Old Rag Pilot Program

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2022 Annual Report Summary

Old Rag Mountain

- One of SHEN's most popular hiking destinations
- Designated Wilderness
  - Natural
  - Solitude
  - Primitive recreation opportunities
- Ecologically important
  - Rare plant communities
- Striving to preserve park resources and provide a highly valued visitor experience

2019 Old Rag Visitor Use Study

- Evaluated visitor experience

  - Trail use densities

  - Impacts to visitor experience

  - Suggested thresholds for "people at one time" at the Chute and Summit

- Methods

  - Trail counters

  - Visitor surveys

  - GPS tracking

  - Simulation modeling

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2022 Old Rag Pilot Program

- Goals
  - Improve visitor experience
  - Increase visitor safety
  - Minimize impacts to natural resources
- Ticketing system through recreation.gov
  - March 1 – Nov 30 (275 days)
  - 800 daily ticket limit
    - 400 available 30 days in advance
    - 400 available 5 days in advance
  - $1 per ticket
  - Limit four tickets per person per day

2022 Old Rag Pilot Program

- Data collection and monitoring

  - Ticket counts

  - Trail counters

  - Monitoring "people at one time" at the Chute and Summit

  - Parking lot capacity monitoring

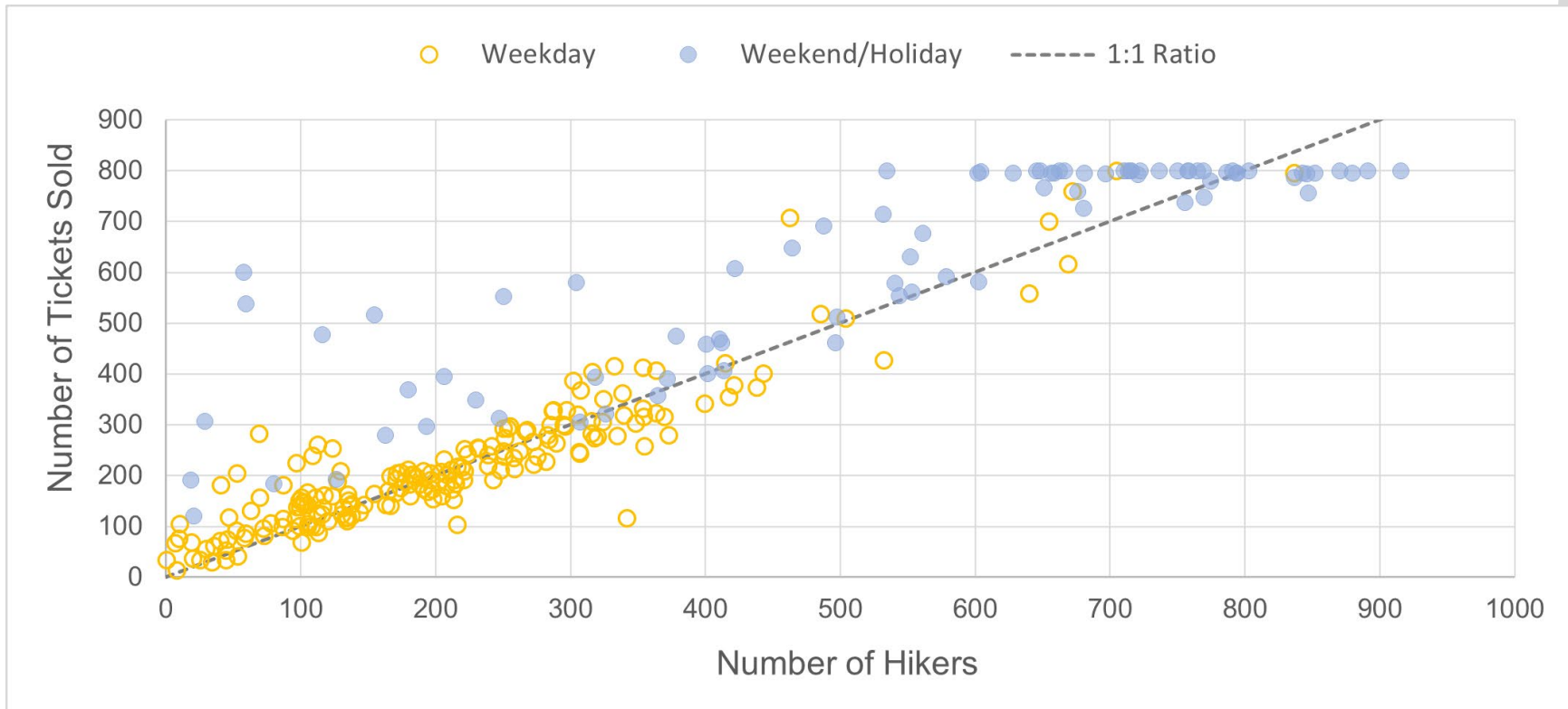 - Methods similar to 2019 Visitor Use Study

