

National Parks Air Tour Management Program



**Federal Aviation
Administration**



**National Park
Service**

**WELCOME – WE WILL
BEGIN SHORTLY**

October 26, 2021



Photo Credits (clockwise from upper left): National Park Service (NPS) photo of Golden Gate National Recreation Area by Alison Taggart Barone, NPS photo of Muir Woods National Monument, NPS photo of Point Reyes National Seashore by Anela Ramos Kopshever, NPS photo of San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

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**Draft Air Tour
Management Plan for:**

**Golden Gate National
Recreation Area,
San Francisco Maritime National
Historical Park,
Point Reyes National Seashore,
and
Muir Woods National Monument**



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Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today.
- Today's meeting focuses on the draft Air Tour Management Plan for four parks: Golden Gate National Recreation Area; San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park; Point Reyes National Seashore; and Muir Woods National Monument.
- We invite you to share your feedback on this draft.
- Specific instructions will be provided throughout this meeting on how to submit your questions.
- This meeting is held pursuant to the National Parks Air Tour Management Act (NPATMA) and its implementing regulations.



Presenters

- **Eric Elmore**, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Environment and Energy, FAA
- **Vicki Ward**, Overflights Program Manager, Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division, NPS
- **Laura Joss**, Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument
- **Alison Forrestel**, Chief of Natural Resources Management and Science, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Muir Woods National Monument



Asking Questions

- Throughout the meeting, we invite you to share your questions. Please submit questions using the Google form posted by the FAA in the chat area of the social media platform you are using (Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube).
- Questions will be addressed at the end of the presentations as part of the Q&A portion.



Submitting Comments

- All written comments for the record must be submitted via the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) site or sent to the mailing addresses listed on the PEPC site.
- These written comments become part of the official record.
- Please note that written comments must be submitted on or before November 15, 2021.



Format of Meeting

- This meeting will be 90 minutes long.
- We will adjourn at 6:00 PM Pacific Time.
- In the event questions are addressed before this end time, we will continue to hold the meeting until this identified end time to allow for any additional questions that might come in.



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**Overview of the National
Parks Air Tour Management
Act (NPATMA) and Air Tour
Management Plans (ATMP)**

October 26, 2021



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NPATMA Overview

- Requires the FAA, in cooperation with the NPS, to develop an ATMP for those parks and Tribal lands where operators have applied to conduct commercial air tours
- Act applies to commercial air tours:
 - Within ½ mile of park
 - Over Tribal lands within or abutting a park
 - Below 5,000 feet altitude above ground level (AGL)



NPATMA Overview

- Does not apply to general aviation, commercial airline, or military flights
- Does not apply to Alaska parks, Grand Canyon National Park, or Rocky Mountain National Park
- Parks with 50 or fewer reported flights per year are exempt from developing an ATMP, unless this exemption is withdrawn by NPS
- If abutting Tribal lands are or may be overflowed, Tribes must be invited as cooperating agencies for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance



NPATMA Overview

- Commercial air tour operators apply for FAA Operating Authority in order to operate over National Park System units and abutting Tribal lands
- Commercial air tour operators fall into two categories:
 - Existing commercial air tour operator
 - New entrant commercial air tour operator



Air Tour Management Plans

The objective of any ATMP is to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent the significant adverse impacts, if any, resulting from commercial air tour operations upon natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, and Tribal lands.



Air Tour Management Plans

An ATMP:

