



Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park

FEB 2022
Newsletter



Air Tour Management Plan
Potential Alternatives for Public Comment

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service (NPS) are working together to present potential alternatives for an Air Tour Management Plan for Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park. Public and stakeholder feedback during this phase is critical. This document will explain:

- Commercial air tour operations
- Requirements for a plan at the Park
- Potential alternatives being considered for the plan
- How the public and stakeholders can provide feedback

Project Introduction

This document presents potential alternatives for the Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) Environmental Assessment (EA) for public and stakeholder input. As applied to Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park (Park), the term commercial air tour operation is defined as any flight conducted for compensation or hire in a powered aircraft, where a purpose of the flight is sightseeing over the Park or within ½-mile outside the Park’s boundary during which the aircraft flies below 5,000 feet above ground level.

The National Parks Air Tour Management Act (the Act) of 2000 requires the FAA, in cooperation with the NPS, to develop an ATMP for parks and tribal lands where operators have applied to conduct commercial air tours. The objective of this ATMP, under the Act, is to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent the significant adverse impacts of commercial air tour operations on the Park’s natural and cultural resources, Native Hawaiian sacred sites and ceremonial areas, wilderness character, and visitor experience.

As part of the public scoping process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the FAA and the NPS invite public input on potential alternatives. Many of you have commented on the FAA and the NPS’s past efforts to complete an ATMP for Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park which have been considered in the development of these potential alternatives. Public and stakeholder input will be used to further refine or dismiss alternatives and potentially to consider new alternatives. Public input will also be used to inform the environmental analysis. Alternatives that are carried forward and analyzed in the EA are expected to be available for public review and comment later this year.



Purpose and Need for the Project

Under NEPA, alternatives must meet the Purpose (i.e., objective) and Need for the project.

Purpose

To comply with the *National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000 (the Act)* and other applicable laws, consistent with the *Plan and Schedule for Completion of Air Tour Management Plans at Twenty-Three Parks* approved by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit on November 20, 2020, in Case No. 19-1044, *In Re Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and Hawai'i Coalition Malama Pono*.

Need

The Act requires an ATMP or voluntary agreement for the Park. Air tours have the potential to impact natural and cultural resources, wilderness character, and visitor experience. The Act requires that the FAA and the NPS develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial air tour operations on natural and cultural resources, wilderness character, visitor experience, and Native Hawaiian Traditional Cultural Properties including Native Hawaiian sacred sites and ceremonial areas. In order to address potential impacts from commercial air tours the agencies have decided to prepare an ATMP for the Park.

Resources for Consideration in the EA

The agencies propose to analyze the potential impacts of each alternative on the following resources:

- Air quality
- Biological resources (wildlife including special status species)
- Climate (climate change and greenhouse gas emissions)
- Coastal resources
- Cultural resources (historic buildings, historic districts, archeological resources, sacred sites, Traditional Cultural Properties, cultural landscapes, ethnographic resources)
- Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)
- Noise and compatible land use (acoustic environment and Park soundscape)
- Park visitors and visitor uses
- Socioeconomics, Children's Environmental Health and Safety Risk, and Environmental Justice (children's environmental health and safety risks, environmental justice and resident communities, socioeconomics)
- Visual effects (visual resources and visual character)
- Water resources
- Wilderness

Elements Common to All Alternatives for the Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park ATMP

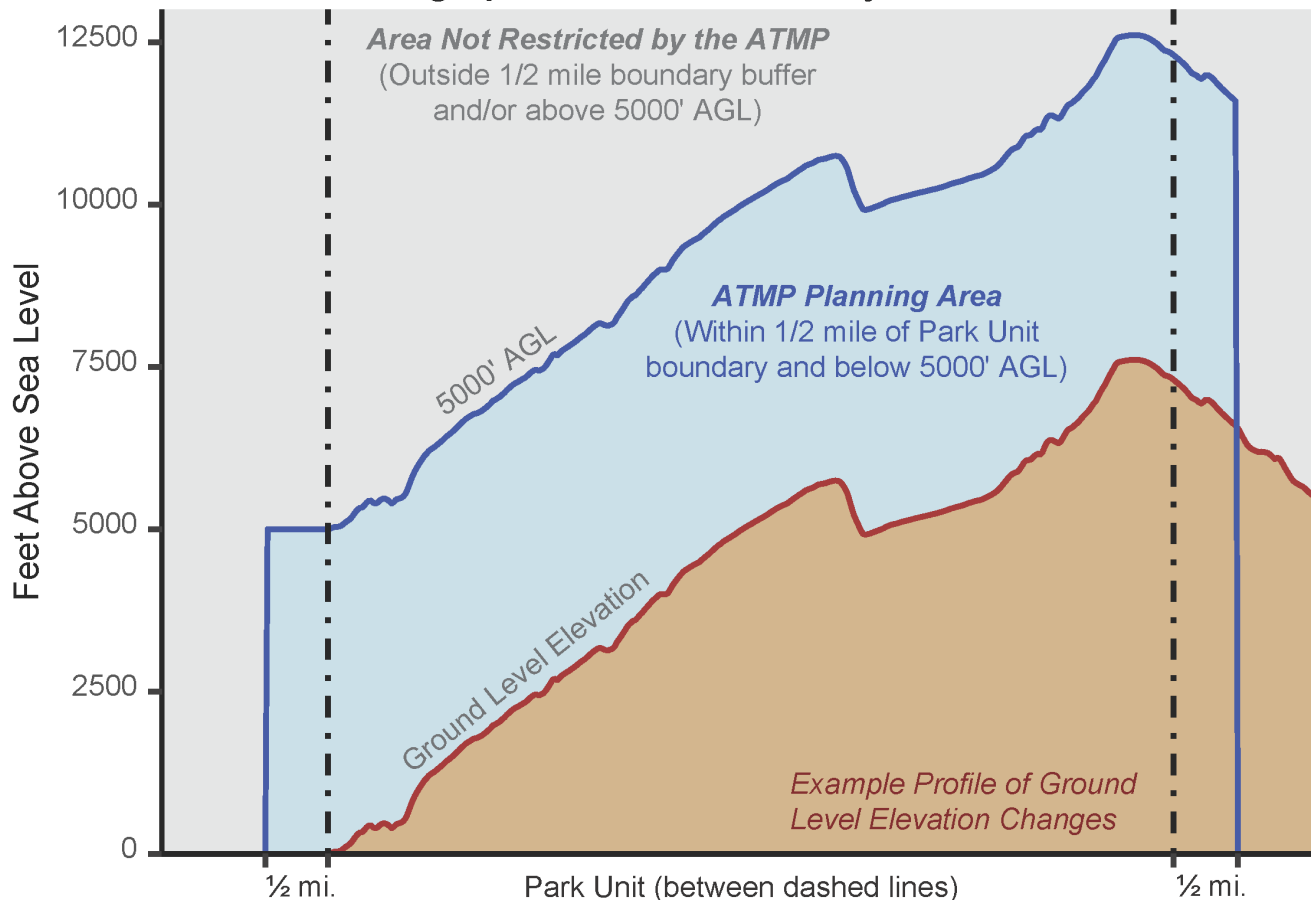
All alternatives being considered for the Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park ATMP will incorporate the following:

ATMP Planning Area

According to the Act, an ATMP shall regulate commercial air tours over a national park or within ½-mile outside the park’s boundary during which the aircraft flies below 5,000 feet above ground level (AGL). This is referred to as the ATMP planning area. Air tours outside of the ATMP planning area are not subject to the Act and are therefore not regulated under the ATMP. As air tours outside the boundaries of the ATMP planning area are outside the jurisdiction of the ATMP, there would be no limitations on the annual number of air tours or routes that could occur outside the ATMP planning area under any alternative. Refer to the figure below for a geographic depiction of the ATMP planning area. Although they may occur within the ATMP planning area, general aviation flights, overflights by commercial airlines, and military flights would not be regulated by the ATMP because they are not commercial air tours subject to regulation under the Act.



Geographic Areas Covered by the ATMP



Monitoring and Enforcement

All air tour operators are required to report to the FAA and the NPS, on a semi-annual basis, the number of commercial air tour operations they have conducted within the ATMP planning area. The operators must provide the date and time each tour occurred, the make/model of aircraft used, and the route on which the tour was conducted.