Tickets and Visitor Use

2022 Old Rag Use (Mar-Nov)

- 95,444 total tickets sold
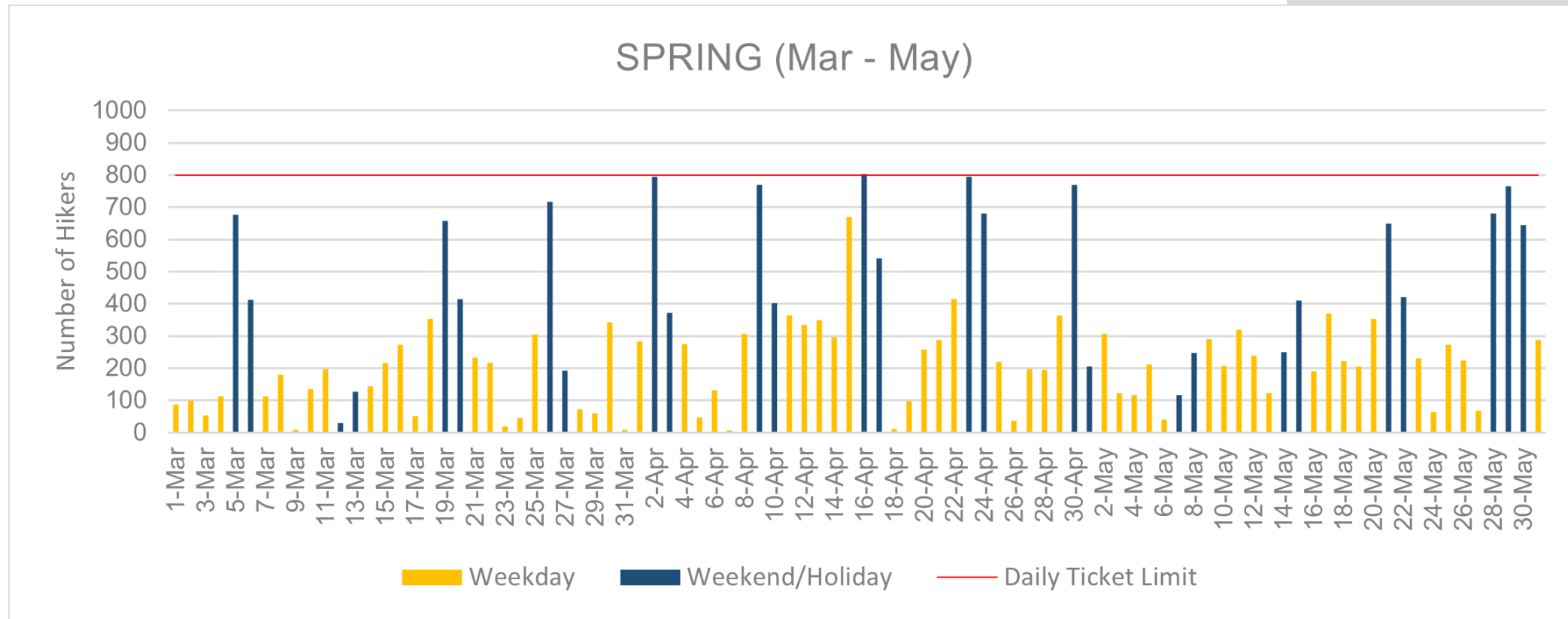
- 86,395 hikers counted

Sold Out Days

- 20 out of 275 days sold out (7%)

