



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior

Petrified Forest
National Park

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Petrified Forest News Release

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Petrified Forest National Park Seeks Public Comment on Air Tour Management Plan

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS), has initiated development of an Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for Petrified Forest National Park (Petrified Forest), pursuant to the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000.

Two air tour operators currently provide commercial air tours over and within ½ mile of Petrified Forest. Flights originate out of two locations, Santa Fe Municipal Airport and Grand Canyon National Park Airport. Since January of 2003, these two operators have had authority to conduct a maximum combined total of 46 air tours per year, though in recent years, operations have likely been below this level. While the air tour visitor experience varies depending on weather conditions and the desires of the air tour client, the primary attraction for air tour visitors is the viewing experience of the solitude and beauty of the Painted Desert and other geological resources.

An ATMP is being developed to provide measures to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial air tour operations at Petrified Forest, including impacts on natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, and tribal lands. It should be noted that the ATMP has no authorization over other non-air-tour aircraft such as military and general aviation aircraft.

In April 2010, the NPS and FAA held a two-day kickoff meeting at Petrified Forest; minutes may be found at (under "Document List"):

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?parkId=88&projectId=30802>

The purpose of the kickoff meeting was for the FAA and NPS to have the opportunity to share information regarding environmental and other issues to consider in the development of an ATMP. Materials presented at the meeting included information on: park resources; the acoustical environment at Petrified Forest; current and historical air tour operations; and representative air tour flight paths. In addition, Petrified Forest staff provided information regarding sensitive park resources, tribal concerns, and tourism patterns.

The FAA and NPS are now inviting the public, agencies, tribes, and other interested parties to provide comments, suggestions, and input regarding the Petrified Forest ATMP. Generally speaking, the agencies would like to know about any concerns or ideas the public has regarding commercial air tour operations at Petrified Forest and their management. Questions to consider when providing input include: Are there any

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significant issues the agencies need to consider during the planning process? How do you feel air tours will affect natural, cultural, and historic resources at Petrified Forest?

A Public Scoping Document that describes the project in greater detail is available at:

- <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?parkId=88&projectId=30802>
- Alpine Public Library
- Apache County Library District Office
- Casa Malpais Visitor Center and Museum
- Flagstaff City-Coconino Public Library
- Gallup Public Library
- Holbrook Public Library
- Larson Public Memorial Library
- Navajo Community College Library-Tsaile Campus
- New Mexico State University Library
- Northern Arizona University Library-Cline Library
- Northland Pioneer College Library
- Painted Cliffs Welcome Center
- Painted Desert Visitor Center
- Phoenix Public Library
- Roxanne Whipple Memorial Library-Winslow
- Tucson-Pima County Public Library

PUBLIC SCOPING:

Scoping Period: The 30-day scoping period will begin on July 1, 2010. Please submit any written response you may have no later than July 31, 2010.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS:

Written comments on the scope of the Environmental Assessment can be sent electronically via the electronic public comment form on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment System at:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?parkId=88&projectId=30802>

All comments must be submitted within 30 days of date of this notice.

Comments may also be submitted to Keith Lusk (Air Tour Management Plan Program Manager, Special Programs Staff, AWP-1SP, FAA) via mail (P.O. Box 92007, Los Angeles, California 90009-2007).

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