Aircraft monitoring and enforcement would occur to ensure that commercial air tour operators are complying with the terms and conditions of the ATMP. The NPS and the FAA are both responsible for the monitoring and oversight of the ATMP. If the NPS identifies instances of non-compliance, the NPS will report such findings to the FAA's Honolulu Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). The FSDO will investigate all substantiated reports of noncompliance. The public may also report allegations of non-compliance with the ATMP to the FSDO, which may result in an FAA investigation.

Minimum Altitudes

The range of altitudes examined in the alternatives will be from 1,500 to 5,000 feet AGL. On two-way routes, aircraft will utilize vertical separation to allow aircraft to maintain a safe distance from each other. Vertical separation of aircraft only applies to aircraft traveling in opposite directions, and vertical stacking of aircraft going the same direction along a route would be prohibited.



Flight Routes and In-flight Deviations

The maps included in the potential alternatives show flight routes where air tours could occur within the ATMP planning area. Flight routes within the ATMP planning area are represented by a line with a buffer on either side of the route that indicates the acceptable range of deviation that would not trigger enforcement action. The flight lines will be used for noise modeling purposes in the impact analysis. If pilots are entering a route in the ATMP planning area but weather conditions do not allow them to follow that route at the prescribed altitude they may not proceed further on the route. They would either be required to follow another ATMP route where weather conditions allow or to leave the ATMP planning area boundary. If pilots are on a route and encounter weather that does not allow them to proceed further along the route at prescribed altitude, they must safely exit the route and either follow another ATMP route where weather conditions allow or leave the ATMP planning area boundary.



FAA Airspace Authority

The FAA has authority for all airspace matters, including any enforcement actions for violations under the ATMP, which the agency would process in accordance with existing FAA procedures and regulations.



Fee Collection

Under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (54 U.S.C. § 100904), commercial air tour operators currently conducting air tours over the Park are required to pay a fee (currently \$25 for each aircraft with 25 passengers or less) for each air tour conducted. This requirement will remain in force when this ATMP becomes effective. Fee collection will not be considered in the decision-making process for analyzing and selecting a potential alternative. The decisions will be based solely on the environmental impact analysis and public input.



Initial Allocation and Competitive Bidding

The Act states whenever an ATMP limits the number of commercial air tour operations during a specified time frame, a competitive bidding process must occur pursuant to the criteria set forth in 49 U.S.C. § 40128(a)(2)(B) and other criteria developed by the



agencies. Since the number of flights would be limited for Alternatives 3 and 4, competitive bidding would be required. In the time period between the finalization of an ATMP and the completion of the competitive bidding process, commercial air tour operators would be allocated a certain number of commercial air tours over the Park, referred to as the initial allocation.

Competitive bidding may also be appropriate to address: a new entrant application; a request by an existing operator for additional operating authority; consideration by the agencies of Park-specific resources, impacts, or safety concerns; or for other reasons. The Act directs the agencies to consider various factors during the comp bidding process including known resource issues, reporting, and compliance concerns.

Potential Alternatives

The agencies have considered a range of reasonable alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, meet the purpose and need for the project, and the goals of the agencies.

Alternatives Considered and Dismissed

The agencies considered but dismissed alternatives that would allow air tour operations at or above existing numbers. These alternatives were dismissed from further consideration because the NPS determined they would result in unacceptable impacts to Park natural and cultural resources, wilderness character, and visitor enjoyment under the NPS Management Policies 2006 1.4.7.1. and do not meet the purpose and need for the plan.

The NPS determined the current level of air tours is inconsistent with the Park's purpose and values. The Park's purpose includes perpetuating the traditional Hawaiian cultural connections to the Park's landscapes (see Foundation Document). Noise from the current level of air tours inhibits the Park's ability to meet this purpose. Noise from air tours negatively impacts existing sacred sites within the Park associated with Native Hawaiian people. The NPS is required to avoid such impacts to sacred sites to the extent possible (NPS Management Policies 2006 5.3.5.3.2). Native Hawaiians have consistently noted that persistent air tours over the Park unreasonably interfere with Native Hawaiian connections to the Park's sacred areas.

Additionally, existing air tour operations result in frequent and loud noise disruptions in many areas of the Park. Current air tours over the Park impede the NPS's ability to fully meet the Park's purpose of perpetuating

endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and does not support the perpetuation of biological diversity and ecological integrity which are fundamental resources and values of the park (see Foundation Document). A recent Park study documents that loud, frequent helicopter noise results in changes in avian vocalization (Gallardo Cruz et al 2021). Helicopter noise could detrimentally affect physiology, pairing and breeding success, and territory size of birds by limiting communication between individuals (Habib et al. 2007; Nemeth and Brumm 2010; Halfwerk et al. 2011; Kleist et al. 2018). These effects could have a greater impact on Hawaiian endemics, which already face a number of stressors (Atkinson and Lapointe 2009; Pratt et al. 2009; LaPointe et al. 2010), than on introduced species.

Current air tours over the Park also directly interfere with resource management activities (such as the execution of acoustic based bird surveys), which impedes the NPS's ability to fully meet the Park's purpose of perpetuating endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and does not support the perpetuation of biological diversity and ecological integrity which are fundamental resources and values of the Park (see Foundation Document).



Nāhuku Rainforest

The current level of air tours diminishes visitor opportunities to learn about and be inspired by Park resources and values and unreasonably interferes with the atmosphere of peace and tranquility and the natural soundscapes in wilderness. Existing air tours repeatedly interrupt and unreasonably interfere with interpretive programs and visitor activities at many sites, including Uēkahuna Bluff, Kīlauea Overlook, Steam Vents, Volcano House, Kīlauea Visitor Center, Kūpina‘i Pali, Kīlauea Iki, Devastation, Pu‘upua‘i, Keanakāko‘i, Maunaulu, Puhimau, Kīpukapua‘ulu, and Maunaloa (lookout and trail). Regular visitor complaints and staff observations indicate that noise from air tours impedes visitors from enjoying and learning about existing Park resources in these and other areas of the Park.

Existing air tour operations also unreasonably interfere with the natural soundscape maintained within the Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park’s four designated Wilderness areas, Maunaloa, ‘Ōla‘a, East Rift, and Ka‘ū Desert, as well as the eligible (Upper Kahuku) and potential (Great Crack) Wilderness areas (see NPS Management Policies 1.4.7.1). Persistent noise within Wilderness interferes with the opportunity for solitude and detracts from the natural quality of Wilderness.

Therefore, authorizing commercial air tours at or above the existing level of operations would not meet the objective of an ATMP under the Act. The NPS has determined that the current level of air tours cannot be mitigated to avoid or prevent unacceptable impacts and therefore any alternative that would maintain or increase the current number of air tours over the Park does not meet the purpose and need for the plan. For all of these reasons, the agencies have considered but dismissed alternatives that would continue air tours at or above existing air tour numbers.



Lava lake

Alternative 1 (No Action)

Objective

A no action alternative is required by the Council on Environmental Quality and NEPA regulations.

The no action alternative provides a basis for comparison but is not a selectable alternative because it does not meet the purpose and need for the ATMP and is not in compliance with the Act. The agencies have decided to comply with the Act by developing an ATMP for the Park.

Description

The no action alternative is what happens if the agencies do not adopt an ATMP. The no action alternative would allow a continuation of air tours under Interim Operating Authority (IOA) without implementation of an ATMP or voluntary agreement. Under the no action alternative, air tour numbers would be expected to vary from year to year, likely consistent with reported numbers over the past three to five years. Air tour numbers from 2017 to 2019 are listed below. Under the no action alternative operators could fly up to IOA, 26,664 air tours per year. Air tour operators may fly where they choose. Currently, altitudes are flown in accordance with the Hawai'i Air Tour Common Procedures Manual (HI Manual). Minimum altitudes range from 500-1,500 ft. AGL, weather dependent, depending on location on the island.

Number of Flights Each Year

Alternative 1 represents a continuation of what is currently flown and allowed under existing law including each company's IOA as granted by the FAA (70 Federal Register 36456 (June 23, 2005)), applicable regulations that govern aviation safety (Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 136, Appendix A (formerly Special Federal Aviation Regulation 71)), and any FAA exceptions issued to individual operators as outlined by the HI Manual. Ten commercial air tour operators currently hold IOA to fly up to a combined total of 26,664 annual commercial air tours over the Park (see table on page 11).

