

# National Park Service



## GRAND CANYON OVERFLIGHTS

*Restoring natural quiet and  
improving the visitor experience*

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## *Objectives*

- Provide an overview of the two tentative preferred alternatives under consideration by the NPS
- Answer clarification questions associated with these alternatives



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## **Developing NPS Preferred Alternative: Summary of Principles Considered**

- Substantially restore the natural quiet and experience of the park
- Provide a quality aerial viewing experience while protecting park resources and minimizing conflicts with other park visitors
- Respond to Tribal requests
- Provide a reasonable opportunity for visitors to experience the Grand Canyon safely by air tours, with reasonable business opportunities for air tour operators

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## *Process to Select NPS Preferred Alternative*

### **Range of Alternatives (A-F)**

- Developed from Grand Canyon Working Group (GCWG) and public input

### **Alternative G**

- Combines elements from Alternatives A-F along with NPS inputs to achieve objectives for resource protection and aerial viewing opportunities
- Noise modeling resulted in less restoration than anticipated

### **Modified Alternative E**

- Developed to provide superior protection for park resources and ground-based visitor experiences while maintaining excellent aerial viewing opportunities

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## *Key Provisions of Alternative G*

- Reduces aircraft noise and increases restoration of natural quiet in many parts of the park
- Close to current number and type of opportunities for air tour visitors, but includes some changes to reduce noise impacts
- Requires full conversion to Quiet Technology aircraft in 15 years, with incentives to convert (QT tour routes and fee reductions)
- Provides at least one hour quiet time before sunset and after sunrise every day
- Moves routes away from many sensitive areas
- Increases flight altitudes near North Rim viewpoints
- Increases entry and exit points in the east end

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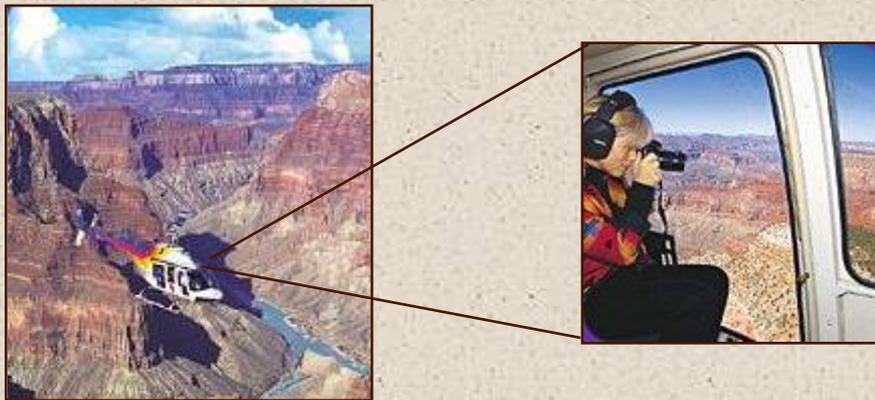
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## *Alternative G - Modified Allocation System*

- Applies to all air tours and related flights
- Continues to provide opportunities for the peak number of operations per operator
- Provides potential for growth in flight operations for quiet technology aircraft if noise does not increase



