Categorical Exclusion Documentation Form (CE Form)

Project: Pilot Timed Entry Permit System 2022
PEPC Project Number: 106478
Description of Action (Project Description):

Park staff are managing for significant increases in visitation to Rocky Mountain National Park, along with continued Covid-19 concerns, ongoing park seasonal staff hiring challenges, reduced shuttle bus capacity and residual fire impacts in some areas of the park from historic fires in 2020. Rocky Mountain National Park was the third most visited national park in the country in 2019 with over 4.6 million visitors. Visitors experience a high level of congestion in many areas of the park from late May through early October. In 2019, visitation from June through September was over 3.2 million visitors. In July alone, almost 1 million people visited the park.

Rocky Mountain National Park piloted a timed entry permit system (TEPS) in 2020 and 2021 as part of a public use limitation to maintain public health and safety (see PEPC 96659). TEPS provides for advanced daily reservations for private vehicles. Reservations are made through recreation.gov, cost $2 per day, and are released one month in advance, with at least 25% of reservations being held for sale the day before (released at 5pm). The booking system is for arrivals, in blocks of two hours. There is no length-of-stay requirement, you may leave the park at any time. Park entrance passes are required in addition to a reservation.

TEPS 1 (2020) targeted a 60% parking capacity or estimated 4800 vehicles/13500 visitors per day; TEPS 2 (2021) targeted 75 to 85% parking capacity or 6,250 vehicles/17,500 visitors per day. TEPS 1 required a reservation parkwide from 6 am to 5 pm from June 4 to October 13, 2020; TEPS 2 utilized two reservations, one for Bear Lake from 5 am to 6 pm and one for rest of park (excluding Bear Lake) from 9 am to 3 pm from May 28 to October 11, 2021.

TEPS 3 (2022) proposal includes:

- Effective dates will be May 27 through October 10, 2022, with reservations available a month in advance and May 2 being the first day reservations can be made; - Reservations will be based on approximately 90% of parking and transit capacity, which equates to around 20,000 visitors and 7,200 vehicles per day; - As in TEPS 2 (2021), the permit system will apply to all areas of the park, but there are two reservations/permits: Bear Lake (5 am to 6 pm) and rest of park (excluding Bear Lake from 9 am to 3 pm); - The park will offer more day-before reservations 30% of the permits available, compared to 25% during TEPS 2 ; - There will be an option to purchase an entrance pass through recreation.gov.

The park may make minor adjustments to TEPS during the season as needed, based on data available (such as the number of no-shows, traffic counts, etc), weather, Covid response, and staffing.

Park employees, park residents (including private inholders) and authorized guests, tribal members, wilderness campers, and front country campers with a reservation are exempt from the TEPS. Commercial Use Authorizations (CUA), Special Use Permits (SUP), Concessioners and Commercial Tours do not need a timed entry reservation for their trips into the park; their permitted use is being accounted for in the overall reservation system and constitutes less than 3 percent of park visitation.

In addition to piloting TEPS during 2020 and 2021, NPS staff continued to work through the Visitor Use Management framework to begin developing a long term Day Use Visitor Access Strategy (DUVAS). This includes developing desired conditions, defining zones, and identifying indicators, thresholds, strategies and capacities. The park engaged the public and various stakeholders in 2021 holding virtual meetings and opening a comment period as part of this pre NEPA project (see

PEPC 100042). The goals of DUVAS are to protect park resources, offer varied opportunities for high quality visitor experiences, enhance visitor and staff safety, and coincide with the park's operational capacity.

Project Locations:

Location 1

County:	Boulder	**State:**	CO

Location 2

County:	Grand	**State:**	CO

Location 3

County:	Larimer	**State:**	CO

There are no required mitigations identified.

CE Citation: 3.3.D.2 Minor changes in amounts or types of visitor use for the purpose of ensuring visitor safety or resource protection in accordance with existing regulations.

CE Justification:

TEPS 3 targets 90% of parking and transit capacity, which equates to around 20,000 visitors and 7,200 vehicles per day.

Decision: I find that the action fits within the categorical exclusion above. Therefore, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No extraordinary circumstances apply.

