

**Canyon De Chelly National Monument Air Tour Management Plan  
Planning, Environment, & Public Comment – Frequently Asked Questions**

**Topics on this page and related links:**

- [Canyon De Chelly National Monument ATMP FAQs](#)
- General ATMP FAQs:
  - [FAA Website](#)
  - [NPS Website](#)
- **Why is there an Air Tour Management Plan being developed for Canyon de Chelly National Monument?**
  - Although the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000 (the Act) provided an exemption to develop an air tour management plan (ATMP) for parks with 50 or less commercial air tours per year, in 2017 the NPS withdrew the exemption for Canyon de Chelly National Monument to protect park resources and values, park visitor use and enjoyment, and to allow the Navajo Nation and its members an opportunity to have input on the planning process.
- **Who authorized air tours over Canyon de Chelly?**
  - The Act requires that commercial air tour operators conducting or intending to conduct commercial air tours over a unit of the National Park System apply to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for authority to undertake such activity. Under the Act, the FAA was required to grant Interim Operating Authority (IOA) for commercial air tours over the Park and adjacent Tribal lands that are outside of the Park but within ½-mile of its boundary as a temporary measure until an ATMP could be established. IOA terminates 180 days after the date on which an air tour management plan is established.
- **Was the granting of IOA subject to review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act?**
  - No, the FAA's granting of IOA was not subject to NEPA review or compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because it was a non-discretionary agency action mandated by Congress.
- **How many air tour flights are currently reported over Canyon De Chelly National Monument every year?**
  - Based on data from 2017-2019, one operator flew an average of 43 commercial air tours over Canyon De Chelly National Monument every year. There are four commercial air tour operators that have Interim Operating Authority (IOA) to fly up to 175 flights per year.
  - As of January 1, 2013, all operators with IOA or with commercial air tour allocations under an ATMP or voluntary agreement are required to report operations and other information semi-annually to the NPS and the FAA. These semi-annual reports are due no later than 30 days after the end of each six-month period.

- IOA does not provide any operating conditions (e.g., routes, altitudes, time of day, etc.) for air tours other than an annual limit. IOA for this Park was published in the Federal Register (FR) on October 7, 2005 (70 FR 58,778).
- **What will an ATMP do for Canyon de Chelly National Monument ?**
  - The Draft ATMP would prohibit commercial air tours within the ATMP planning area (below 5,000 feet altitude above ground level over the Park and within ½ -mile of the Park's boundary). This will protect Tribal trust cultural and natural resources and values that are within the Park, and the lifeways, traditional cultural practices, and sacred lands of the approximately 80 families that live in and around the Park.
- **What is the current status of the ATMP?**
  - The FAA and the NPS will initiate a 30-day public comment period from the date of publication in the Federal Register during which the public, agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties may provide comments, suggestions and input on the Draft ATMP and Draft Environmental Assessment (EA).
  - The agencies are hosting an in-person public meeting and an on-line public meeting for the Park as part of compliance with the Act and the agencies' associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance process. Both meetings will convey the same information. The in-person meeting will be held on April 16, 2024, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM MT, and the on-line meeting will be held on April 17, 2024, from 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM MT.
  - Hard copies of the Draft ATMP and the Executive Summary of the Draft EA will be available at the Chinle, Tsaile-Wheatfields, Lukachukai, Nazlini, and Sawmill Chapter Houses to provide the greatest opportunity for public participation and comment. Notice of availability of the Draft ATMP and Draft EA and instructions on how to comment will also be published in the Federal Register.
- **How do I submit a comment(s) on the Draft ATMP and Draft EA for Canyon De Chelly National Monument?**
  - The public is encouraged to submit official comments on the Draft ATMP and Draft EA through the [NPS PEPC website](#). You can access the Draft ATMP and Draft EA by clicking "Open for Comment" on the left side of the page and then clicking on the link to the Draft ATMP and Draft EA under "Select a document to review and comment". Select the "Comment Now" button to enter your official comments on the Draft EA. Comments will not be accepted by email.
  - The agencies are seeking substantive comments that:
    - specifically describe why something will or will not work,
    - provide new ideas or factual information to correct or adjust assumptions made,
    - present reasonable alternatives other than those described.
  - Comments that merely support or oppose the proposals that provide personal opinions are not considered substantive.
  - Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment (including your personal identifying information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in

your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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

Volpe National Transportation Systems Center  
Kaitlyn Rimol, V-326  
Attn: Canyon De Chelly National Monument ATMP  
220 Binney Street  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142

- **What are commercial air tours that are subject to the ATMP?**

- Commercial air tours subject to the ATMP are powered flights for compensation or hire for the purpose of sightseeing over Canyon De Chelly National Monument or within ½-mile outside the Park's boundary at altitudes below 5,000 feet above ground level (AGL). This is referred to as the ATMP planning area in the Draft EA and as the ATMP boundary in the Draft ATMP.

- **What overflights are not subject to the ATMP?**

- Overflights conducted for other purposes (e.g., commercial jets or military overflights), including to air tours conducted over lands that are greater than ½ mile from the Park boundary or public lands managed by agencies other than the National Park Service are not subject to the ATMP.

- **Will commercial air tours be allowed outside the ATMP planning area?**

- Air tours outside of the ATMP planning area (i.e., at or above 5,000 feet AGL or more than ½-mile outside the Park boundary) are not subject to the Act and, therefore, are not regulated under this ATMP. Air tour operators could potentially fly outside the ATMP planning area if Park feature attractions can still be viewed, or en route to other parks where air tours occur such as Grand Canyon National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

- **How will the ATMP be enforced?**

- Aircraft monitoring and enforcement would still occur under the Act to ensure that commercial air tour operators are complying with the terms and conditions of the ATMP by not conducting tours within the ATMP planning area. The NPS and the FAA would both be responsible for the monitoring and oversight.

- **How was the Navajo Nation involved in the development of the ATMP?**

- The Navajo Nation serves in three roles on this project. First, they are a sovereign, or independent, nation in the nation-to-nation consultation with the agencies. Second, the Navajo Nation was invited to be a cooperating agency, and although no formal acceptance was received, they participated as a cooperating agency and engaged in the development of the ATMP. Finally, the Nation is a consulting party for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

- **How does the ATMP seek to protect cultural resources, protect Tribal lands, properties, ceremonies, or practices?**
  - The elimination of commercial air tours from the ATMP planning area would eliminate commercial air tour flights and routes within the ATMP planning area, the minimal noise impact is expected to be reduced. The elimination of air tours within the ATMP planning area will also reduce the likelihood that an air tour would interrupt traditional practices such as ceremonies.
- **How are air tours outside of the ATMP planning area regulated?**
  - Applicable regulations that govern aviation safety are found at [14 CFR § 136](#), [Appendix A](#) (formerly Special Federal Aviation Regulation 71).
- **What happens after the public review period on a draft ATMP and draft EA?**
  - Agencies will consider comments received on the Draft ATMP and Draft EA and continue consultation with other agencies and Tribal governments, as necessary. A final ATMP and final EA documenting the project's outcomes (including comments received and consultations undertaken) will be developed with ultimate approval resting with the FAA and the NPS.