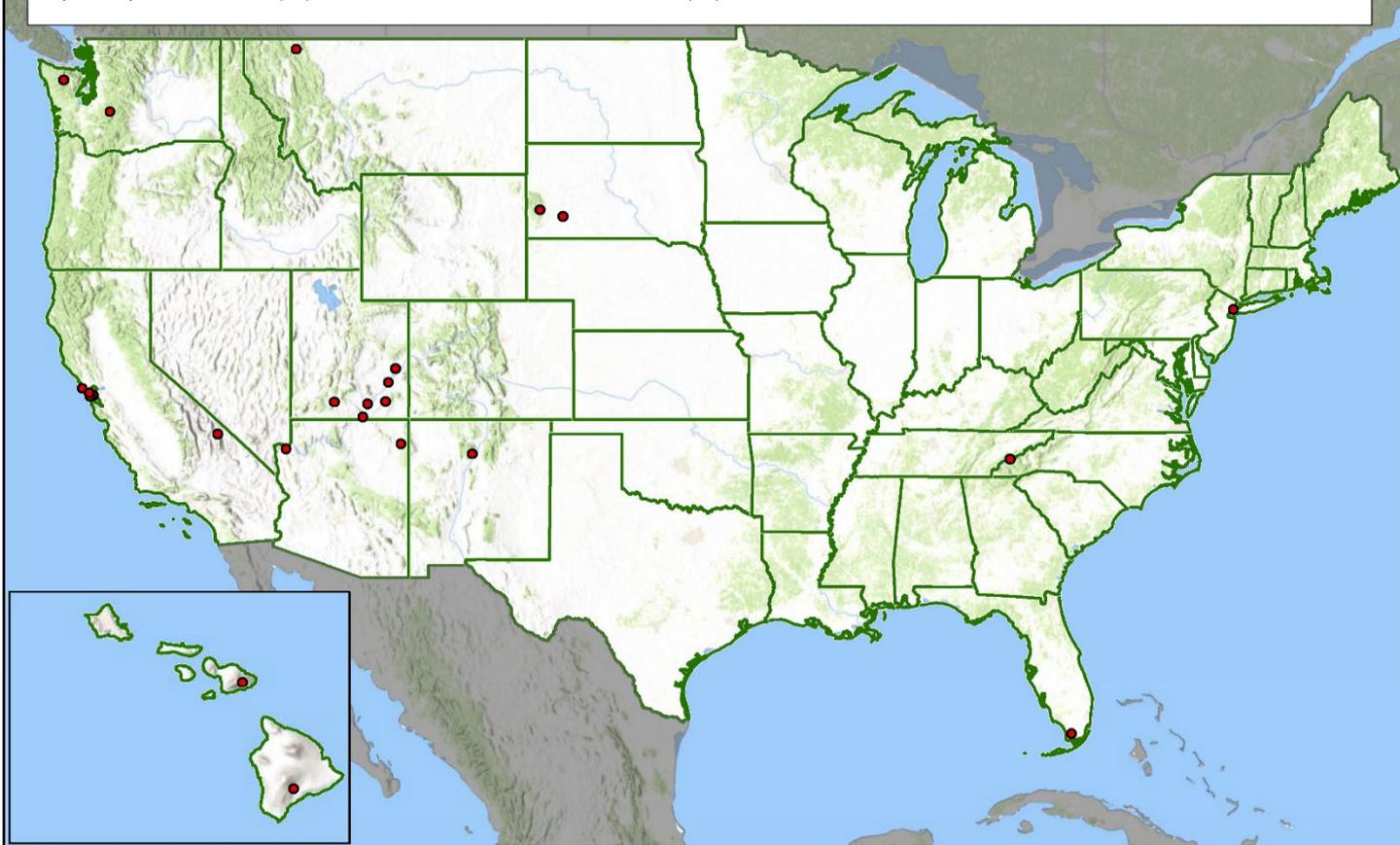
- A. May prohibit commercial air tour operations in whole or in part
- B. May establish conditions for the conduct of air tour operations including routes, altitudes, time-of-day restrictions, restrictions for particular events, maximum number of flights, etc.
- C. Shall apply to all commercial air tour operations within ½ mile outside the boundary of a national park
- D. Shall include incentives for the adoption of quiet aircraft technology
- E. Shall provide for the allocation of opportunities to conduct air tours when the ATMP limits the number of operations
- F. Shall justify and document the need for measures taken pursuant to items (A) through (E), above, and include such justifications in the record of decision



ATMP Parks

24 Parks

- Mount Rainier National Park (WA)
- Olympic National Park (WA)
- Point Reyes National Seashore (CA)
- San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park (CA)
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area (CA)
- Muir Woods National Monument (CA)
- Death Valley National Park (CA/NV)
- Glacier National Park (MT)
- Bryce Canyon National Park (UT)
- Canyonlands National Park (UT)
- Rainbow Bridge National Monument (UT)
- Natural Bridges National Monument (UT)
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (UT)
- Arches National Park (UT)
- Canyon de Chelly National Monument (AZ)
- Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NV/AZ)
- Bandelier National Monument (NM)
- Mount Rushmore National Memorial (SD)
- Badlands National Park (SD)
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park (NC/TN)
- National Parks of New York Harbor (NY)
- Everglades National Park (FL)
- Haleakala National Park (HI)
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (HI)



Draft ATMP for Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Point Reyes National Seashore, and Muir Woods National Monument



Federal Aviation Administration



National Park Service

ATMP Development

- For each ATMP, the agencies will:
 1. Publish the proposed ATMP in the Federal Register;
 2. Hold at least one public meeting;
 3. Comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other legal requirements; and,
 4. Invite Tribes to participate as cooperating agencies for NEPA compliance in cases where Tribal lands are, or may be, overflown.
- The purpose of today's meeting is to review the components of the draft ATMP.