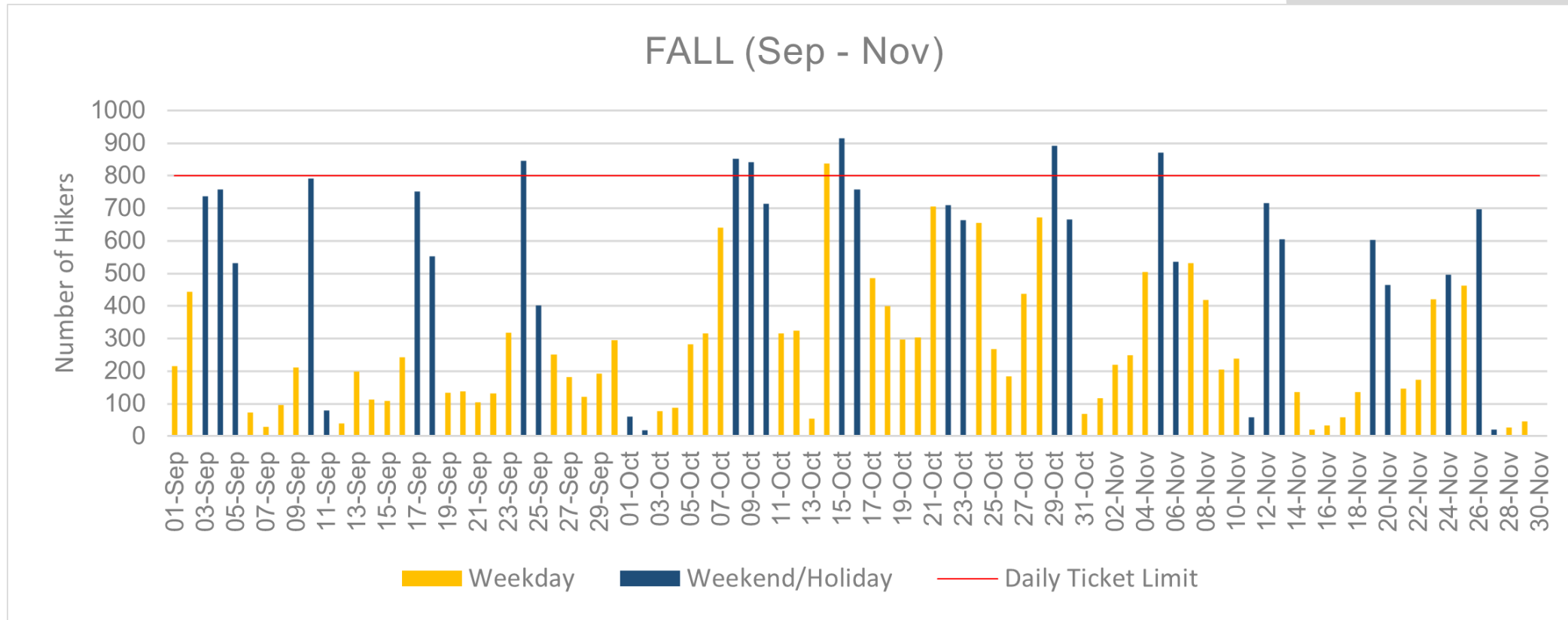| Season	Weekday	Weekend/Holiday	Total
Spring	0	6	6
Summer	0	0	0
Fall	1	13	14

Seasonal Use Pattern

- Weekends & holidays accounted for ~50% of total use

SPRING (Mar - May)

Seasonal Use Pattern

- Weekends & holidays accounted for ~50% of total use

SUMMER (Jun - Aug)