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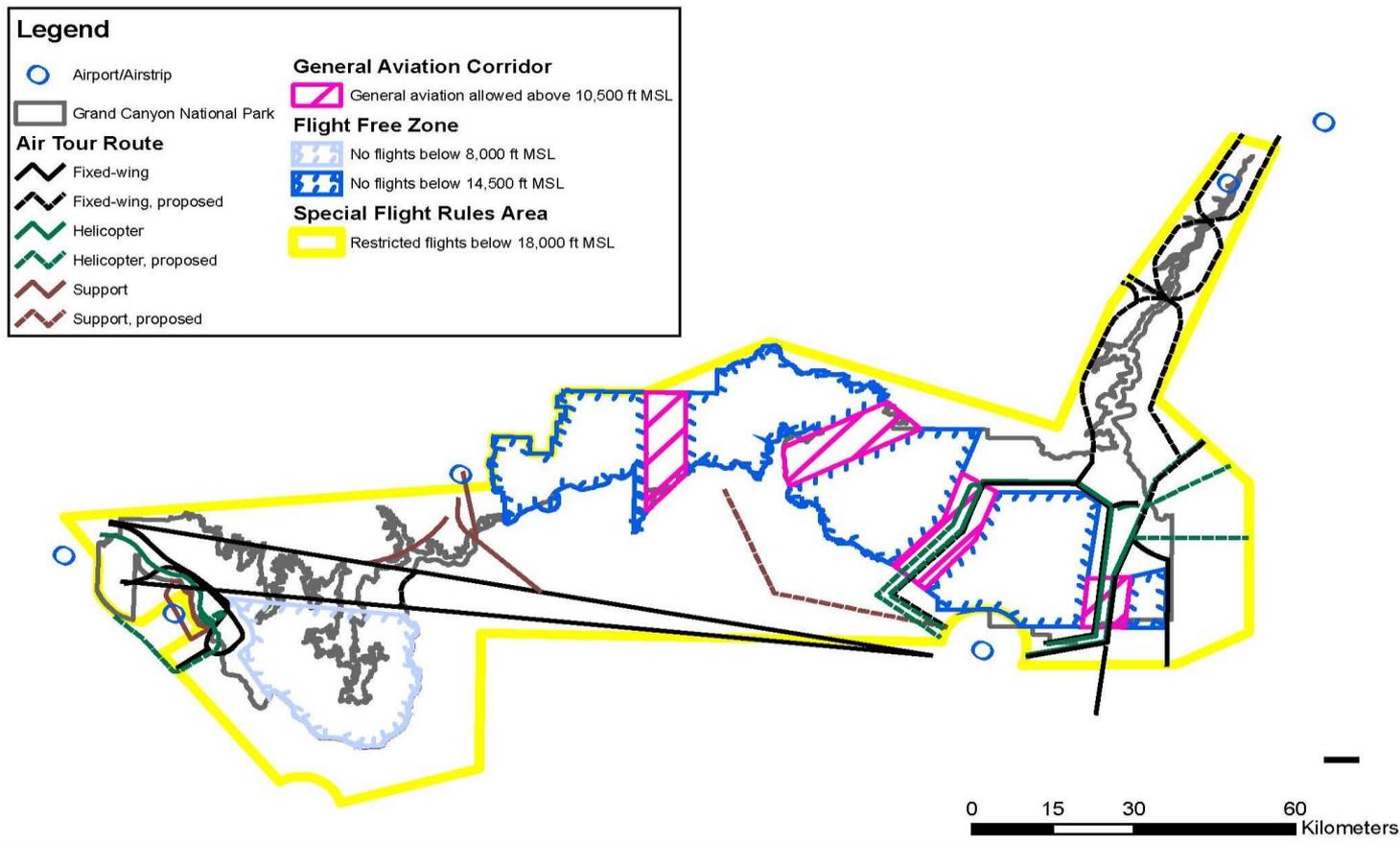


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## Alternative G: NPS Potential Preferred Alternative 1



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## *Key Provisions of Modified Alternative E*

Provisions that are *the same as Alternative E*:

- Provides short loop tour routes, with seasonal shift , for both fixed-wings and helicopters (Dragon open Sept 16 to June 30, Zuni open July 1 to Sept 15)
- Moves most non-air tour operations outside of park
- Sets a daily cap on operations (364 air tour and related ops)
- Requires full conversion to Best Available Quiet Technology (BAQT)
- Provides 100 minutes quiet time before sunset and 150 minutes after sunrise every day, and only BAQT can fly first 1.5 hours and last 2.5 hours of each tour day
- Eliminates routes in Marble Canyon

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## *Key Provisions of Modified Alternative E*

Provisions that are *different from Alternative E*:

- Adds a fixed-wing Zuni-Dragon loop route (Black 1A) similar to Alternative D (i.e., BAQT fixed-wing only, 25% of the tour day), open year-round
- Moves Black 1 and Green 1 routes to west of the Little Colorado River confluence
- Provisions for Best Available Quiet Technology (BAQT) would be phased-in (i.e., BAQT-only flight hours, Black 1A route)
- Air tour allocations could be used anywhere by BAQT, rather than only east or west end, to help meet daily operations cap
- Air tour fees may be reduced or waived for BAQT

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## *Key Provisions of Modified Alternative E*

