

ATTACHMENT A

Final EA

**Final Environmental Assessment for an Air Tour
Management Plan for
Mount Rushmore National Memorial**

November 15, 2023

Introduction

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service (NPS) (collectively, "the agencies") published a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) for Mount Rushmore National Memorial (the Park) on May 16, 2023. This document represents the final EA for the ATMP and describes comments that resulted in changes to the draft EA and draft ATMP and the nature of those changes.

The FAA published a notice of availability of the draft EA and draft ATMP for the Park in the Federal Register on May 18, 2023. Notice of Availability of Draft Air Tour Management Plans and Draft Environmental Assessments (EA) and Public Meetings, 88 Fed. Reg. 31,840 (May 18, 2023). The agencies held the public meeting for the draft EA and draft ATMP for the Park on June 1, 2023 and accepted public comments between May 16, 2023 and June 20, 2023. During the public review period, the agencies received 266 correspondences on the draft EA and draft ATMP, some of which resulted in changes or updates to the draft EA. Comments that resulted in changes to the draft EA are presented in this final EA/errata sheet along with a description of the comment and rationale for the change. The comments and agencies' responses to substantive comments received are included in Appendix K.

There were no comments that resulted in substantive changes to the ATMP parameters. All changes made to the ATMP were to improve clarity and accuracy.

The FAA is issuing the final EA using errata sheets. The FAA's use of errata sheets is consistent with 40 CFR 1503.4(c). The purpose of the final EA/errata sheet is to correct errors and omissions, and make other adjustments that may be required after the printing of the draft EA. In addition to changes resulting from public comment, these changes include any corrections identified by the agencies, as well as updates on other consultation processes. This final EA/errata sheet is being included with the agencies' decision documents to comprise a full and complete record of the environmental analysis for the ATMP. The EA will not be reprinted. Note that in the following instances where the EA is referred to as a "draft EA", the issuance of this final EA/errata amends them to read as "final EA" (Pages 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 [line 3], 16, 19, 37, 66, 67, 69, 80, 90, 106, 107, 109, 111, 115, 121, 124).

Summary of Changes

Commenters suggested various changes to the economic analysis in the draft EA. In consideration of those changes, the agencies reviewed operator websites listing current prices for air tours over the Park and identified a factual correction to the range of air tour prices listed in the draft EA. This correction did not result in a change to analysis of socioeconomic environmental consequences in the EA.

The agencies identified one factual correction in the Noise Technical Analysis to include average atmospheric data for the local airport. This correction did not result in changes to other data or outputs in the Noise Technical Analysis.

The agencies also revised the distribution list for the draft EA to reflect the final list of agencies and organizations notified of the draft EA release.

The agencies added additional information to the final ATMP on the management of cultural resources described in the NPS 2006 Management Policies to provide additional information for the justification of the ATMP. As a result of this change, that information has been added to the cultural resources discussion in the EA. Additionally, the agencies added a new section to the EA providing a Park overview, as reflected in the Park Overview section of the ATMP document.

Following the publication of the draft EA, the agencies continued consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The FAA proposed a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties for the ATMP undertaking and consulted with the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), consulting parties, and tribes. The SHPO, two tribes, and one consulting party concurred with this effect finding. The EA has been updated to describe this consultation process and the outcome, and supporting correspondence has been added to Appendix G.

The FAA also continued to coordinate with Officials with Jurisdiction (OWJ) under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 following the release of the draft EA. The FAA consulted with the NPS and other OWJs on the FAA's finding of no substantial impairment, and hence, the FAA's proposed no constructive use determination. No responses from OWJs were received. A summary of this coordination and supporting correspondence was added to Appendix I, *Section 4(f) Analysis*. The property name of one Section 4(f) resource was corrected in Appendix I.

The agencies added copies of all public comments received during public scoping and a distribution list reflective of agencies and parties notified of the public scoping process to Appendix J, and the title of this appendix was renamed.

A new appendix, Appendix K, was added to the EA with copies of all public comments received on the draft ATMP and draft EA, a summary of the comments, and the agencies' response to substantive comments.

As stated above, based on comments received and changed conditions, several pages in this final EA have been updated from the draft EA with new or corrected material. Page numbers referenced pertain to the draft EA released to the public for review on May 16, 2023. Original text from the draft EA is included to provide context and to allow for comparison to the text change. Additions to text are underlined, and deleted text is shown by ~~strikeout~~.

1.0 Purpose and Need

1.2 Background

Page 8: Refer to Appendix J, *Public Scoping Newsletter and Comment Summary Report Materials*, for more information.

Page 13, new Section 1.6, “Park Overview”: The Park includes 1,278 acres in the central Black Hills in southwestern South Dakota, near Keystone. The Park features the monumental carved faces of United States Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, reminding visitors of the political, social, and cultural histories of the past and the relevancy of America’s spirit and ideals today. The majority of Park visitation is for purposes of seeing the carved mountain and associated visitor facilities.