Legend: Weekday | Weekend/Holiday | Daily Ticket Limit

Seasonal Use Pattern

- Weekends & holidays accounted for ~50% of total use

FALL (Sep - Nov)
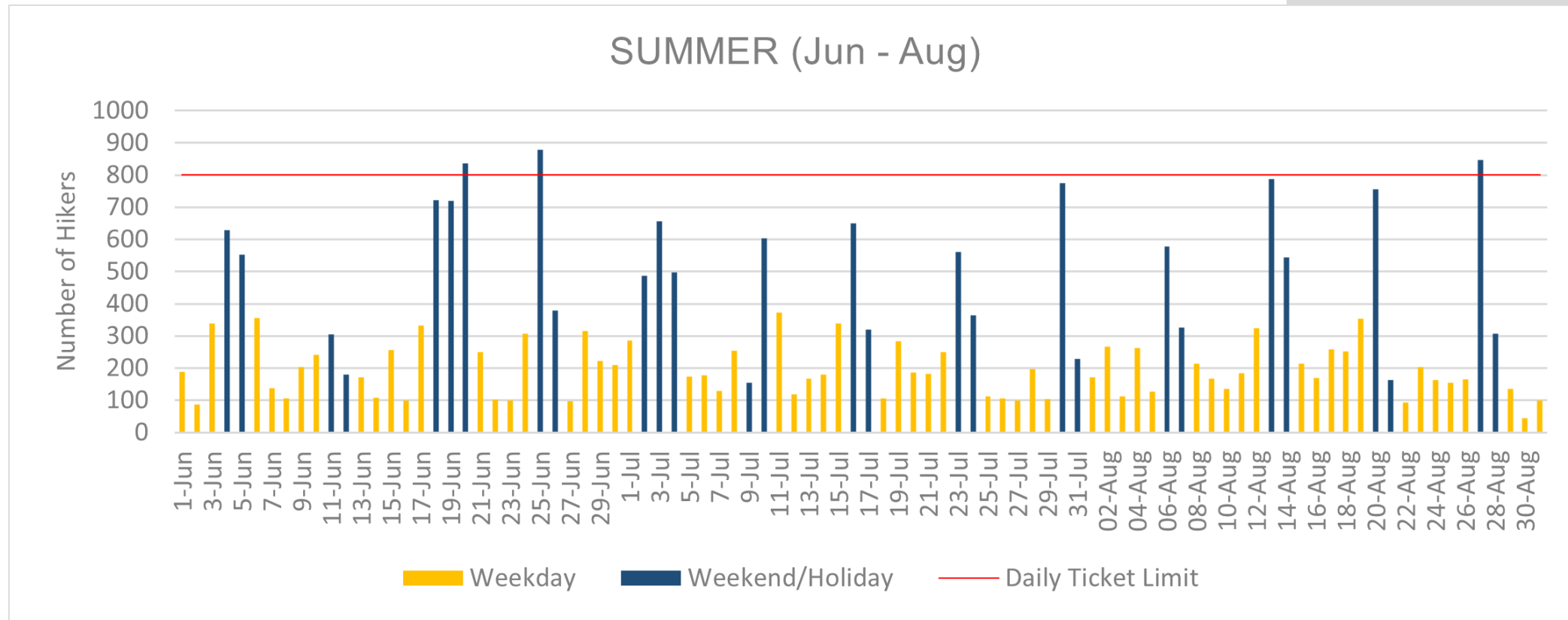
Legend: Weekday (yellow), Weekend/Holiday (blue), Daily Ticket Limit (red line)
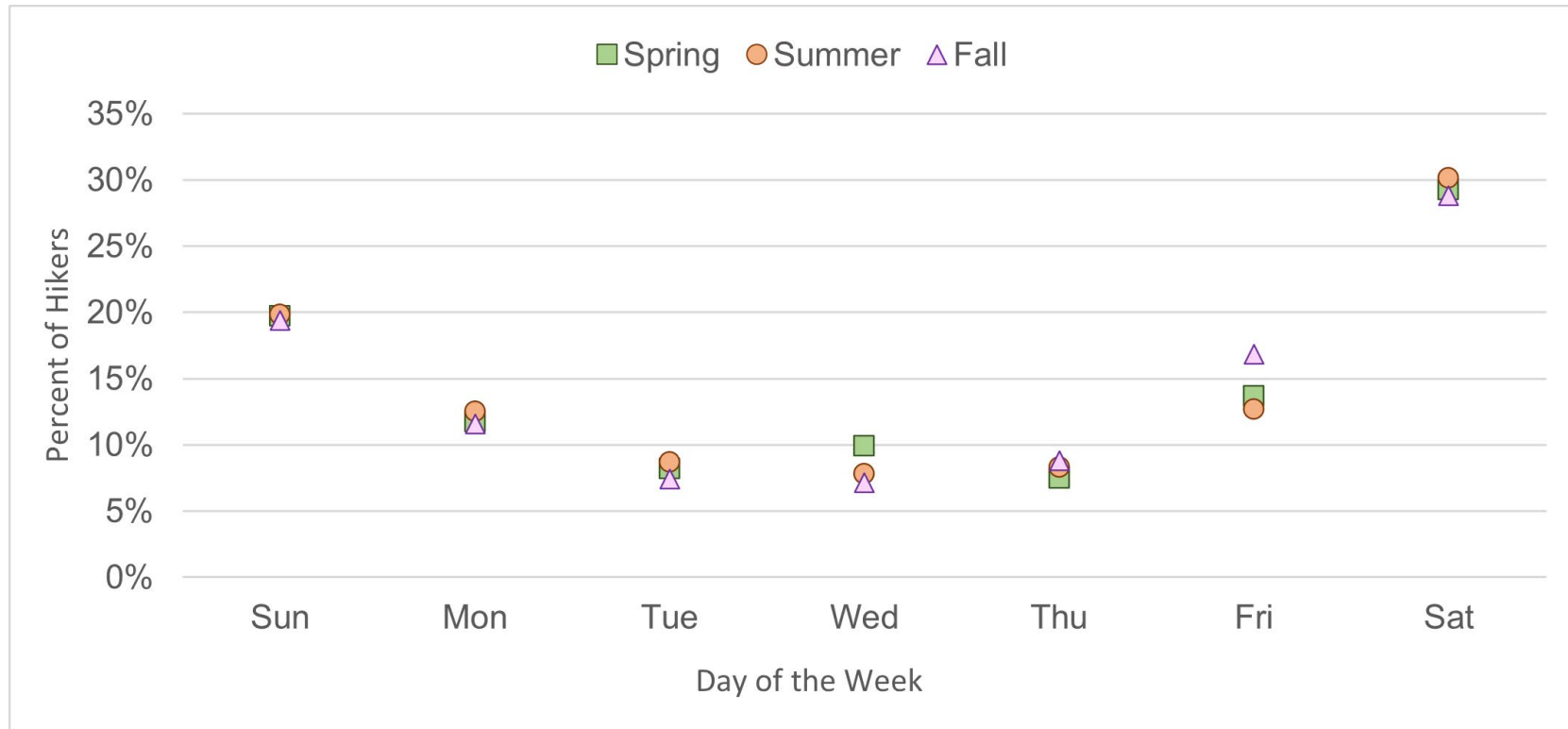
Monthly Use