Provisions that are *different from Alternative E (continued)*:

- When Zuni is open, helicopters can access Navajo lands and return. When Zuni is closed, limited flights can access Navajo lands but not return
- A limited number of training flights could be conducted on seasonally closed routes to meet training needs for safety
- Mid-day one hour curfew would be eliminated
- Changes near Grand Canyon West made as requested by Hualapai Tribe
- The Fossil Canyon General Aviation Corridor would not be eliminated

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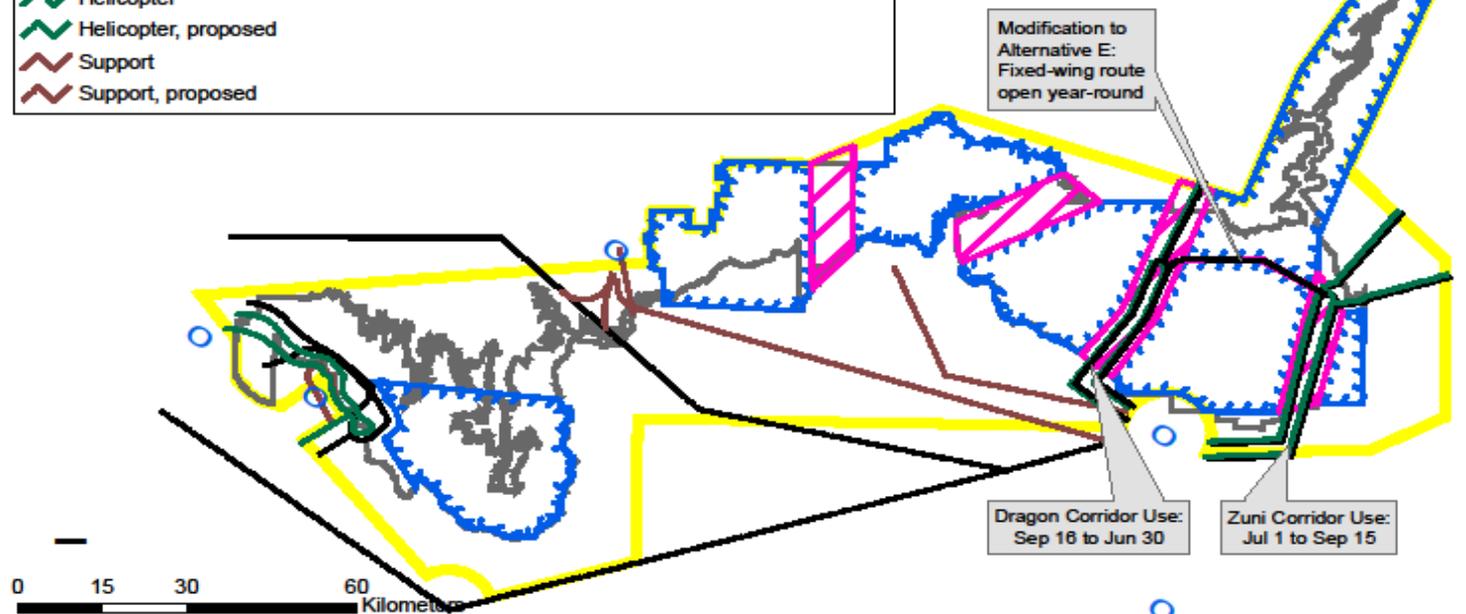
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## Modified Alternative E: NPS Potential Preferred Alternative 2

### Legend

- Airport/Airstrip
- Grand Canyon National Park
- Air Tour Route**
  - Fixed-wing
  - Fixed-wing, proposed
  - Helicopter
  - Helicopter, proposed
  - Support
  - Support, proposed
- General Aviation Corridor**
  - General aviation allowed above 10,500 ft MSL
  - Flight Free Zone
    - No flights below 18,000 ft MSL
  - Special Flight Rules Area**
    - Restricted flights below 18,000 ft MSL



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## *Modified Alternative E Compared to G*

- Modified Alternative E is expected to provide greater restoration of natural quiet (greater than 70% of park vs. 63%) and more benefits to park resources and ground-based visitor experiences
- Non-air-tour flights moved outside of park in Modified Alternative E, but not in Alternative G
- Both provide high quality aerial viewing experiences
- Both provide viable business opportunities, with opportunity for similar to current numbers of air tour operations and passengers