The Park includes large stands of old growth ponderosa pine forest, granite peaks, historic buildings and archeological sites, streams and wetlands, and flora and fauna representative of a variety of habitats. The Park is home to the federally listed endangered northern long-eared bat and the state listed threatened peregrine falcon, which is highly susceptible to noise disturbance. The Black Elk Wilderness, congressionally designated Wilderness that is managed by U.S. Forest Service, abuts the Park to the south and west, and is partially within the ATMP planning area.

The land reflects human habitation and development for thousands of years, from the earliest stone tools of tribal populations to the first homesteads in the Black Hills. There are also several historic sites related to the mining boom of the area and sites related to the Park’s early development and tourism. The entirety of the Park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the nationally significant level, and the mountain carving is a primary contributing feature of the Park.

The mountain upon which the sculpture is located is of cultural significance to many of the Northern Plains Tribal Nations, and the Lakota refer to it as the Six Grandfathers. The entire Black Hills are considered a continuous cultural landscape for these Tribes.

The purpose of Mount Rushmore National Memorial, as stated in its Foundation Document, is to commemorate the founding, expansion, preservation, and unification of the United States by preserving, protecting, and interpreting the mountain sculpture in its historic, cultural, and natural setting while providing for the education, enjoyment, and inspiration of the public.

The following Park management objectives relate to the development of the Park’s ATMP:

- The Park’s acoustic environment supports an outstanding visitor experience and opportunities to hear and enjoy natural sounds.
- Park staff are able to conduct, and visitors are able to experience, interpretive programming with minimal interference due to noise.

- Natural sounds are protected to conserve healthy and robust wildlife populations; biological and ecological processes prevail.
- Traditional and cultural resources are preserved to facilitate ongoing connection with and use of these resources by associated Tribal Nations and traditionally associated communities.

2.1 Alternatives Development

Page 14: Refer to the public scoping newsletter in Appendix J, *Public Scoping Newsletter and Comment Summary Report Materials* for details on the alternatives included in public scoping.

3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

3.4 Cultural Resources

Page 78: In addition to Section 106 of the NHPA, the NPS's Organic Act and Section 110 of the NHPA apply to and provide for the preservation of historic, ethnographic and cultural resources on parkland. The cultural resources that the NPS preserves under its Organic Act are broader than "historic properties" under the NHPA. As defined in NPS 2006 Management Policies, a cultural resource is "an aspect of a cultural system that is valued by or significantly representative of a culture, or that contains significant information about the culture." It may be tangible or may be a cultural practice or connection to a landscape. Tangible cultural resources in the Park include archaeological sites, sacred sites, ancestral sites, cultural landscapes, and traditional cultural properties, all of which include the natural resources within them. NPS policies and directives also apply to park cultural and ethnographic resources, and provide direction for their management including the NPS Management Policies (2006), Chapter 5 and Director's Order 28: Cultural Resource Management. The NPS's mandate to conserve Park resources and values "applies all the time with respect to all park resources and values, even when there is no risk that any park resources or values may be impaired" (NPS, 2006).

Page 85: ~~Based on this consultation, the FAA proposes a finding that the ATMP will not adversely affect historic properties.~~ Based on this consultation, the FAA proposed a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties (36 CFR § 800.5(b)) for the ATMP undertaking. The South Dakota SHPO, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and Eagle Aviation Inc. concurred with the finding of no adverse effect to historic properties. The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians provided comment but did not concur or object. No consulting party objected to the finding and Section 106 consultation was completed on April 14, 2023.

3.7 Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics

Page 110: The price per person for each air tour varies by company and can range from \$59 to ~~\$700~~ \$350 per person (Eagle Aviation, Inc., 2022, Black Hills Aerial Adventures, 2023).

Appendix A: References

Black Hills Aerial Adventures. (2023). Mount Rushmore Helipad Tours.
<https://coptertours.com/tours>. Retrieved June 22, 2023.

Appendix D: Distribution List

Page 1-2:

Federal Agencies

- Black Hills National Forest
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- ~~Federal Emergency Management Agency~~
- Federal Highway Administration
- ~~Federal Railroad Administration~~
- National Park Service
- Rep. Dusty Johnson – U.S. Representative from South Dakota
- Sen. John Thune – U.S. Senator from South Dakota
- Sen. Mike Rounds – U.S. Senator from South Dakota
- ~~U.S. Army Corps of Engineers~~
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – County Natural Resources Conservation Service,
Western Region Conservationist
- ~~U.S. Department of Commerce~~
- ~~U.S. Department of Energy – Western Area Power Administration~~
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region VIII
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey – Dakota Water Science Center
- USDA Forest Service
- USDA Forest Service – Black Hills National Forest
- USDA Forest Service – Black Hills National Forest, Hell Canyon District

South Dakota State Agencies

- Custer State Park
- Governor of South Dakota
- South Dakota Bureau of Finance and Management
- ~~South Dakota Department of Agriculture~~
- South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources - Air Quality Program

- South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources – Surface Water Quality Program
- South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks – Division of Parks and Recreation
- South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks – Division of Wildlife
- South Dakota Department of Health
- South Dakota Department of Human Services
- South Dakota Department of Public Safety
- South Dakota Department of Tourism
- South Dakota Department of Transportation – Division of Planning and Engineering
- ~~South Dakota Geological Survey~~
- South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development
- South Dakota Office of Emergency Management
- South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands
- South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
- South Dakota Secretary of State
- South Dakota Secretary of Transportation
- South Dakota State Historical Society

