

Questions Asked by Members of the Public During Rocky Mountain National Park's Virtual Public Meeting

November 8, 2023

Many of these questions were addressed by park staff during the November 8, 2023 virtual public meeting. The focus of this virtual public meeting was to answer questions specific to the Environmental Assessment and analysis. To see a recording of that meeting, please visit RMNP's Planning, Environment & Public Comment project page at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=100042>.

To see a list of questions related to RMNP's Timed Entry Permit System, visit <https://go.nps.gov/romo/timedentryquestions>

1. Is the NPS aware of the frustrations of both visitors and Estes Park residents with this new system? What has the general response of the public been to the timed entry system?
2. With any future introductions to limiting park access, will park rangers and their families also be limited the same way as the public? If not, why not?
3. I have a lifetime park pass. I think having this pass I should not need a timed entry reservation. Because I have the pass I should have a 'perk' to admittance to the park when I want to enjoy the park. I don't think people having the senior pass would greatly impact the number of people on a daily basis.
4. If you want to be flexible and responsive, why isn't there the ability to open up areas during days when there is less visitors (e.g. bad weather)? I ask because I've personally seen low parking at the park and ride when reservations are still required - as have others.
5. How do we address equity and park entry for those who don't have computer access or ability to manage the fees?
6. Local paper editorial as well as statewide e-letter have warned about the possibility of a year-round timed entry at RMNP as one of the options you are considering. I don't see that in any of these possibilities. Are they referring to the provision where the park can change the period for timed entry based upon annual patterns (which I believe is the case for all the options).
7. Are there efforts to work with Rec.gov to ensure that bots are not taking up reservation permits and then being sold on third-party websites like all-trails?
8. What about driving from Estes Park to Grand Lake in the summer? If one just wants to go to Grand Lake for the day, how is that being managed?

9. Has there ever been any consideration to giving some sort of priority to full-time Estes Park residents?
10. The NPS seems to struggle with having its visitorship look like the diversity of our region and nation. Has any analysis been done that looks at how different populations are advantaged or disadvantaged based on the heavy pre-planning demands of different alternative timed entry approaches?
11. Have you considered a shorter Timed Entry season....say June thru Sept?
12. I visited Yellowstone a couple of years ago when they used the "license plate plan" for visitors. License plates that ended in even/odd numbers got in on certain days, etc. It seemed to work very well there and I'm wondering if that was ever considered as an option for Rocky.
13. Can you describe the conditions the park was experiencing with the highest levels of visitation, before you enacted the pilots? I assume this is why you decided to try managing numbers? Huge kudos, BTW, the park resources seem in better condition now, and I can actually find a place to park and hike without hordes of people!
14. Everything about this process reeks of RMNP what we want you to do to enjoy OUR park. When will you consider abolishing the reservation system entirely as the park survived for years without it?
15. Every time I've been to Grand Lake at Adams Falls I have seen numbers of people turned away when the parking lot is almost entirely empty. How is that possibly pushing people to other portions of the park?
16. Could the no show numbers be because recreation.com does not provide for cancellation of timed entry?
17. What about 9-year-olds that wants to hike to Sky Pond, Black Lake, and other areas that make it impossible later in the day which are most reservation openings. Is having them wake up at 4am the appropriate way to address this?
18. Has it occurred to ANY of you that some people can only come to the park at the last moment?
19. Any discussion of increasing the percentage of permits held for release at 5 pm the day before? Going from 25% to 35% or more? As Denver locals, we don't make our decision to visit months in advance as do the out of staters.
20. How is degraded natural resources quantitatively measured? I have hiked 100-200 miles of during the summer and the trails have never been in better condition.

21. How is the visitor experience quantitatively measured? Can you publish the data that has driven the implementation of the time entry system with regard to poor visitor experiences?
22. Outside of numbers showing the plateauing of visitors throughout the year at RMNP during the times of the timed entry enforcement, are there any details and metrics to show the positive or negative impact that time entry and other limitations have had on the park, wildlife, and community?
23. How have you gathered and socialized comments from all the people who did not get into the park?
24. How low does visitation have to go before the NPS feels they have achieved lowering the visitation?
25. I have read chapter 3, which has been referenced several times for getting data in answering questions, and I am NOT finding any data. Can you provide the web address?
26. If publicly shareable, could you please share the anticipated timeline for the permanent plan implementation?
27. Do you expect to start implementing changes (if that's the plan you choose) for next summer?
28. For all options presented. What would be the lead time on when permits/entry reservations would be available to book? I live in Pittsburgh but try to make it to RMNP every year to hike. Thinking about how availability of permits/reservations would impact booking travel and planning travel. Thanks!
29. Explain why you keep calling reservations "pilot" year after year.
30. Most people interpret "pilot" as temporary, but NPS seems to use it as a "permanent, but slightly changeable" This is not quite the same.
31. How is the NPS defining a pilot program?
32. Can you please share your thoughts on BLRC ecosystem restoration? Is there a visitor threshold that actually fosters ecosystem restoration there? I appreciate this is a very studied area and not a "sacrifice zone" of course.
33. Can we arrive at a more reasonable entry time for Bear Lake Road?