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## *Business Opportunities Associated with Alternative G and Modified Alternative E*

- Initial indications are that both Alternative G and Modified Alternative E are feasible in terms of providing opportunities for quality experiences for air tour visitors, and maintaining associated business opportunities

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## *Business Opportunities Associated with Alternative G*

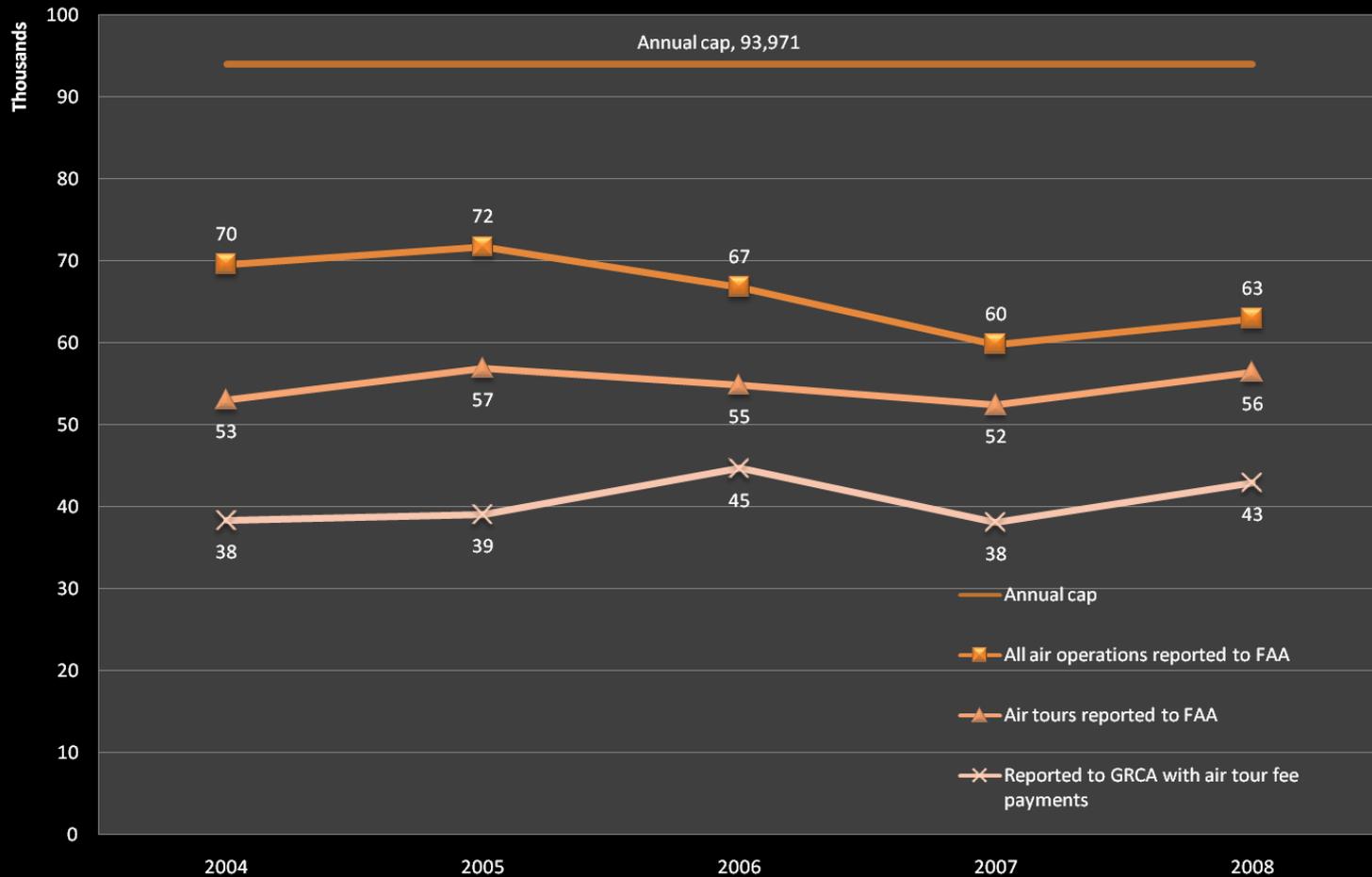
- Close to current number and type of opportunities for air tour visitors
- Initial allocation cap provides opportunity for peak number of operations actually flown per operator (2004-2006)
- Annual allocation cap adjusted downward to reflect the use of QT aircraft, until all operations are exempt from allocations cap when the QT conversion process is complete (subject to law's noise provisions)
- Growth in flight operations is possible for QT aircraft if noise does not increase (monitoring and adaptive management)