- March averaged the least daily hikers, while October averaged the most
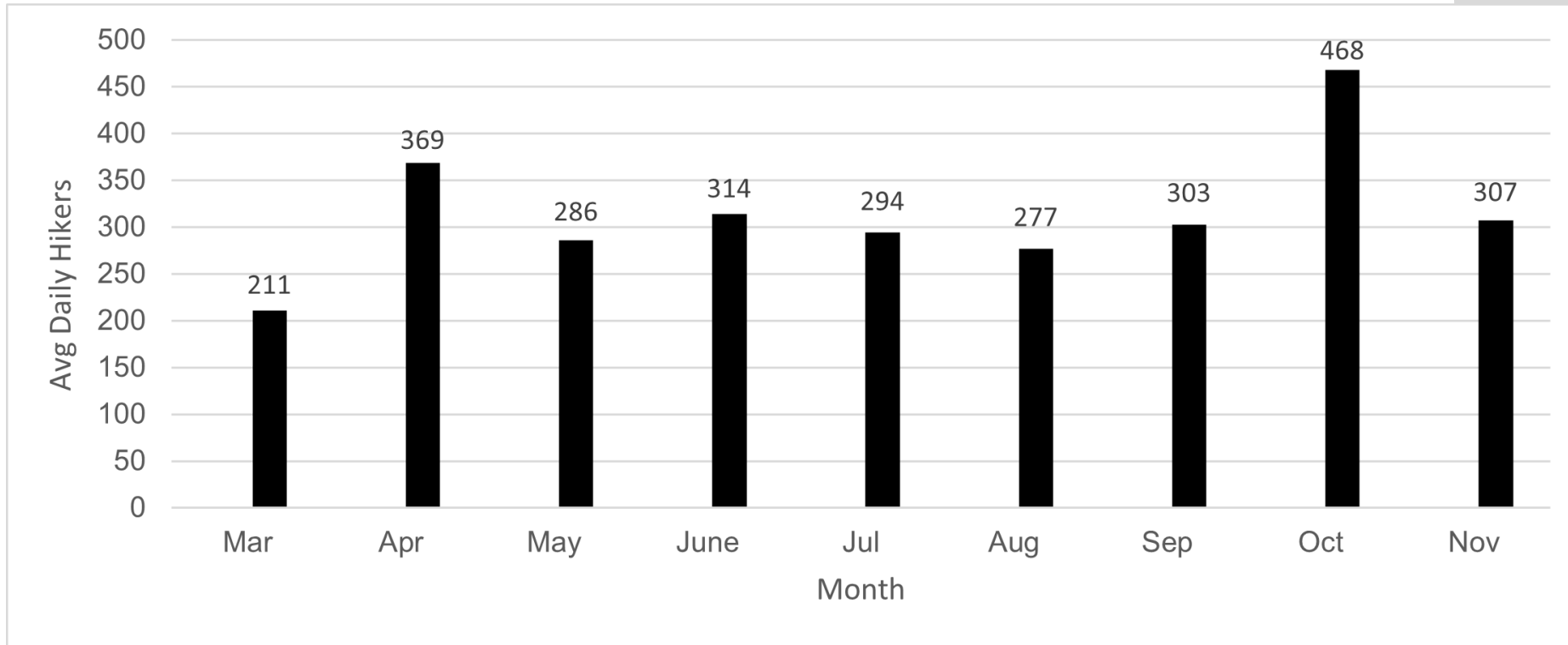
Weekly Use