Since reporting began in 2013, the total number of annual commercial air tours reported over the Park ranges from 8,333 (reported in 2018) to 16,520 (reported in 2017). Under the no action alternative, operators could fly up to IOA. The operators may not exceed their respective IOA limitation in any given year. Under the no action alternative, air tours numbers would be expected to vary from year to year, likely consistent with reported numbers over the past three to five years.

Alternative 1 (No Action)

The average annual number of commercial air tours conducted over the Park from 2017-2019 for all operators is 11,376. The agencies consider the 2017-2019, three-year average, the existing baseline for the purposes of understanding the existing number of commercial air tour flights over the Park. The requirement for commercial air tour operators to report actual commercial air tours to the FAA and the NPS was implemented in 2013. Reporting data from 2013 and 2014 are considered incomplete as reporting protocols were not fully in place at that time and likely do not reflect actual flights. Flight numbers from a single year were not chosen as the existing baseline because the three-year average accounts for both variation across years and takes into account the most recent pre-pandemic years. Reporting data from 2020 was not used because the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lower than normal commercial air tour operations due to travel restrictions and closures in the State of Hawai‘i, which does not represent the conditions in a typical year.

Routes and Altitudes

There are no designated flight routes or no-fly zones under the no action alternative. The figure for this alternative depicts both general route information provided by current commercial air tour operators and Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) flight tracking data of actual commercial air tour operations over and adjacent to the Park. Actual commercial air tour operations are dispersed around the generalized routes provided by operators depicted on the figure. The ADS-B tracking data is more reflective of existing operations for various reasons including deviations that may occur due to weather.

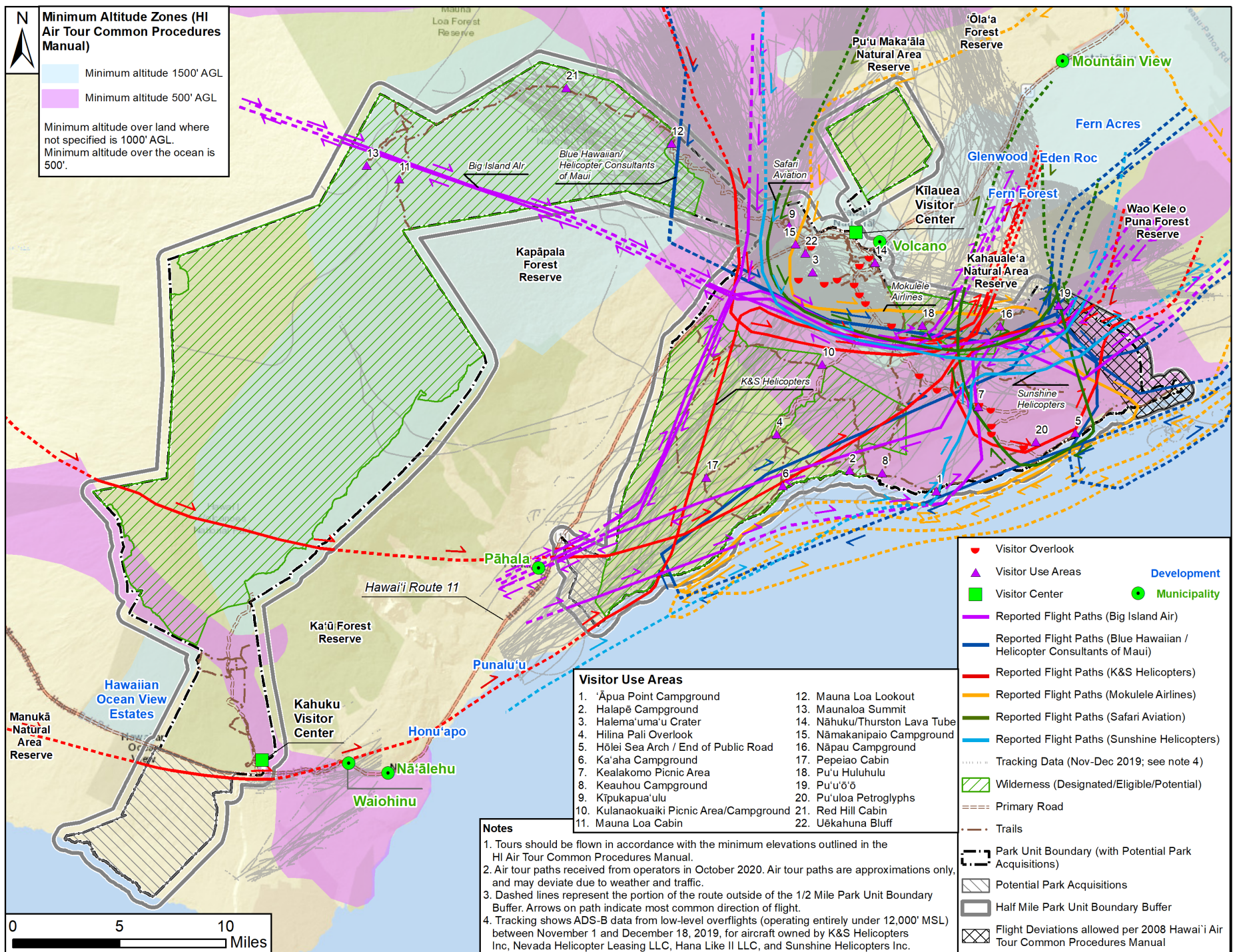
Minimum altitudes for commercial air tours within the ATMP planning area are flown in accordance with the HI Manual, from 500-1,500 ft. AGL, weather dependent and contingent on location on the island. In addition, operators holding a B048 Operations Specification are authorized to conduct commercial air tour operations at altitudes less than 1,500 feet above the surface, within the state of Hawai‘i, in accordance with the provisions and limitations of the HI Manual. See the figure for this alternative for details.

Operators, Aircraft Types, Interim Operating Authority

Seven of the ten operators that hold IOA for the Park reported flying commercial air tours over the Park between 2013 and 2019. Five operators fly helicopters, and two operators fly fixed-wing aircraft. The following table summarizes each operator’s aircraft type, IOA for the Park, and average number of reported air tours over the Park from 2017-2019:

Alternative 1 (No Action)

Operator	Aircraft Type	2017 Reported Tours	2018 Reported Tours	2019 Reported Tours	3-year Reported Average No. of Air Tours (2017-2019)	Interim Operating Authority (IOA)
Above it All Inc. (Sporty's Academy Hawai'i, Hawai'i Island Hoppers, Hawai'i Airventures, Benchmark Flight Center)	no data	0	0	0	0	3,878
Big Island Air Inc.	fixed wing	102	7	0	36	1,643
Hawai'i Helicopters Inc. (Helicopter Consultants of Maui, Inc.)	helicopter	139	50	67	85	141
Helicopter Consultants of Maui Inc. (Hawai'i Helicopter, Blue Hawaiian Helicopters)	helicopter	12,300	6,059	7,325	8561	12,413
K&S Helicopters (Paradise Helicopters)	helicopter	877	552	248	559	1,684
Manuiwa Airways Inc. (Volcano Helicopters, Volcano Heli-Tours)	no data	0	0	0	0	800
Mokulele Flight Service Inc. (Mokulele Airlines)	fixed wing	0	15	0	5	60
Safari Aviation Inc. (Safari Helicopter Tours)	helicopter	1,977	1,050	995	1341	3,920
Schuman Aviation Company, Ltd. (Makani Kai Helicopters)	no data	0	0	0	0	25
Sunshine Helicopters Inc.	helicopter	1,125	600	641	789	2,100
		16,520	8,333	9,276	11,376	26,664



Alternative 2

Objective

Alternative 2 seeks the greatest protection for the purposes, resources, and values of the Park. These include the summits of Kīlauea and Maunaloa which hold spiritual and cultural significance to Native Hawaiians; threatened and endangered species and other wildlife sensitive to noise; Congressionally designated wilderness and visitor opportunities for solitude; ground-based visitor experience; Native Hawaiian traditional cultural practices; scenic qualities, and natural sounds.