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## Comparison of Reported Operational Data with Annual Allocation Cap Outlined in Modified Alternative E

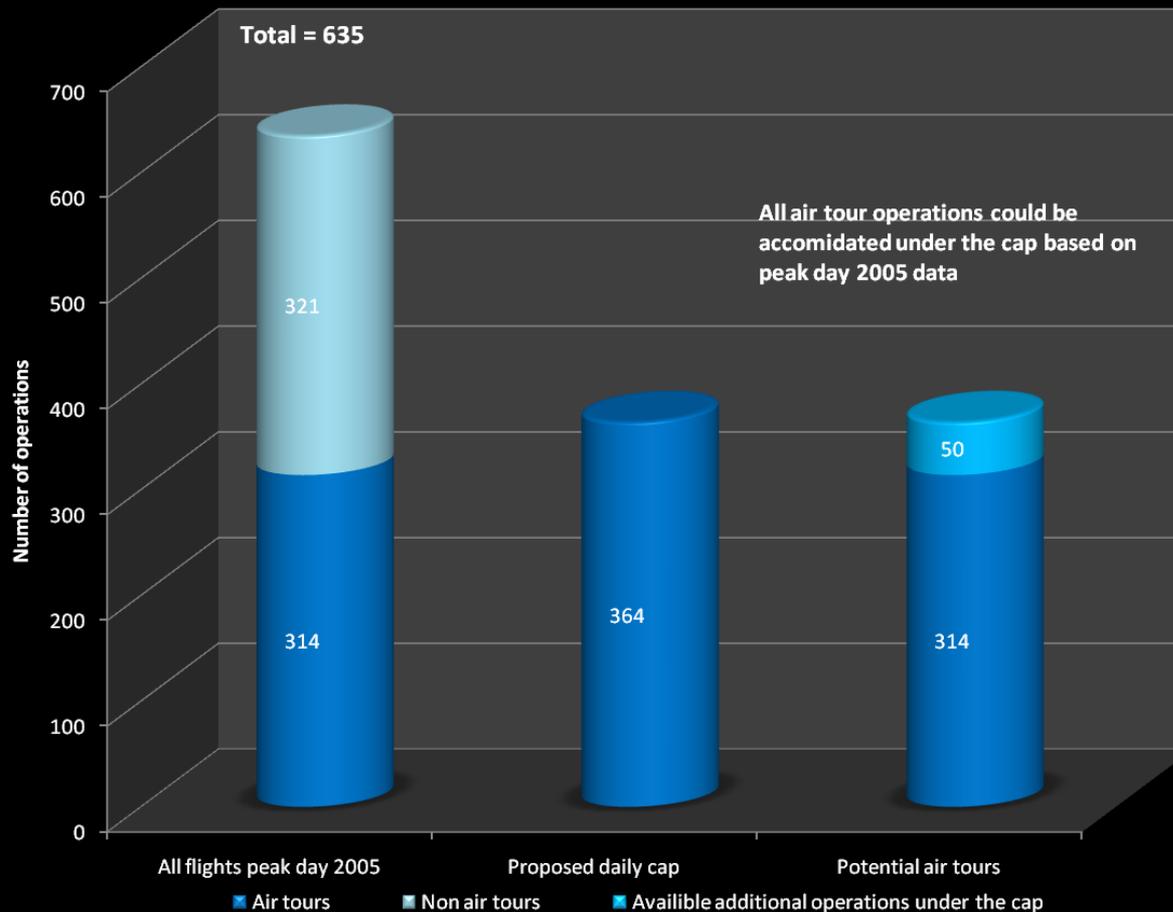


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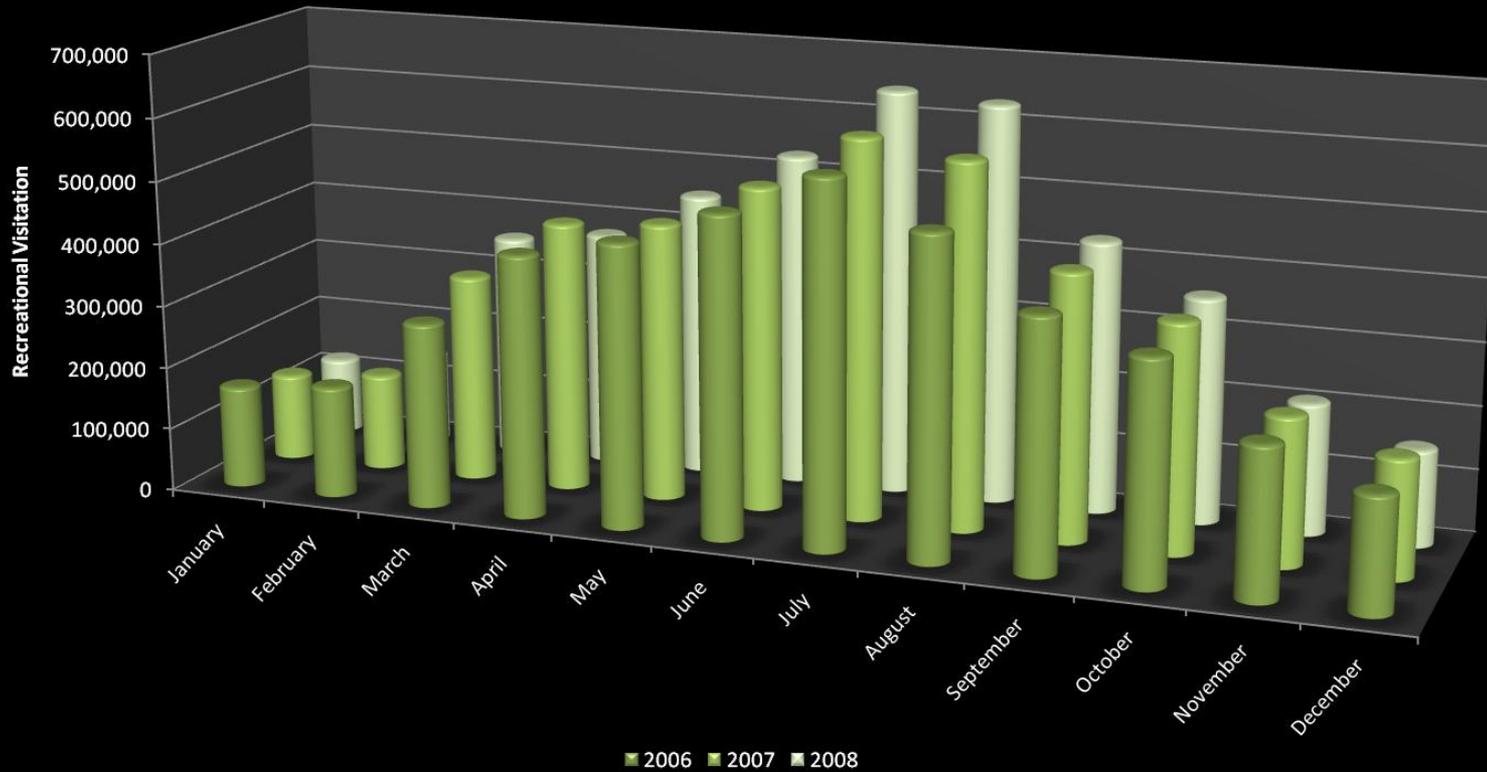
## Peak Day 2005 Operations compared with Potential Business Opportunities and Daily Operations Cap Proposed in Modified Alternative E



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## Three Year Monthly Recreation Visitation (2006-2008)