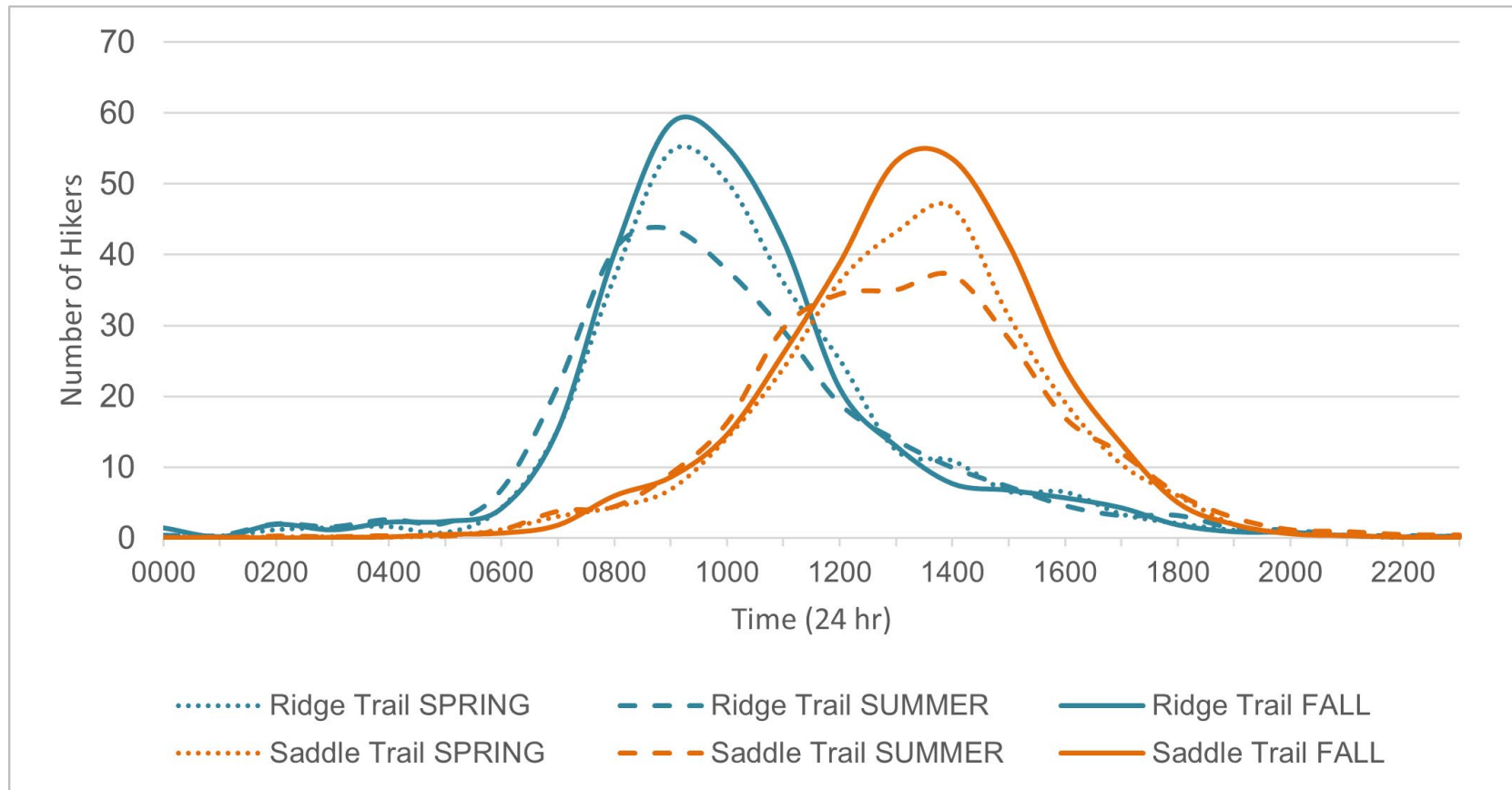- Lowest use occurred mid-week
- Saturdays accounted for ~30% of all use

Daily Use

- Peak use on Ridge Trail occurred between 9:00–10:00 am
- Peak use on Saddle Trail occurred between 2:00 – 3:00 pm