Description

Alternative 2 would prohibit air tours within the ATMP planning area. The ATMP planning area includes areas below 5,000 feet AGL and within ½-mile of the Park boundary. The Park itself would be designated as an area to remain free of commercial air tours under 5,000 feet AGL regardless of future eruptions or lava flows. Air tours outside of the ATMP planning area (i.e., above 5,000 feet AGL or more than ½-mile outside the Park boundary) are not subject to the Act and are therefore not regulated under the ATMP. Thus, there would be no limitations on the number of air tours that could occur outside the ATMP planning area.

Routes and Altitudes

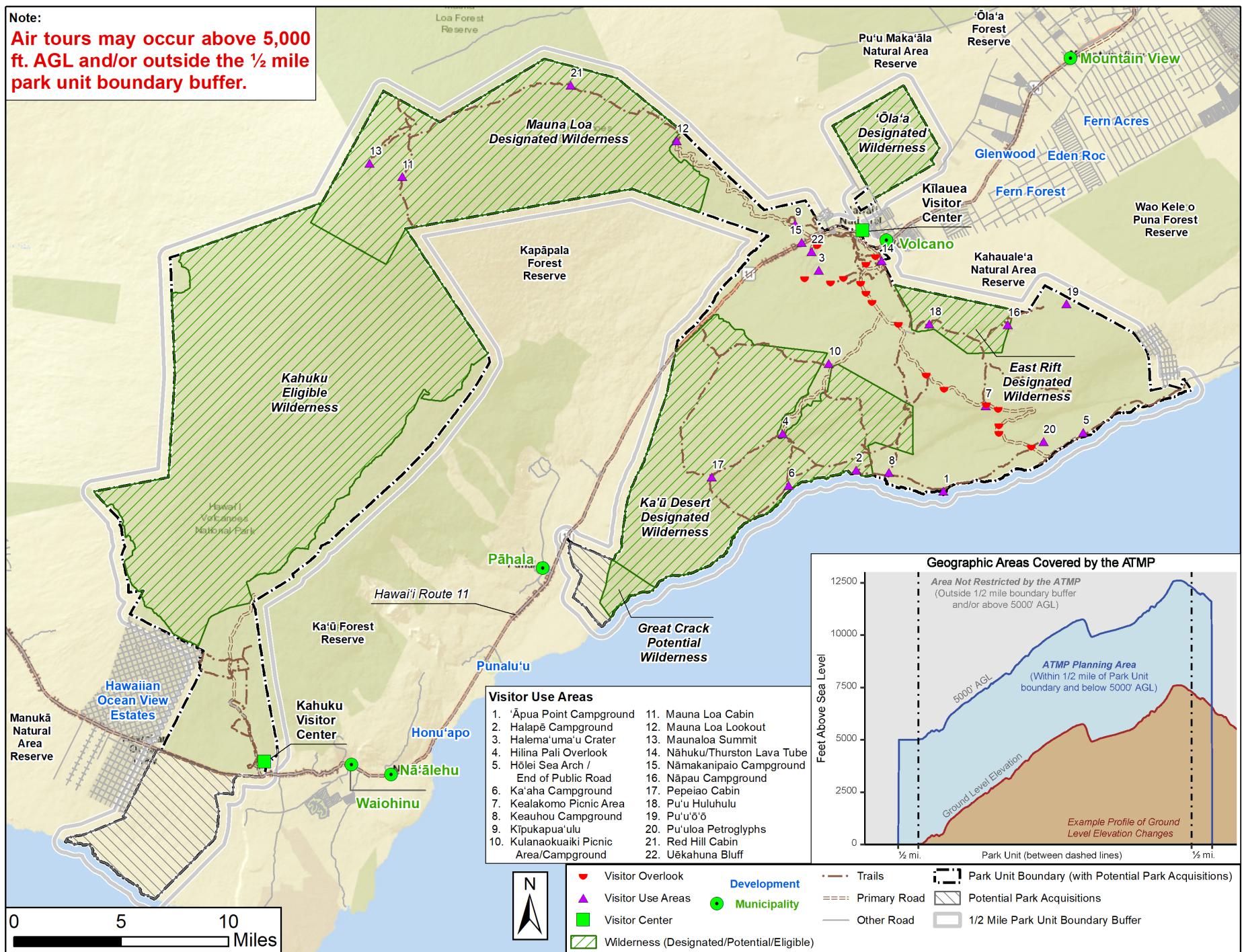
Air tours could be conducted only outside the ATMP planning area. Based on current air tour activity, routes outside of the ATMP planning area would be expected to be similar to existing routes. An unknown number of air tours originating on Hawai‘i Island from Hilo, Kailua-Kona, Hāpuna and Waikoloa, and airports on Maui and O‘ahu would still continue to fly more than ½-mile outside of the Park’s boundary at or below 1,500 feet AGL in accordance with the HI Manual. The actual flight path of air tours outside the ATMP planning area would vary due to operator preference, volcanic activity, and weather conditions at the time of the air tour.



Rainforest trail

Note:

Air tours may occur above 5,000 ft. AGL and/or outside the ½ mile park unit boundary buffer.



Alternative 3

Objective

The NPS developed Alternative 3 to provide multiple air tour routes for access to historically active volcanic areas of the Park with mitigations to avoid or minimize unacceptable impacts to soundscapes based on Park management zones. The FAA reviewed the alternative to ensure it meets safety parameters.

Description

Commercial air tour operations would only fly along two main routes, one fly zone, and one adaptive management route providing access to active volcanic areas, coastal areas, and other volcanic landscapes.

Caps on Numbers of Flights Allowed Annually and Daily

Soundscape modeling for Alternative 3 will consider and evaluate various numbers of annual commercial air tours over the Park, ranging between 1 flight per year to below current condition (the average number of commercial air tours conducted over the Park each year from 2017-2019, in this case 11,376). The number of flights allowed over the Park on an annual basis will be selected to avoid or minimize unacceptable impacts to soundscapes based on Park management zones. This alternative would not consider a daily cap on the number of commercial air tours that each operator could fly.

Routes and Altitudes

Alternative 3 includes two main routes, one fly zone, and one adaptive management route where commercial air tour operators could fly. Refer to the figure for this Alternative for a depiction of each:

- Northern Route: Commercial air tour operations would fly along Highway 11 for viewing of Kīlauea and Halema‘uma‘u Craters. The northern route would be flown at minimum 1,500 ft. AGL altitude, and minimum 2,000 ft. AGL altitude over wilderness areas and sensitive sites.
- Coastal Route: Commercial air tour operators would fly offshore along the edge of the Park boundary, but within ½-mile of the Park boundary. The route runs offshore along the edge of the ATMP planning area boundary in order to protect wilderness areas and backcountry campgrounds within the Park. This route would be flown at minimum 2,000 ft. AGL. The coastal route would be available for use only if commercial air tour operators could safely adhere to the required altitudes and distances to the shore. If an operator is not able to safely fly offshore in accordance with the prescribed altitude and distance requirements, the operator shall not utilize that route.

Alternative 3

- Pu‘u‘ō‘ō Viewing Area: The Pu‘u‘ō‘ō viewing area is a fly zone along the east rift of Kīlauea to the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō area. Commercial air tour access would be permitted to the east rift of Kīlauea within the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō viewing area. Quiet Technology (QT) aircraft would be permitted to use an expanded fly zone in the western portion of this area near Pu‘u‘ō‘ō. Commercial air tours conducted within this area would be flown at minimum 1,500 ft. AGL.
- Southwest Rift Zone Route: The Kīlauea Southwest Rift Zone would be viewable from the Southwest Rift Zone route outside the Park boundary but within ½-mile of the boundary under adaptive management only (e.g., if lava emerges, the adaptive management process would be implemented to determine if/when the route is approved for use). The offset from the Park boundary would provide protection to wilderness areas. This route would be flown at minimum 2,000 ft. AGL.

Other than the routes described above, under Alternative 3, no air tours could occur below 5,000 feet AGL within the rest of the Park or within ½-mile of the Park boundary. Refer to the map for this alternative for a depiction of flight corridors and altitudes.

Loitering/Circling

This alternative would prohibit loitering or circling because it could negatively impact visitors, cultural, and natural resources, including sensitive sites.