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Golden Gate National Recreation Area: Park Overview & Resources

- 80,000 acres of land, including sites within urban San Francisco and offshore tidal and submerged lands.
- Variety of cultural and natural features for visitors to enjoy, including Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz Island, and Crissy Field.
- The park protects 19 separate ecosystems and numerous watersheds, including more than 1,250 plant and animal species.

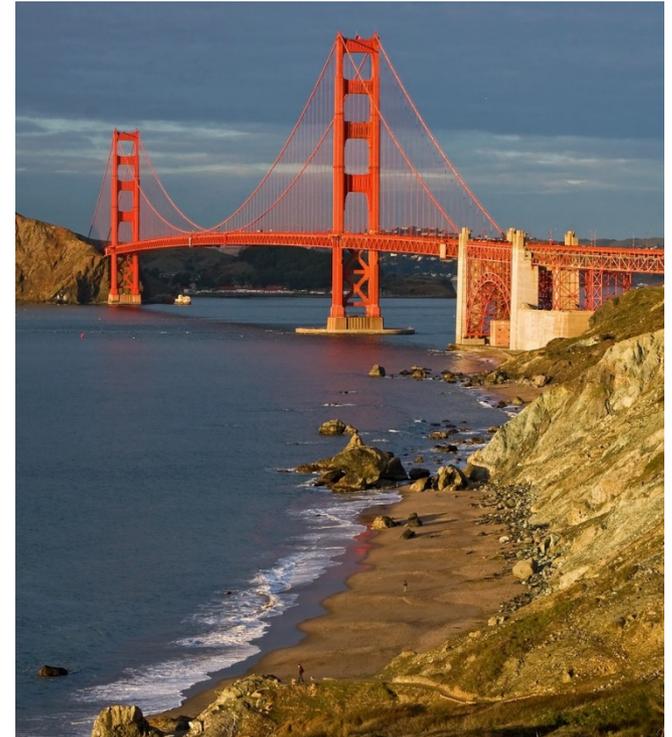


Photo Credit: NPS

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park: Park Overview & Resources

- Promotes the understanding and enjoyment of the nation's West Coast maritime heritage.
- The 50-acre park maintains the largest and most diverse collection of national historic landmark ships in the United States, featuring historic vessels, maritime structures, and exhibits.



Photo Credit: NPS

Muir Woods National Monument: Park Overview & Resources

- The 558-acre monument preserves one of the last remaining ancient redwood forests in the Bay Area, including 380 different plants and animals.
- More than 1 million visitors per year come to enjoy the park, which houses redwoods that are nearly 1,000 years old and more than 250 feet tall.