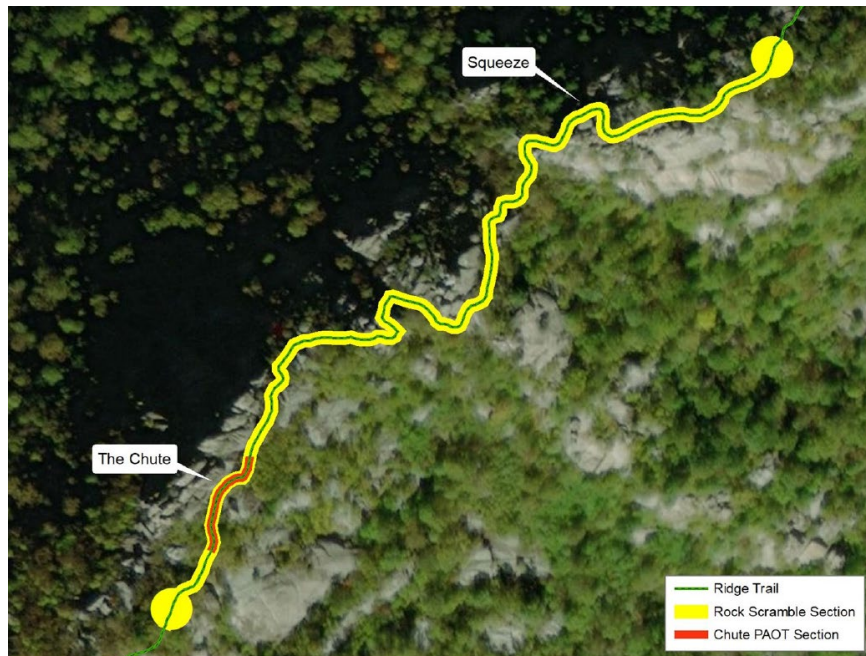# Capacity and Visitor Experience

- People at one time (PAOT) counts
  - The Chute
  - Summit viewscape

- Suggested thresholds from 2019 study
  - Chute = 49 PAOT
  - Summit viewscape = 20 PAOT

Chute PAOT*

- Suggested threshold = 49 PAOT

- Threshold was reached/surpassed on one day during ticketing season (Oct. 22)

*People at One Time

	DATE	DAY TYPE	WEATHER	CHUTE PAOT MEAN	CHUTE PAOT MAX
2019		Weekday	no rain	17	44
	10/12	Weekend/Holiday	no rain	47	100
	10/13	Weekend/Holiday	light rain	46	93
	10/14	Weekend/Holiday	no rain	64	125
	10/17	Weekday	rainy	10	50
	10/18	Weekday	no rain	42	63
	10/19	Weekend/Holiday	no rain	99	196
	10/21	Weekday	rainy	9	23
	10/23	Weekday	rainy	11	22
2022	10/3	Weekday	partly cloudy	1	2
	10/7	Weekday	sunny	8	15
	10/10	Weekend/Holiday	sunny	14	32
	10/12	Weekday	sunny	3	8
	10/14	Weekday	sunny	15	24
	10/16	Weekend/Holiday	partly cloudy/sunny	12	21
	10/19	Weekday	sunny/overcast	2	6
	10/22	Weekend/Holiday	sunny	34	99
	10/24	Weekday	sunny	9	25
	10/30	Weekend/Holiday	sunny	12	21

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Summit Viewscape PAOT*

- Suggested threshold = 20 PAOT

- Threshold was reached/surpassed on seven days during ticketing season

*People at One Time

	DATE	DAY TYPE	WEATHER	SUMMIT VIEWSCAPE PAOT	
				MEAN	MAX
2019	10/11	Weekday	no rain	11	40
	10/12	Weekend/Holiday	no rain	21	59
	10/13	Weekend/Holiday	light rain	14	37
	10/14	Weekend/Holiday	no rain	15	33
	10/17	Weekday	rainy	1	18
	10/18	Weekday	no rain	4	16
2022	10/3	Weekday	partly cloudy/overcast	1	6
	10/7	Weekday	sunny	12	19
	10/10	Weekend/Holiday	sunny	10	18
	10/12	Weekday	sunny	4	13
	10/14	Weekday	sunny	6	16
	10/16	Weekend/Holiday	partly cloudy/sunny	4	10
	10/19	Weekday	sunny/overcast	3	11
	10/22	Weekend/Holiday	sunny	11	22
	10/24	Weekday	sunny	10	24
	10/27	Weekend/Holiday	sunny	6	17