Time of Day/Day of Week

Flights would be permitted between the hours of 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Flights would be permitted on all days of the week except Wednesday and Sunday. Exceptions to these parameters for QT aircraft are noted below, which allows QT aircraft to fly over the Park on Wednesdays. One no-fly day provides opportunities for visitor enjoyment, particularly bird watching. Sunday was selected as a no-fly day for consistency with the Park’s Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan and Environmental Assessment and allows for one weekend flight-free day at the Park.

Quiet Technology (QT) Incentives

The Act requires that the ATMP include incentives for the adoption of QT by commercial air tour operators. Alternative 3 includes the following incentives for operators conducting commercial air tours using QT aircraft:

- Relax the day of week restriction to allow flights on Wednesdays for QT aircraft
- Relax the time-of-day restrictions to allow QT aircraft to fly from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- Allow QT aircraft to conduct commercial air tours in additional locations in the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō viewing area (see map for a depiction of these areas).

In order to qualify for QT incentives, operators will be required to follow a process to be defined by the agencies.

Alternative 3

Restrictions for Special Events

This alternative would include a mandatory 5-mile standoff for special events that could be impacted by commercial air tours, limited to the day of the event. Special events could include Native Hawaiian events or other natural and cultural resource programs. Two months' notice would be provided to commercial air tour operators prior to the event. The standoff would not extend outside the ATMP planning area.

Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a systematic approach for improving resource management and ensuring that the continued effectiveness of the ATMP over time through the monitoring of park conditions and by learning from management actions or choices. Adaptive management is also used to address changed conditions such as a new lava flow occurs in the Park or if the breeding habitat of a sensitive species moves to a new area. This alternative will analyze an adaptive management route, the Southwest Rift Zone route, for use during an eruptive event along the Southwest Rift Zone of Kīlauea. See "Routes and Altitudes" section for a description of this route.

Interpretive Training and Education

The NPS would provide mandatory training for air tour pilots regarding Park resources. The training would include the Park information that operators could use to further their own understanding of Park priorities, cultural and natural resources protection and management objectives as well as enhance the interpretive narrative for air tour clients and increase

understanding of the Park by air tour clients.

Operators would also be required to complete the FAA Fly Neighborly training for their aircraft type. Fly Neighborly is a noise reduction program that seeks to create better relationships between communities and helicopter operators by establishing noise mitigation techniques and increasing effective communication.

Annual Meeting

An annual meeting between the agencies and commercial air tour operators would occur under this alternative. The ATMP will describe the details of the annual meeting.

Operators, Initial Allocation of Air Tours, and Aircraft Types

Upon finalization of the ATMP, the number of flights authorized to occur each year would be proportionally allocated to each of the seven operators that have reported operations over the Park in the period from 2017-2019. Each operator's initial allocation will reflect the proportion of its average number of reported flights from 2017-2019 as compared to all operators that have reported flying over the Park during this period. Each operator's aircraft types would reflect those reported in the period from 2017-2019. The initial allocation would be used until a competitive bidding process could occur. Under the Act, IOA terminates 180 days after the date of establishment of the ATMP, however, if the FAA updates an operator's Operations Specifications before that time, IOA will be terminated when the Operations Specifications are updated.

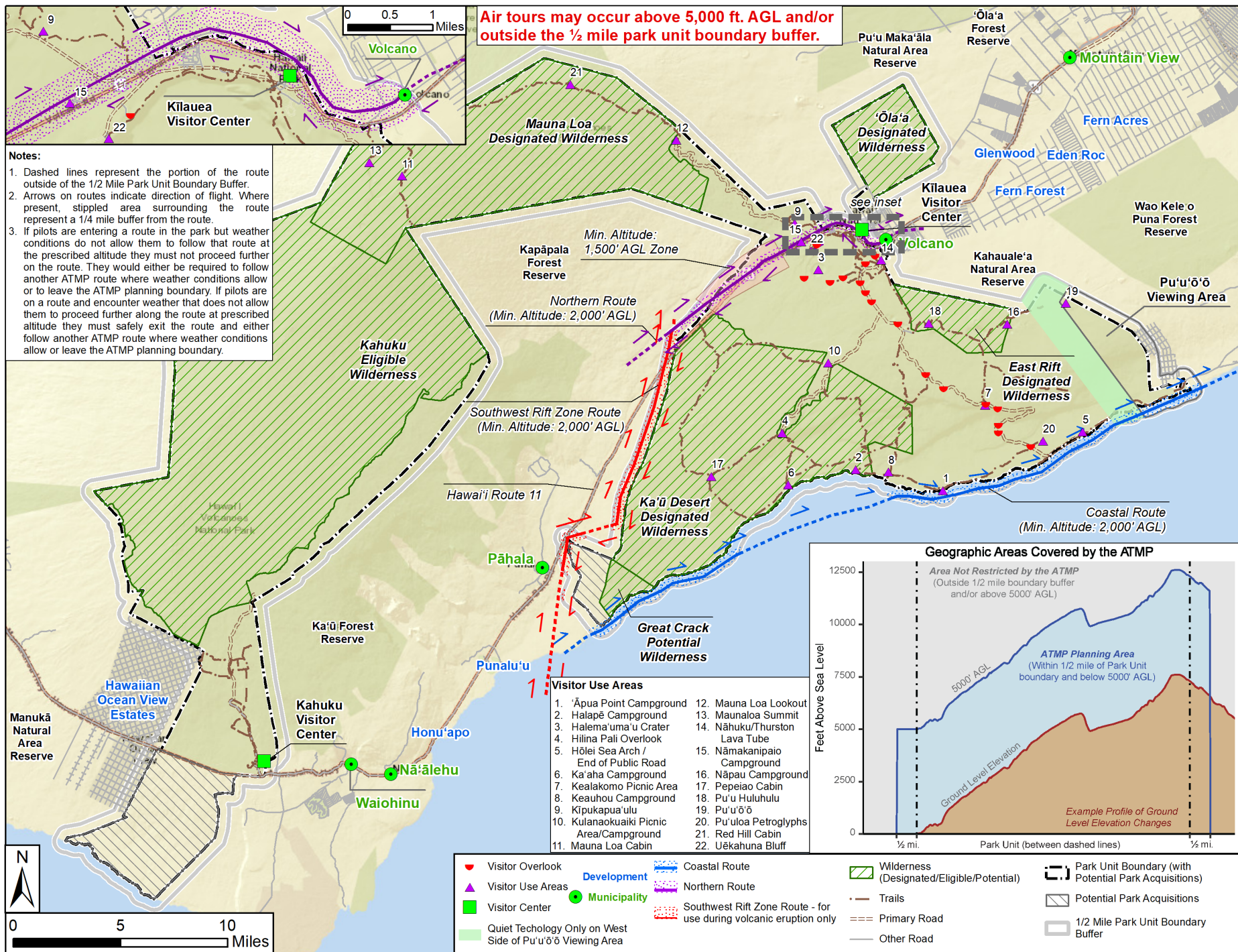
Alternative 3

Monitoring and Enforcement

Upon finalization of the ATMP, the operators would be required to equip all aircraft used for air tours with flight monitoring technology, use flight monitoring technology during all air tours under the ATMP, and to report flight monitoring data as an attachment to the operator's semi-annual reports. Soundscape monitoring would also occur to ensure that the terms and conditions of the ATMP are consistent with Park management objectives.



Maunaulu



Alternative 4

Objective

The NPS developed Alternative 4 to provide an air tour route for access to the historically active east rift zone of Kīlauea, an additional route for air tour transit across the lower southern edge of Kahuku, and an offshore coastal flight corridor that would protect wilderness areas and backcountry campgrounds. The heart of the Park, including designated wilderness areas and key cultural and visitor use areas, would be free of commercial air tours. This alternative would avoid or minimize unacceptable impacts to Park soundscapes based on Park management zones. The FAA reviewed the alternative to ensure it meets safety parameters.

Description

This alternative includes three flight corridors for commercial air tours within the ATMP planning area and does not consider any adaptive management routes.

Caps on Numbers of Flights Allowed Annually and Daily

Soundscape modeling for Alternative 4 will consider and evaluate various numbers of annual commercial air tours over the Park, ranging between 1 flight per year to below current condition (the average number of annual commercial air tours conducted over the Park from 2017-2019, in this case 11,376). The number of flights allowed over the Park on an annual basis will be selected

to avoid or minimize unacceptable impacts to soundscapes based on Park management zones. This alternative would consider the use of daily caps by operator due to the historical frequency of air tours that have occurred during eruptive events at the Park.