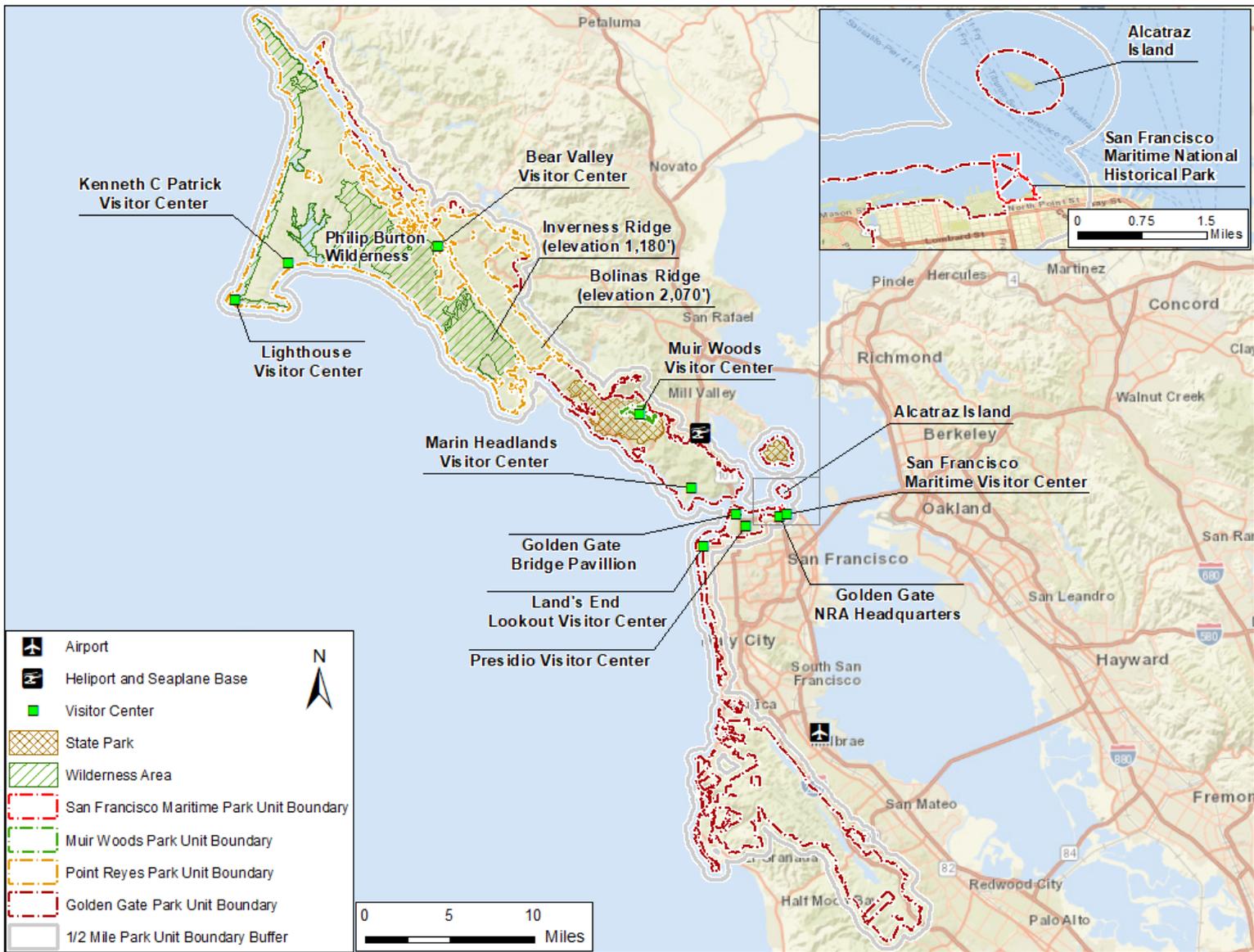
Photo Credit: NPS

Point Reyes National Seashore: Park Overview & Resources

- Encompasses more than 71,000 acres of beaches, coastal cliffs and headlands, marine terraces, coastal uplands, and forests and includes all tide and submerged lands to 0.25 miles offshore.
- Includes two no-take state marine reserves, three special closure areas, and three state marine conservation areas, as well as two ranching historic districts.
- The almost 33,000-acre Phillip Burton Wilderness includes one of only two marine wilderness areas in the national park system.



Photo Credit: NPS Photo by Anela Ramos Kopshever



Existing Air Tour Conditions at the Parks

- Two air tour operators currently hold Interim Operating Authority (IOA) for a total of 5,090 flights each year for each park.
- Annual number of commercial air tours at the parks is limited by the IOA.
- There are no designated parameters on route, time-of-day, or altitude restrictions; no procedures to establish no-fly periods; and no training or education requirements.



Existing Air Tour Conditions at the Parks

Park	Three-Year Average (2017-2019)
Golden Gate National Recreation Area	2,548 flights per year
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park	2,548 flights per year
Point Reyes National Seashore	143 flights per year
Muir Woods National Monument	0 flights per year

Draft ATMP for the Parks

Category	Existing Air Tour Conditions	Draft ATMP
Number of Air Tours Authorized Per Year	IOA: 5,090 at each of the 4 park units. Three Year Average (2017-2019): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Golden Gate National Recreation Area: 2,548 flights per year ▪ San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park: 2,548 flights per year ▪ Point Reyes National Seashore: 143 flights per year ▪ Muir Woods National Monument: 0 flights per year 	2,548 (of these, 143 commercial air tours may fly over Point Reyes National Seashore, and none are authorized to fly over Muir Woods National Monument)
Altitudes	No restrictions, reported altitude currently ranging between 800 feet and 2,500 feet AGL	No lower than 1,500 to 2,500 ft AGL for fixed-wing aircraft, and no lower than 1,000 to 1,500 ft AGL for helicopters, depending on location over the Parks
Aircraft Types	No restrictions	Fixed wing and helicopters at Golden Gate National Recreation Area and San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. Only fixed wing at Point Reyes National Seashore.