34. Can the Bear Lake Parking Lot Is Full sign be more accurate and up to date? Sometimes it is true, others it is not.
35. Why does the Bear Lake corridor begin before Moraine Park? It reduces access to the Fern and Cub Lake trails.
36. Have you considered restructuring the 2 RMNP access areas (bear Lake and Rest of the Park) into 3? The current Bear Lake area covers much more than just Bear Lake to include some areas not as busy. These areas should be either in a separate area or moved into the "Rest of the Park" area. This includes areas such as Moraine Park and its trails.
37. Is it necessary to include Sprague Lake in the Bear Lake Corridor reservation system?
38. What were the results of allowing BLC re-entry after 2pm with a pass? Do you think that will be continued in the alternatives B,C,D?
39. Why would number of permits be reduced so much under Alt C compared to B? Would all the reduction be in permits for rest of park?
40. For alternatives B, C, and D, do you anticipate any change (relative to the pilot) in either: (1) the number of slots available at Bear Lake Corridor in each 2-hour window or (2) the percentage of slots at Bear Lake Corridor that are set aside for day-before reservations?
41. If more than 50% of the public comments in support of Alternative A, will the Park respect the public's desires--to have unimpaired access to the park on a first-come, first-serve basis?
42. Can details still be added to the alternatives? Can the alternatives still be "tweaked"? Some of us are coming into this at this phase in the process and missed the opportunity to help craft the alternatives in the last phase.
43. Why not enforce no parking on the side of the road for Fern/Cub Lake Road as it should be and is signed in many areas?
44. Who does alternative A most negatively impact? Rangers, managers, visitors wilderness? Why?
45. I'm concerned about the potential increase in commercial use. I don't believe that just because you have a lot of money to pay for a guide, you should get access preference over the general public. How do you propose to manage and limit commercial use?

46. The potential plan for a permit for Longs Peak is extremely vague, are there any details publicly to be shared for what the requirements would be? Can that plan be specific so it isn't something the community sees as overstepping in the recreation in the park?
47. Has the park service taken into consideration the impacts of a reservation system for Longs Peak potentially creating a sense of scarcity which would trigger visitors to attempt the peak in spite of poor weather conditions to "bag the summit" while they have a permit thus increasing the risk of SAR efforts?
48. What does it mean to be designated a wilderness? What are the usage restrictions in a wilderness? Is a back-country permit needed in a wilderness?
49. This plan addresses visitor access to the park in general (frontcountry). How does it/will it dovetail with day use management in the wilderness?
50. Has there been any considerations regarding accessibility behind these proposed changes?
51. Regarding, the long lines at major entries...naming Beaver Meadows, the line is consistently a mile or more long every weekend day and holidays well past the summer season. I'm concerned about emissions of all those cars. A mile of cars is about 528 in total. Six hours of idling of that many cars is over 160,000lbs of CO2 emissions. All that is in a concentrated location. How is your planning/options going to factor this in? Side note: I've been personally told when riding a bike into the park that I needed to wait in the car line (usually longer than 30 minutes) and breath in exhaust. How will your plans address impacts to people and animals around the pollution zones?
52. It seems there is a lot of pollution created at the entrance stations, because it takes so long to get through. Will this improve?
53. I don't see how any of the alternatives could help if we can't find better ways to manage the entry line speed/staffing/messaging - how do plans about line management fit into the alternatives?
54. How can entry lanes be better managed by staff to avoid surprised guests who did not read signs, who take time accepting and understanding a turnaround? Can there be a lane for park passholders?
55. In alternatives that include timed entries, the past shows that lines through the 2-3 booths as major entries are 30+ minutes throughout the much of the time windows. All of the alternatives seem to assume NO improvement to the real problem...processing of people. Why do we not see technology, innovation, and infrastructure improvements? They all assume fixed

transactional systems, which seems shortsighted. The issue at booths is significantly bottleneck, not park capacity.

56. Does the park staff entrance stations more fully at peak entry times?
57. Will we ever have the automated pass lanes operational again? As an Estes Park resident who visits the park regularly, it's frustrating to sit in line behind visitors who have to purchase a pass and ask questions of the person at the entrance booth.
58. With the massive traffic Zion sees - and even more constriction in many ways - why is there not a more thorough option for getting to bear lake corridor, alluvial fan, and deer mountain (popular areas) through the use of buses? What makes this more difficult in Rocky?
59. Any thoughts on having a shuttle bus up Trail Ridge Road to the Alpine visitor center? One that stops at various points on the way up and down.
60. People ride a long bus route on Going to The Sun Road in Glacier National Park, why not Rocky?
61. Table 3 of the Environmental Assessment proposes a visitor capacity of 300 people at one time in Wild Basin, 420 people at one time at the Alpine Visitor Center, and 580 people per day on Longs Peak. This definition of capacity is based partly on what are called 'desired conditions' and seems to be a departure from the Timed Entry system where capacity is determined by the number of available parking spaces. The EA says indicators like 'Encounter Rates' and 'People per Viewscape' will be used through 'adaptive management' policies and that 'these capacities will be identified in subsequent planning.' This appears to mean that under the Park's preferred alternatives for permanent reservations, reservations could be required--or areas temporarily closed--not based on physical parking capacity but subjective factors about how the Park thinks people should be enjoying it. Isn't the preferred alternative proposed a vast expansion of reservation requirements, resulting in diminished visitation opportunities for the public--an impairment of the public's rights today.
62. Are the Visitor Capacity numbers public information? Are these capacity numbers posted in the area? How are these determined and calculated?
63. With all the concern with pollution, garbage, and other issues with high visitation (completely understandable) what enforcement AND education has been increased over the last 5 years? Personal experience: I have seen no increased education as a visitor since when we began visiting 10 years ago. Is there a reason for that?
64. On page 2-4 there is a map with no legend to the colors, please explain.

65. It appears the "Leave a Comment" link is not active on the page <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=100042>. Maybe I am missing something?
66. I am doubtful that you have listened to comments in the past, so how can I be ensured that all comments are read and valued? Are all the comments made public?
67. Who approved the punch passes? When can we see the email trail for that entire program?
68. What key learnings have been shared by other national parks piloting a TEPS that are helpful in ROMO planning?
69. When do we get to meet the new Superintendent?
70. Can Universities help you analyze input?