Routes and Altitudes

This alternative includes three flight corridors where commercial air tour operators would be permitted to fly:

- Pu‘u‘ō‘ō Route: The Pu‘u‘ō‘ō route consists of a route on the east rift of Kīlauea in the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō area with a single entry and exit over the ocean. Only QT aircraft would be permitted to use an expanded fly zone directly west of this route near Pu‘u‘ō‘ō. The flight path on the west side would avoid the designated wilderness boundary at Nāpau, and an impact analysis would be used to determine the boundary line of the west side flight zone. Commercial air tours conducted within this area would be flown at minimum 1,500 ft. AGL.
- Coastal Route: Commercial air tour operators would fly offshore along the edge of the Park boundary, but within ½-mile of the boundary. The route runs offshore along the edge of the ATMP planning area boundary in order to protect wilderness areas and backcountry campgrounds within the Park. This route would be flown at minimum 2,000 ft. AGL. The coastal route would be

Alternative 4

available for use only if commercial air tour operators could safely adhere to the required altitudes and distances to the shore. If an operator is not able to safely fly offshore in accordance with the prescribed altitude and distance requirements, the operator shall not utilize that route.

- Kahuku Route: This route provides access for Kailua-Kona flights and circle island tours across the lower southern edge of Kahuku along Highway 11 to provide views of the southwest rift of Maunaloa and many past eruptions. This route would be flown at minimum 1,500 ft. AGL.

Other than the routes described above, under Alternative 4, no air tours could occur below 5,000 feet AGL over the rest of the Park or within ½-mile of its boundary. Refer to the map for this alternative for a depiction of flight corridors and altitudes.

Loitering/Circling

This alternative would allow loitering and circling along the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō route and viewing area. Impact analyses would be used to set mandatory time limits for loitering within the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō viewing area. Circling aircraft must turn away from the advancing blade as much as possible in order to minimize noise.

Time of Day/Day of Week

Flights would be permitted between the hours of 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Flights would be permitted on all days of the week except Sunday. Exceptions to these parameters for QT aircraft are noted below. One no-fly day provides opportunities for visitor enjoyment, particularly bird watching. Sunday was

selected as a no-fly day for consistency with the Park’s Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan and Environmental Assessment and allows for one weekend flight-free day at the Park.

Quiet Technology (QT) Incentives

The Act requires that the ATMP include incentives for the adoption of QT by commercial air tour operators. Alternative 4 includes the following incentives for operators conducting commercial air tours using QT aircraft:

- Relax the time-of-day restrictions to allow QT aircraft to fly from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- Allow QT aircraft to conduct commercial air tours in additional locations in the Pu‘u‘ō‘ō viewing area (see map for a depiction of these areas).

In order to qualify for QT incentives, operators will be required to follow a process to be defined by the agencies.

Restrictions for Special Events

This alternative would include a voluntary 3-mile standoff for special events that could be impacted by overflights, limited to the day of the event. Special events could include Native Hawaiian events or other natural and cultural resource programs. Two months’ notice would be provided to commercial air tour operators prior to the event. The standoff would not extend outside the boundary of the ATMP planning area.

Alternative 4

Interpretive Training and Education

NPS would provide voluntary training for air tour pilots regarding Park resources. The training would include the Park information that operators could use to further their own understanding of Park priorities and management objectives as well as enhance the interpretive narrative for air tour clients and increase understanding of the Park by air tour clients.

Operators would also be required to complete the FAA Fly Neighborly training for their aircraft type. Fly Neighborly is a noise reduction program that seeks to create better relationships between communities and helicopter operators by establishing noise mitigation techniques and increasing effective communication.

Annual Meeting

An annual meeting between the agencies and commercial air tour operators would occur under this alternative. The ATMP will describe the details of the annual meeting.

Operators, Initial Allocation of Air Tours, and Aircraft Types

Upon finalization of the ATMP, the number of flights authorized to occur each year would be proportionally allocated to each of the seven operators that have reported operations over the Park in the period from 2017-2019. Each operator's initial allocation will reflect the proportion of their average number of reported flights from 2017-2019 as compared to all operators that have reported flying over the Park during this period. Each operator's aircraft types would reflect those reported in the period from 2017-2019. The initial allocation would be used until a competitive bidding process could occur. Under the Act, IOA terminates 180 days after the date of establishment of the ATMP. However, if FAA updates an operator's Operations Specifications before that time, the IOA will be terminated when the Operations Specifications are updated.

Monitoring and Enforcement

Operators would be required to equip all aircraft used for air tours with flight monitoring technology, use flight monitoring technology during all air tours under the ATMP, and to report flight monitoring data as an attachment to the operator's semi-annual reports. Soundscape monitoring would also occur to ensure that the terms and conditions of the ATMP are consistent with Park management objectives.

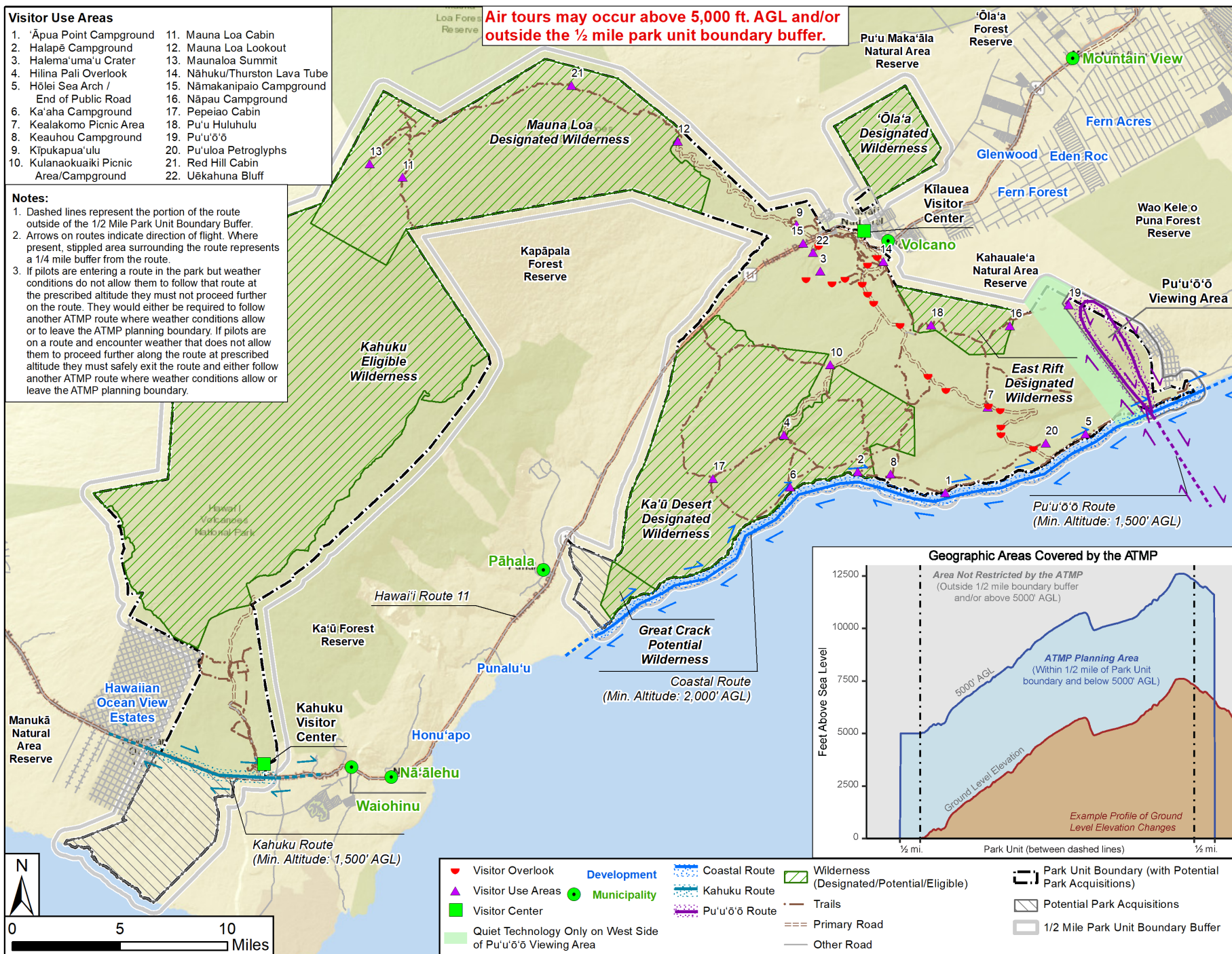
Visitor Use Areas

1. 'Āpua Point Campground
2. Halapē Campground
3. Halema'uma'u Crater
4. Hilina Pali Overlook
5. Hōlei Sea Arch / End of Public Road
6. Ka'aha Campground
7. Kealakomo Picnic Area
8. Keauhou Campground
9. Kīpukapua'ulu
10. Kulanaokuaiki Picnic Area/Campground
11. Mauna Loa Cabin
12. Mauna Loa Lookout
13. Maunaloa Summit
14. Nāhuku/Thurston Lava Tube
15. Nāmanipāio Campground
16. Nāpau Campground
17. Pepeeao Cabin
18. Pu'u Huluhulu
19. Pu'u'ō'ō
20. Pu'u'ō'ō Petroglyphs
21. Red Hill Cabin
22. Uēkahuna Bluff