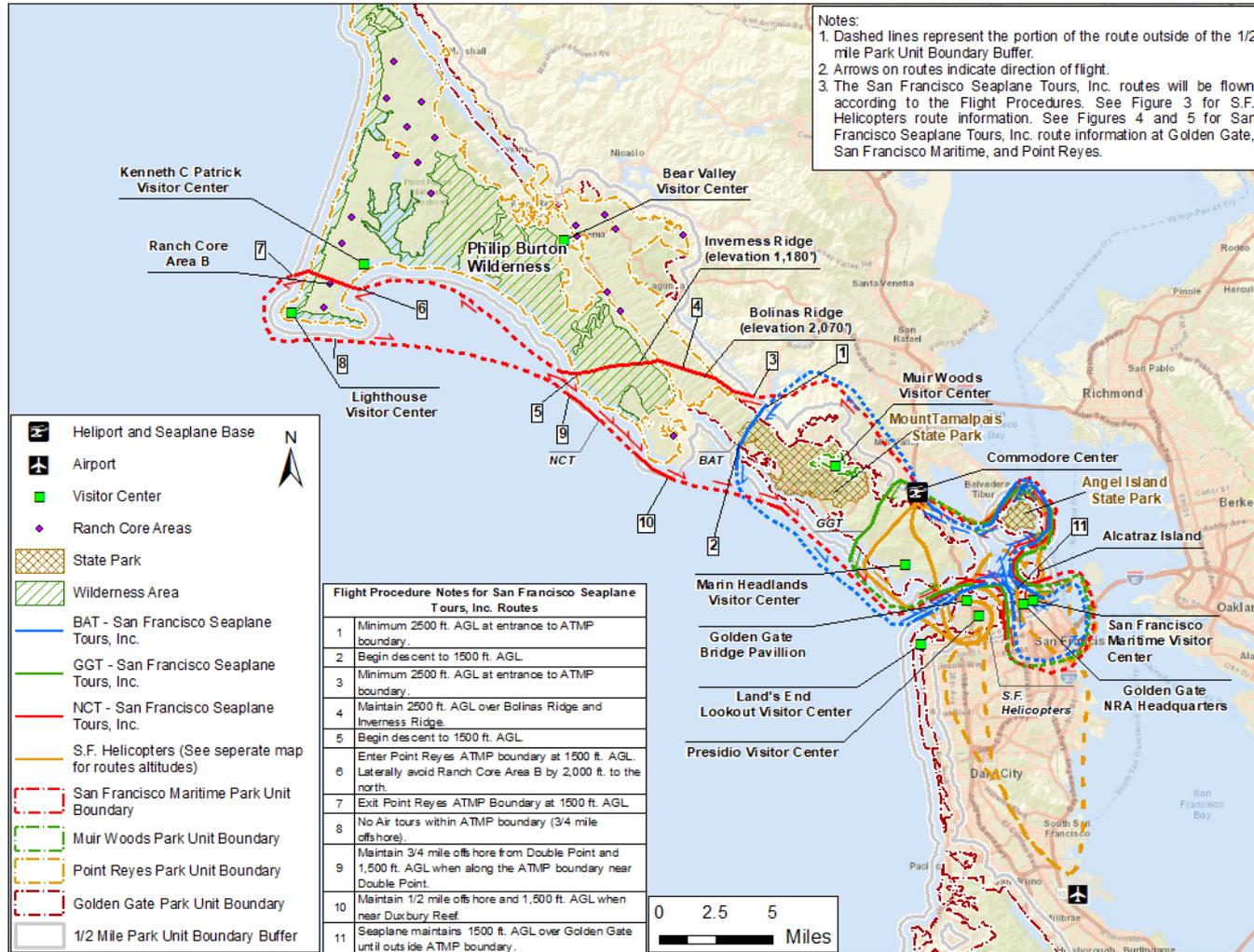
Draft ATMP for the Parks

Category	Existing Air Tour Conditions	Draft ATMP
Time-of-Day Restrictions	No restrictions, may occur at any time	From 9:00 AM until 30 minutes after sunset for tours of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, and from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM for tours of Point Reyes National Seashore
Day-of-Week Restrictions	No restrictions, may occur on any day of the week	The NPS can establish temporary no-fly periods for special events or planned park management.
Required Reporting and Additional Requirements	Semi-annual reporting requirement; no additional requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restrictions for particular events ▪ Restrictions for number of daily air tours ▪ Semi-annual reporting requirement ▪ Operator training when made available by NPS ▪ Option for annual meeting ▪ Specified in-flight communications frequency