Pennington County and Local Agencies

- Custer Chamber of Commerce
- Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce
- Keystone Chamber of Commerce
- Mayor of Keystone, South Dakota
- Pennington County
- Pennington County Commission
- Pennington County Emergency Management Department
- Pennington County Fire Department
- Pennington County Highway Department
- Pennington County Planning Department
- Pennington County Sheriff
- Rapid City Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Hill City, South Dakota
- Town of Keystone, South Dakota

Community Organizations, Associations, Businesses, and Interest Groups

- Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association
- Black Hills Parks and Forests Association
- Crazy Horse Memorial
- Dakota Rotors, LLC (Black Hills Aerial Adventures, Inc.)

- Dakota Rotors LLC (Rushmore Helicopters, Inc.)
- Eagle Aviation, Inc.
- Mount Rushmore Society
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- South Dakota Wing – Civil Air Patrol
- Visit Rapid City
- Xanterra Travel Collection

Appendix F: Noise Technical Analysis

Page 12, Footnote 5: Atmospheric absorption is based on the ~~2012–2021 average temperature of 76 degrees Fahrenheit and 71% relative humidity~~ 2011–2020 average temperature at Rushmore Heliport (SD70) of 42 degrees Fahrenheit and 60% relative humidity and computed according to SAE-ARP-5534.

Appendix G: Cultural Resources Consultation and Summary

The following contents have been added to Appendix G:

- Concurrence from South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office
- Concurrence from Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation
- Concurrence from Northern Cheyenne Tribe
- Concurrence from Eagle Aviation Inc.
- Comment from Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

Appendix I: Section 4(f) Analysis

Page 1: Table 1 lists the Section 4(f) parks, recreational areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges identified in the Section 4(f) study area. All data sources were accessed the week of December 12, 2022. The FAA corresponded with the Officials with Jurisdiction (OWJ) related to the Section 4(f) resources. On May 16, 2023, the FAA sent an email, with an attached letter, to the U.S. Forest Service describing the proposed action and FAA’s preliminary determination and requested response within a 14-day review period. A follow-up email was sent on May 23, 2023. Additionally, the FAA notified the National Park Service (NPS) of the determination via email on May 15, 2023. The 14-day response period for both review requests closed on May 30, 2023. No responses were received. Information on coordination with OWJs is located in Table 4.

The following contents have been added to Appendix I:

- OWJ letter to U.S. Forest Service

Page 1, Table 1: Norbeck Wildlife Preserve ~~National Game Refuge~~

Page 3, 15-18, Table 2: Norbeck Wildlife Preserve ~~National Game Refuge~~

Appendix J: Public Scoping ~~Newsletter and Comment Summary Report~~ Materials

The agencies have sent the following agencies and parties copies of public scoping newsletter for participation in the public scoping process:

Federal Agencies

- Black Hills National Forest
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Rep. Dusty Johnson – U.S. Representative from South Dakota
- Sen. John Thune – U.S. Senator from South Dakota
- Sen. Mike Rounds – U.S. Senator from South Dakota
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – County Natural Resources Conservation Service, Western Region Conservationist
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region VIII
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey – Dakota Water Science Center
- USDA Forest Service – Black Hills National Forest
- USDA Forest Service – Black Hills National Forest, Hell Canyon District

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- Custer State Park
- Governor of South Dakota
- South Dakota Bureau of Finance and Management
- South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources - Air Quality Program
- South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources – Surface Water Quality Program
- South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks – Division of Parks and Recreation
- South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks – Division of Wildlife
- South Dakota Department of Health
- South Dakota Department of Human Services
- South Dakota Department of Public Safety
- South Dakota Department of Tourism
- South Dakota Department of Transportation – Division of Planning and Engineering
- South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development
- South Dakota Office of Emergency Management
- South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands

- South Dakota Secretary of State
- South Dakota Secretary of Transportation
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- Keystone Chamber of Commerce
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- Pennington County Sheriff
- Rapid City Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Hill City, South Dakota
- Town of Keystone, South Dakota

Community Organizations, Associations, Businesses, and Interest Groups

- Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association
- Black Hills Parks and Forests Association
- Crazy Horse Memorial
- Mount Rushmore Society
- South Dakota Wing – Civil Air Patrol
- Visit Rapid City
- Xanterra Travel Collection

The following contents have been added to Appendix J:

- Copies of all public comments received during public scoping

Appendix K: Draft ATMP and Draft EA Public Involvement Materials

- The recorded public meeting for the Park's draft ATMP and draft EA is available via the following: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op29u2HtKcg>
- The NPS Planning, Environmental and Public Comment website for the Park is available via the following: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/MountRushmoreATMP>

The following contents are included in Appendix K:

- Copies of all public comments received on the draft ATMP and draft EA
- Comment Summary Report and Agency Responses to Comments on the draft ATMP and draft EA