Notes:

1. Dashed lines represent the portion of the route outside of the 1/2 Mile Park Unit Boundary Buffer.
2. Arrows on routes indicate direction of flight. Where present, stippled area surrounding the route represents a 1/4 mile buffer from the route.
3. If pilots are entering a route in the park but weather conditions do not allow them to follow that route at the prescribed altitude they must not proceed further on the route. They would either be required to follow another ATMP route where weather conditions allow or to leave the ATMP planning boundary. If pilots are on a route and encounter weather that does not allow them to proceed further along the route at prescribed altitude they must safely exit the route and either follow another ATMP route where weather conditions allow or leave the ATMP planning boundary.

Air tours may occur above 5,000 ft. AGL and/or outside the ½ mile park unit boundary buffer.



Summary of Alternative Elements

Alternative Attributes	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
General Description and Objectives	What happens if the agencies do not adopt an ATMP. Allows a continuation of air tours under IOA without implementation of an ATMP or voluntary agreement. Does not comply with the Act.	Prohibits air tours within the ATMP planning area to maximize Park resource protection. Air tours could still continue to fly outside the ATMP planning area (i.e., above 5,000 feet AGL or more than ½-mile outside of the Park's boundary).	Two main air tour routes, one fly zone, and one adaptive management route provide access to historically active volcanic areas of the Park with soundscape mitigations.	Three routes provide air tour access over the Park with soundscape mitigations, while keeping the heart of the Park free of air tours.
Annual/Daily Number of Flights	Leaves IOA in place, allowing the potential for up to 26,664 commercial air tours each year. Actual number of tours has historically ranged from 8,333 to 16,520 flights per year, or an average of 11,376 flights (based on 2017-2019 reporting).	None in ATMP planning area.	Above 1 and below 11,376 flights per year, dependent on modeling. No daily caps.	Above 1 and below 11,376 flights per year, dependent on modeling. Daily caps will be considered.
Routes	No mandatory routes or no-fly zones. See map for depiction of reported routes and actual operations.	None in ATMP planning area.	Two main routes (coastal route and northern route) and one fly zone (Pu'u'ō'ō viewing area). Also includes an adaptive management route (Southwest Rift Zone route) for use during a volcanic eruption only.	Three routes (Kahuku route, coastal route, Pu'u'ō'ō route). Does not include adaptive management routes.
Minimum Altitudes	Flown in accordance with the HI Manual, generally between 500-1,500 ft. AGL.	No minimum altitude would be set. However, flights over the Park that are above 5,000 feet AGL could occur as they are outside the ATMP planning area. Flights more than ½-mile outside the Park boundary are similarly outside the ATMP planning area and are subject to the altitude restrictions of the HI Manual.	Minimum 1,500 ft. AGL; minimum 2,000 ft. AGL over wilderness areas and sensitive sites. Flights more than ½-mile outside the Park boundary are similarly outside the ATMP planning area and are subject to the altitude restrictions of the HI Manual.	Minimum 1,500 ft. AGL; minimum 2,000 ft. AGL over wilderness areas and sensitive sites. Flights more than ½-mile outside the Park boundary are similarly outside the ATMP planning area and are subject to the altitude restrictions of the HI Manual.
Time of Day	No Restrictions.	N/A	10 AM – 2 PM for non-QT flights. 10 AM – 4 PM for QT flights.	9 AM – 5 PM for non-QT flights. 8 AM – 5 PM for QT flights.

Continuation of Alternative Attributes	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Day of Week	No Restrictions.	N/A	No-fly day on Sunday Only QT flights may fly on Wednesday.	No-fly day on Sunday.
Loitering/ Circling	None.	N/A	Not permitted.	Permits loitering/circling from the Pu'u'ō'ō route.
Quiet Technology (QT) Incentives	None.	N/A	QT flights may fly 10AM - 4PM QT flights may fly on Wednesdays Additional fly locations in the Pu'u'ō'ō viewing area for QT flights.	QT flights may fly 8AM - 5PM Additional fly locations in the Pu'u'ō'ō viewing area for QT flights.
Interpretative Training and Education	None.	N/A	Mandatory.	Voluntary.
Annual Meeting	None.	N/A	Included.	Included.
Restrictions for Particular Events	None.	N/A	Mandatory 5-mile standoff distance. Two months' notice provided to operators.	Voluntary 3-mile standoff distance. Two months' notice provided to operators.
Adaptive Management	None.	N/A	Includes adaptive management route for new eruption along Southwest Rift Zone.	None.
Operators, Initial Allocation of Air Tours, and Aircraft Types	Reflects IOA (26,664 IOA issued to ten operators (five helicopter operators, two fixed-wing operators, and three with unknown aircraft).	N/A	The initial allocation would reflect the proportional number of air tours reported over the Park and the existing aircraft types of each of the seven operators that have reported operating in the period from 2017-2019. Then it would move to competitive bidding.	The initial allocation would reflect the proportional number of air tours reported over the Park and the existing aircraft types of each of the seven operators that have reported operating in the period from 2017-2019. Then it would move to competitive bidding.

Glossary

The Act	National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000
ADS-B	Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast
AGL	Above Ground Level
ATMP	Air Tour Management Plan
EA	Environmental Assessment
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FSDO	Flight Standards District Office
HI Manual	Hawai‘i Air Tour Common Procedures Manual
IOA	Interim Operating Authority
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NPS	National Park Service
Park	Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park
PEPC	Planning, Environment & Public Comment System
QT	Quiet Technology