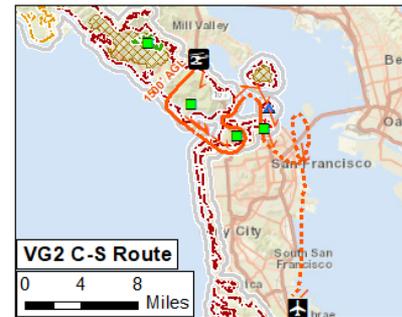
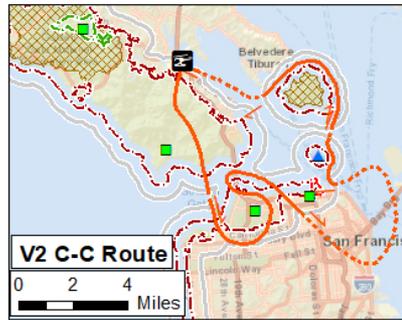
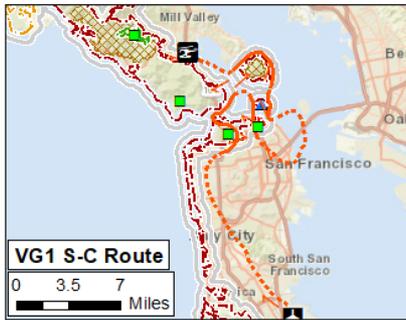
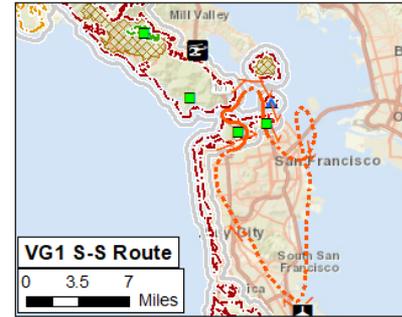
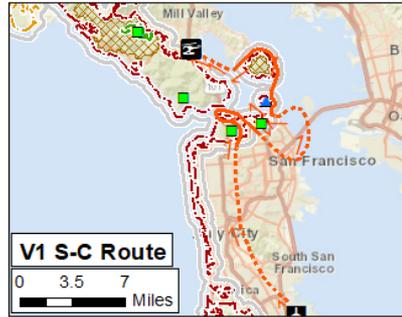
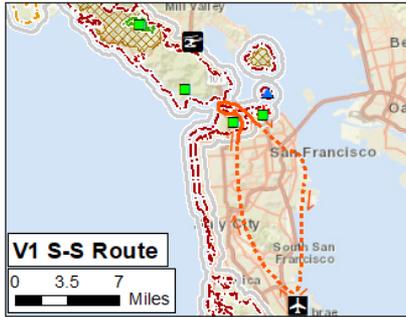
Proposed Air Tour Routes