Visitor Parking

- Even on busiest days, parking was available in one of the three Old Rag lots

- Overflow lot (lot 3) was needed 47 days

Parking Capacity (Lot 1 & 2)
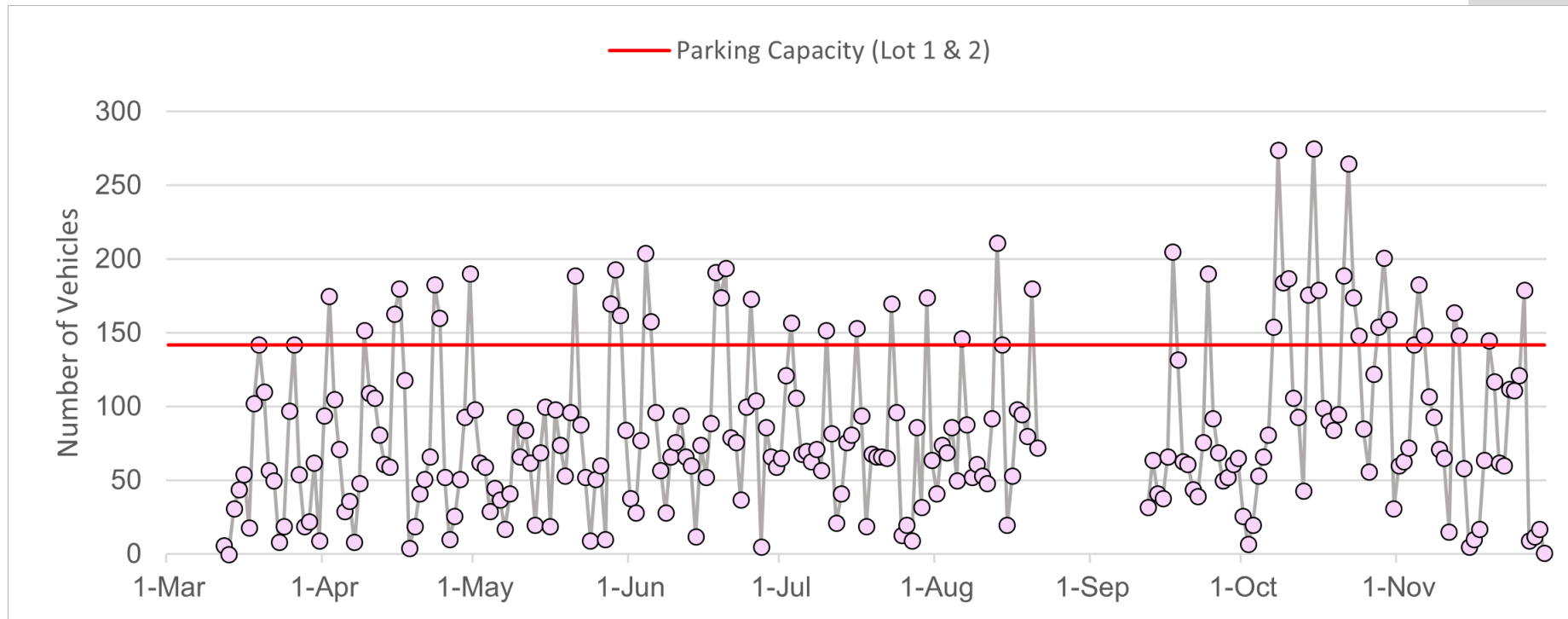
Visitor Safety

- Old Rag area assists and rescues by park staff

YEAR	ASSISTS	RESCUES
2017-2021 AVERAGE	16	24
2022	22 (+27%)	20 (-12%)

Public Feedback Regarding Pilot Program To Date

- Combination of emails, calls, online reviews
  - 234 total comments about the pilot program

#	Comment
82	Ticket system easy to use
76	Liked fewer hikers/smaller crowds
62	Generally favorable of ticket system
43	Frustrated can't purchase tickets on site
30	Felt safer/liked ranger presence
26	Ticket system frustrating/confusing/difficult to plan trip
15	Generally unfavorable of ticket system
5	Ticket system not group/family friendly

Moving Forward

- Old Rag Pilot Program has been extended through the 2023 season

- Park will use data and public input to inform future visitor use management decisions of Old Rag

- Public comment now open through May 16th:
  - https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Old-Rag-Pilot
  - mail to:
    Shenandoah National Park
    Office of the Superintendent
    3655 U.S. Highway 211 East
    Luray, VA 22835

Questions?

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