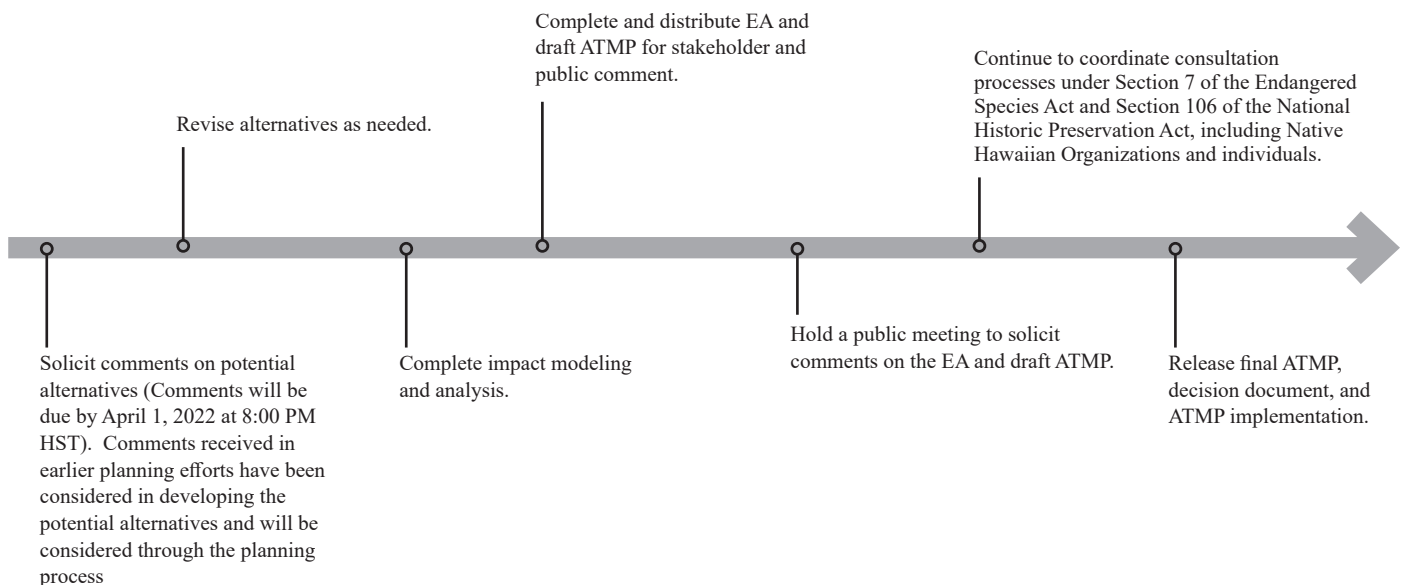
Next Steps

This public scoping period represents the first opportunity to be involved in the current planning process. During this scoping period, the project planning team would like to receive comments on the potential alternatives. After this public scoping process has concluded, the agencies will prepare an EA to comply with NEPA and a draft ATMP. Important steps in the planning process are in the graphic below.

The FAA and the NPS are also identifying resources that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places that could be affected by air tours operating under the proposed ATMP. This includes any historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects or landscapes, including traditional cultural properties. If members of the public have any information on historic properties that they believe would be helpful in this effort, including properties outside of the Park, we welcome that assistance.

The FAA and the NPS are also seeking to identify additional individuals or organizations that may be interested in participating in Section 106 consultations for the ATMP as consulting parties. We want to ensure that we include anyone that may have information or expertise to share.

Should you have information you wish to provide regarding historic properties or are interested in participating in the Section 106 review process as a consulting party, please contact Cathy Nadals at 240-446-5086 or Catherine.L.Nadals@FAA.gov and copy the ATMP Team at ATMPTeam@dot.gov. Please note that this contact information is only for correspondence related to the Section 106 process and comments not related to the Section 106 process will not be accepted or relayed via email. Instructions for general public comment on the potential alternatives described in this newsletter are provided below.



Instructions for Public Comment

Please comment on any alternative and/or alternative element described above. The agencies are seeking substantive comments that describe why something will or will not work, provide new ideas or factual information to correct or adjust assumptions made, or present reasonable alternatives other than those described. Comments that merely support or oppose the proposals are not considered substantive. Commenters may wish to consider the following questions:

- What elements of the alternatives do you think are most important? Why?
- What other information should the planning team consider when analyzing the alternatives?
- Are there other elements or ideas that should be considered and analyzed that are not already presented? What is missing, and why should it be considered?
- Are there other resources or impact topics that should be considered in the analysis?
- What other comments and suggestions do you have?

Comment submission using the Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) system is preferred, although written comments sent via postal mail will also be accepted. If you do not have access to a computer, use the attached comment form, following directions on the form. Comments will not be accepted via email.

Comments may be submitted using the [PEPC system](https://parkplanning.nps.gov/HawaiiVolcanoesATMP) (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/HawaiiVolcanoesATMP>) by **April 1, 2022 at 8:00 PM HST**.

Written comments may be sent via postal mail to the following address:

Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Kaitlyn Rimol, V-326
Attn: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park ATMP
55 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02142

Send Us Your Comments!

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS BY APRIL 1, 2022 AT 8:00 PM HST.

Please submit comments electronically by visiting: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/HawaiiVolcanoesATMP>. Once on the website, select “Open for Comment” to provide your thoughts on these preliminary alternatives. If you do not have access to a computer, you can send us your comments on this comment form.

Do you wish to remain on the mailing list for the Air Tour Management Plan ? YES___ NO___

Please print your name and address in the space provided. If the mailing label we used is incorrect, please indicate any corrections in the space below. To keep our mailing list accurate, please check the boxes below that apply.

- ☐ Change my address.
- ☐ Add my name to the mailing list.
- ☐ Remove my name from the mailing list.
- ☐ Send me information by e-mail.

Name: _____

Organization, if any: _____

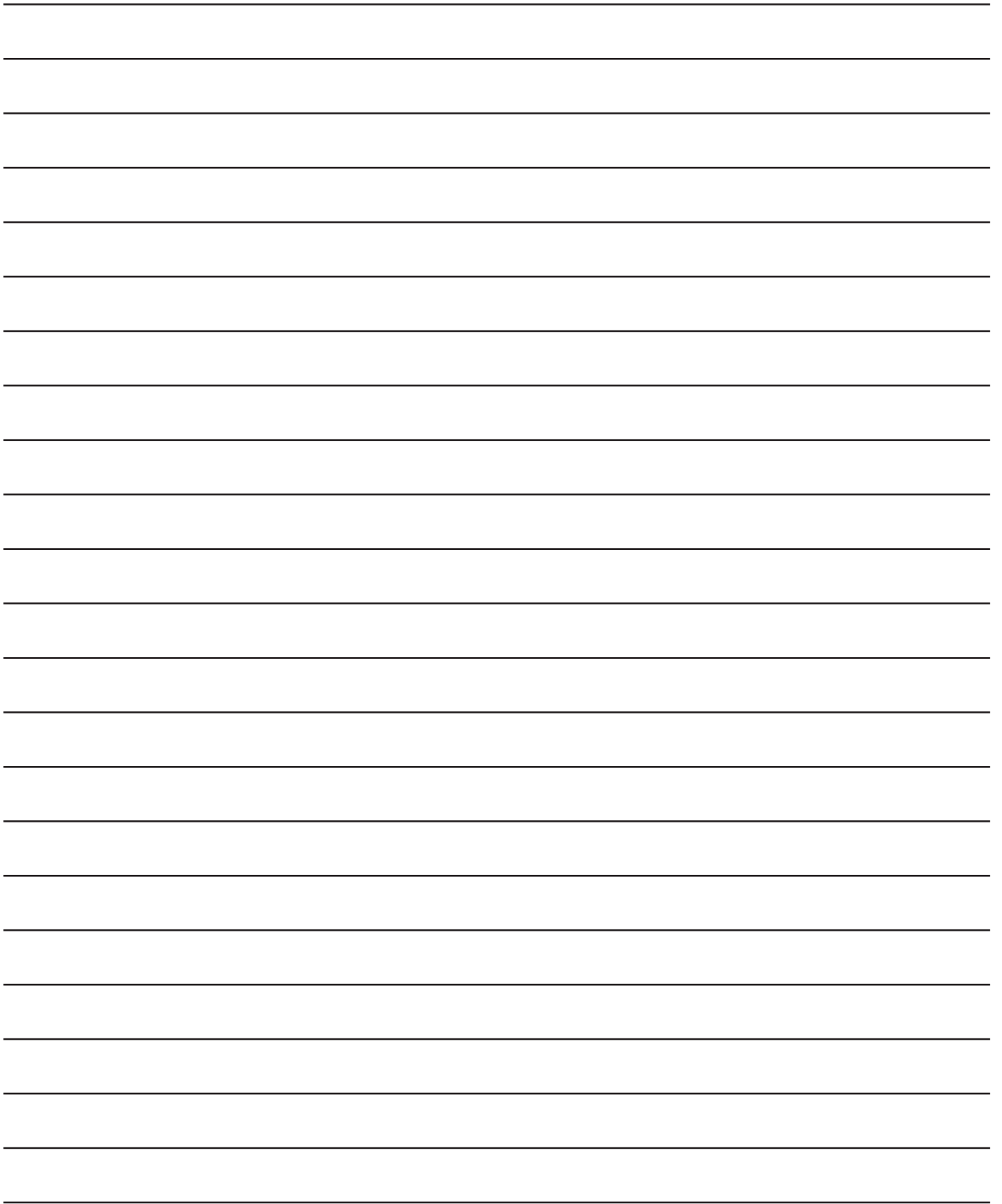
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City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Below, please write any comments or feedback related to information provided in this newsletter. Please include additional sheets of paper as necessary. When complete, please fold this form in half, showing the preprinted address on the outside, tape it closed (no staples please), add postage, and drop in the mail.

Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



Name: _____

Address: _____

ADD
POSTAGE
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