All Parks, all routes



Proposed Air Tour Routes

Helicopter routes

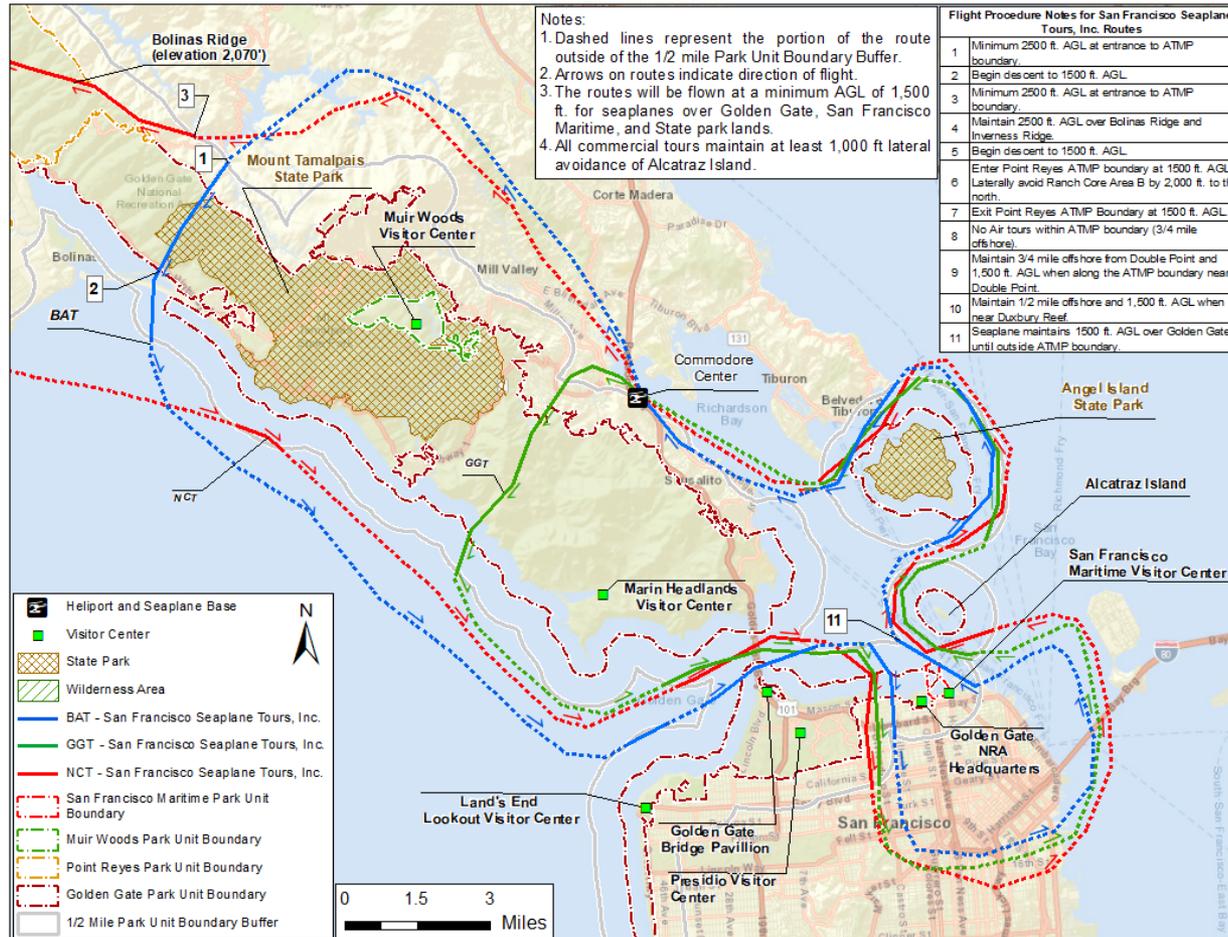


Heliport and Seaplane Base	San Francisco Maritime Park Unit Boundary	
Airport	Muir Woods Park Unit Boundary	
Visitor Center	Point Reyes Park Unit Boundary	
Alcatraz Island	Golden Gate Park Unit Boundary	
State Park	1/2 Mile Park Unit Boundary Buffer	

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.
 3. The routes will be flown at a minimum AGL of 1,000 ft. over Golden Gate and San Francisco Maritime.
 4. All commercial tours maintain at least 1,000 ft lateral avoidance of Alcatraz Island.