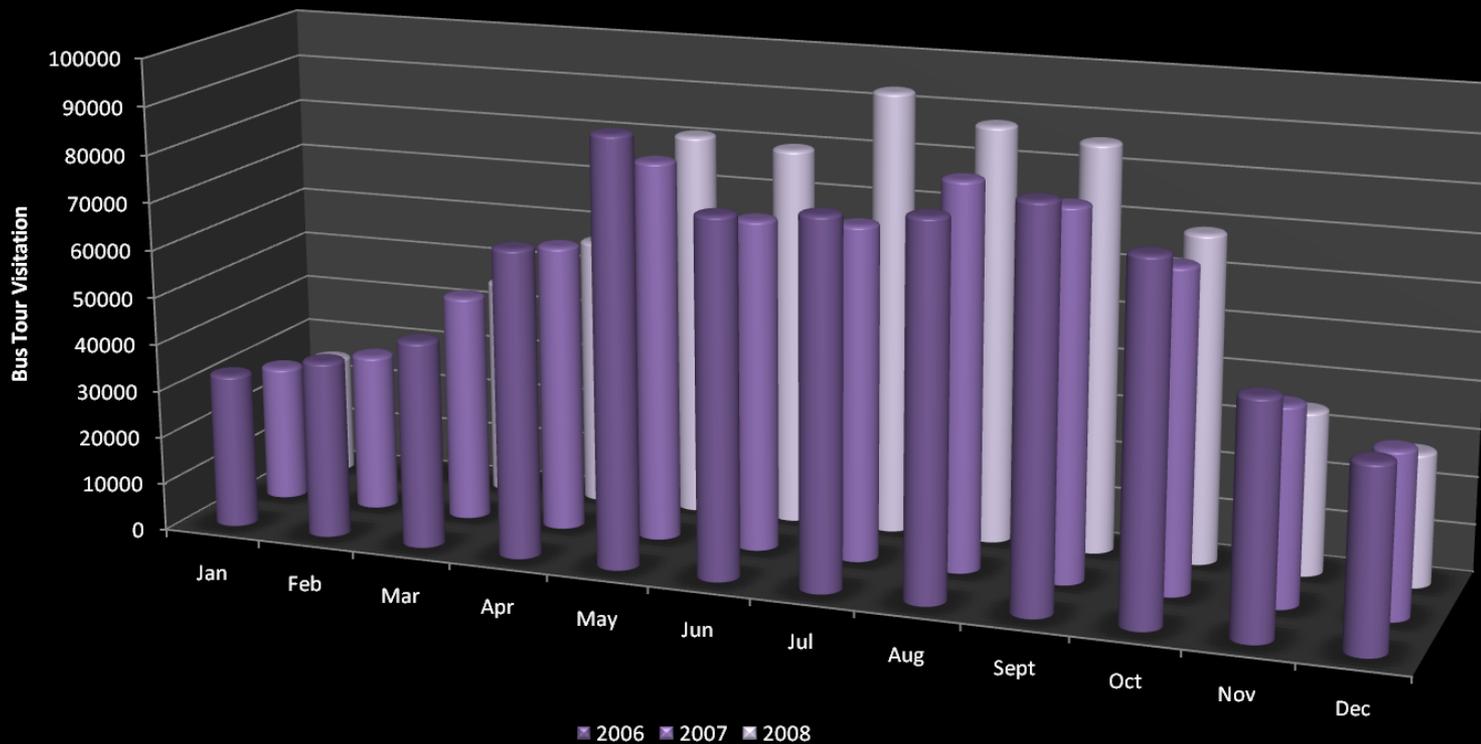


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## 3-Year Monthly Bus Tour Visitation (2006-2008) for South Rim of GCNP



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## **Developing NPS Preferred Alternative: Summary of Principles Considered (Re-Cap)**

- Substantially restore the natural quiet and experience of the park
- Provide a quality aerial viewing experience while protecting park resources and minimizing conflicts with other park visitors
- Respond to Tribal requests
- Provide a reasonable opportunity for visitors to experience the Grand Canyon safely by air tours, with reasonable business opportunities for air tour operators



## *Afternoon Workshop*

- More detailed information & opportunities for discussion and comments during the workshop
- Maps and an alternatives matrix will be available at Stations 2 and 3
  - Station 1: Noise Modeling
  - Station 2: Alternative G
  - Station 3: Modified Alternative E
  - Station 4: Technical Team Issues
  - Station 5: Quiet Technology