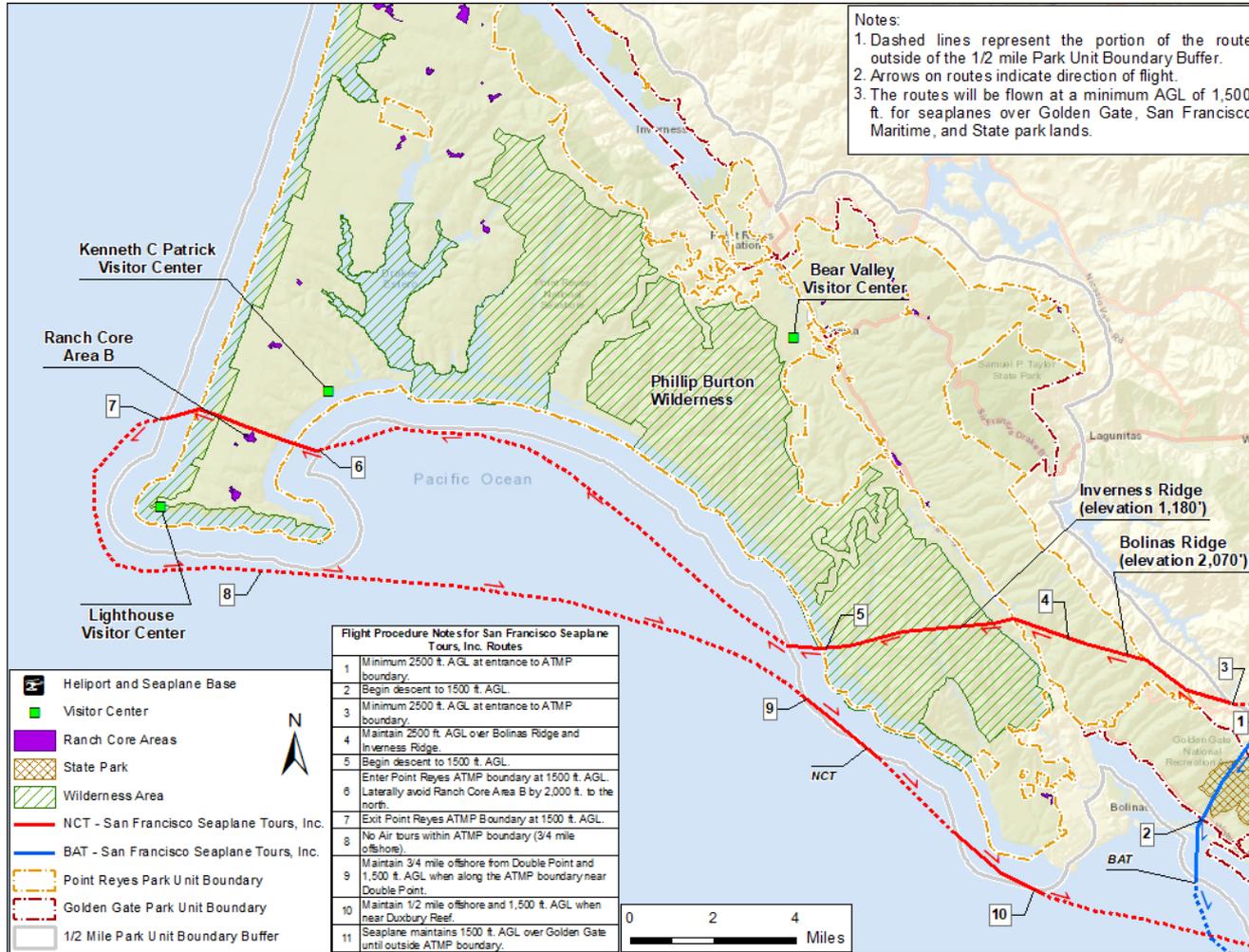
Proposed Air Tour Routes

Seaplane routes at Golden Gate National Recreation Area and San Francisco National Maritime Park



Proposed Air Tour Routes

Seaplane route at Point Reyes National Seashore



Justification for Measures Taken

- **Northern Spotted Owls:** Condition that in certain locations the commercial air tours fly no lower than 1,500 feet AGL is consistent with avoidance recommendations for spotted owls.
- **Wilderness:** Condition that commercial air tours fly no lower than 2,000 feet AGL over land-based wilderness is intended to protect wilderness character and visitor experience.
- **Seabirds and Marine Mammals:** Condition that commercial air tours fly at least 1,000 feet laterally from Alcatraz Island and from known seabird colonies, peregrine falcon nests, and marine mammal haul outs are intended to protect wildlife.
- **Muir Woods:** No air tours currently occur. The ATMP would continue existing conditions and no air tours would be authorized.

National Environmental Policy Act

- The FAA and the NPS are complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in development of the draft ATMP.
- NEPA requires that the agencies:
 - Consider the human and natural environment that could be affected by their action (ATMP).
 - Determine the appropriate level of NEPA review.
 - Prepare associated environmental review documents.
- At this time, the FAA and the NPS have conducted an initial impact analysis and are considering developing the ATMP under an NPS Categorical Exclusion.
- The agencies will consider public comments on the ATMP, information obtained during consultations, and fully assess the environmental impacts before making a final decision on the appropriate level of environmental review.



Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

- The FAA and the NPS are complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in development of the draft ATMP.
- Section 106 includes the requirement that the agencies:
 - Define the Undertaking and Identify Consulting Parties
 - Determine the Area of Potential Effects and Identify Historic Properties
 - Assess Effects to Historic Properties
 - Resolve Adverse Effects, if Any, to Historic Properties
- The FAA and the NPS have initiated consultation with the relevant SHPO, Tribes, and Consulting Parties.



Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

- The FAA and the NPS are complying with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in development of the draft ATMP.
- Section 7 includes the requirement that the agencies:
 - Ensure their actions do not jeopardize the existence of any species listed under ESA or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.
- The FAA and the NPS have completed a preliminary assessment and do not anticipate impacts to listed species or designated critical habitat.

Public Review of the Draft ATMP

- The FAA and the NPS invite comments from the public, agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties on the draft ATMP.
- Comments must be received on or before November 15, 2021.
- Submit your comments:
 - Online: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BayAreaATMP>
 - Via Mail:
National Park Service
Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division
Bay Area ATMP
1201 Oakridge Dr., Suite 100
Fort Collins, CO 80525



Next Steps

- Following the end of the public comment period, the FAA and the NPS will:
 - Review the comments and use these to inform the final ATMP.
 - Continue to coordinate and complete Tribal, Section 106, and Section 7 consultations.
 - Conclude the NEPA process by signing a decision document.
- Upon the completion of the public comment period, consultations, Section 106 and NEPA processes, the ATMP will be finalized. The final ATMP will be available on the FAA and the NPS websites.
- Once the final ATMP is in place, the FAA will update Operations Specifications for each air tour operator.



Questions and Comments

- **During the meeting**, please submit questions using the Google form posted by the FAA in the chat area of the social media platform you are using (Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube).
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- **After the meeting**, please submit your comments for the record on or before November 15, 2021, at:

- Online: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BayAreaATMP>
- Via Mail:

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