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*END*

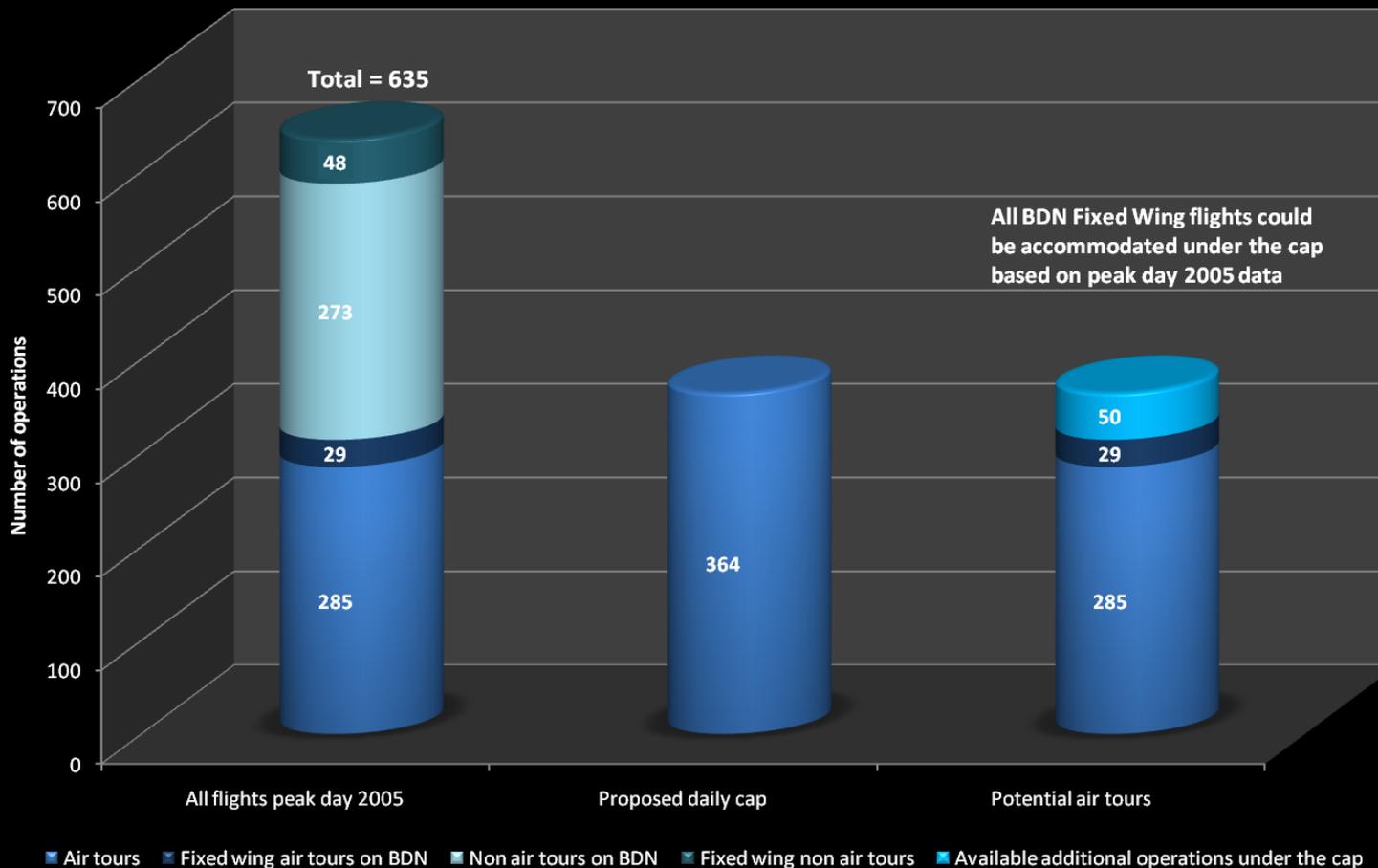
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**Blue Direct North (BDN) Fixed Wing Operations on Peak Day 2005  
compared with Potential Business Opportunitites and Daily Operations  
Cap Proposed in Modified Alternative E**





## Effect on Air Tour and Related Operations