Signature

Superintendent: _____ **Date:** 1·19·22

Darla Sidles

Extraordinary Circumstances:

If implemented, would the proposal...	Yes/No	Explanation
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?	No	There is no evidence to indicate that managing access to the park through a timed entry reservation system would have a significant impact on public health or safety.
B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	No	The goal of this action, managing access to the park through a timed entry reservation system, aligns with the park's Day Use Visitor Access Strategy (DUVAS) goals: to protect park resources, offer varied opportunities for high quality visitor experiences, enhance visitor and staff safety, and coincide with the park's operational capacity. As documented in the ESF, there is no evidence to indicate a potential for significant impacts on natural or cultural resources.
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?	No	Managed access of visitor use of parks and recreation sites is a common activity with well-known effects, as demonstrated in the attached ESF. Therefore, there is no evidence to indicate a potential for significant scientific controversy over effects resulting from this action; additionally, there are no unresolved conflicts over use of available resources.
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	No	Managed access of visitor use of parks and recreation sites is a common activity with negligible environmental effects, as demonstrated in the attached ESF. Therefore, this action does not have the potential for effects or risks that are unique, unknown, or potentially significant.
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	No	As demonstrated herein and in the attached ESF, managed access to the park through a timed entry reservation system does not have the potential for significant effects and therefore does not set any precedent that would not lead to future actions with significant environmental impacts.
G. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by either the bureau or office?	No	Managed access of visitor use of parks and recreation sites is a common activity with well-known effects, as demonstrated in the attached ESF. Therefore, this action does not have the potential for significant impacts on cultural resources listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
H. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?	No	Managed access of visitor use of parks and recreation sites is a common activity with negligible environmental effects, as demonstrated in the attached ESF. Therefore, this action does not have the potential for significant impacts on species listed or proposed for listing on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or on designated Critical Habitats.
I. Violate a federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	No	All actions will be conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and therefore would not violate any law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898)?	No	The timed entry reservation system has been designed to provide for fair and equitable access to the park, as demonstrated in the attached ESF. Therefore, there is no

		evidence to indicate that this action would have a disproportionately high or adverse impacts on low income or minority populations.
K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)?	No	Tribal members are exempt from the TEPS; therefore, tribal access to and ceremonial use of park lands will not be limited by or impacted by this action.
L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?	No	Managed access of visitor use of parks and recreation sites is a common activity with negligible environmental effects, as demonstrated in the attached ESF, and will not increase the spread and introduction of nonnative species when compared to the existing baseline levels. Therefore, there would be no change in the potential for the introduction, continued existence or spread of these species from this project.

Other Compliance/Consultations Form

Park Name: Rocky Mountain National Park
PEPC Project Number: 106478
Project Title: Pilot Timed Entry Permit System 2022
Project Type: Other Study : Pilot Timed Entry Permit System
Project Location:
County, State: Boulder, CO
County, State: Grand, CO
County, State: Larimer, CO
Project Leader: John Hannon

ESA

Any Federal Species in the project Area? No
If species in area: No Effect
Was Biological Assessment prepared? No
If Biological Assessment prepared, concurred?
Formal Consultation required? No
Formal Consultation Notes:
TEPS is one strategy to manage visitor day use and aims to protect park resources by better distributing the number of visitors during the highest use times. TEPS is a parkwide strategy, and while species and habitat do exist within the park, the TEPS has no significant impact on T&E wildlife species including lynx, Mexican spotted owl, or downstream species. Preble's meadow jumping mouse, western yellow-billed cuckoo, Colorado butterfly plant, Ute ladies'-tresses orchid = not present, Rocky Mountain National Park is outside elevation range for these species.

Formal Consultation Concluded:
Any State listed Species in the Project Area? No
Consultation Information: TEPS is one strategy to manage visitor day use and aims to protect park resources by better distributing the number of visitors during the highest use times. TEPS is a parkwide strategy, and while species and habitat do exist within the park, the TEPS has no significant impact on species of management concern. The TEPS should protect rare plants by distributing foot traffic.
General Notes:

Data Entered By: Cheria Yost **Date:** Jan 3, 2022

ESA Mitigations

No ESA mitigations are associated with this project.

Floodplains/Wetlands/§404 Permits

Question	Yes	No	Details

A.1. Is project in 100- or 500-year floodplain or flash flood hazard area?		No	Not in floodplain or flash flood hazard area.
A.2. Is Project in wetlands as defined by NPS/DOI?		No	Not in wetland as defined by NPS/DOI.
B. COE Section 404 permit needed?		No	No placement of fill in waters of the United States.
C. State 401 certification?		No	
D. State Section 401 Permit?		No	**Issue Date:** **Expiration Date:**
E. Tribal Water Quality Permit?		No	
F. CZM Consistency determination needed?			N/A
G. Erosion & Sediment Control Plan Required?		No	
H. Any other permits required?		No	**Permit Information:**
Other Information:			This is a visitor management project and has no on the ground activities that could negatively affect water quality and quantity or wetlands.

Data Entered By: Cheria Yost **Date:** Jan 3, 2022

FloodPlains & Wetlands Mitigations

No FloodPlains & Wetlands mitigations are associated with this project.

Wilderness

Question	Yes	No	
A. Does this project occur in or adjacent to Designated, Recommended, Proposed, Study, Eligible, or Potential Wilderness?		No	
B. Is the only place to conduct this project in wilderness?		No	
C. Is the project necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness?		No	
D. Would the project or any of its alternatives adversely affect (directly or indirectly) Designated, Recommended, Proposed, Study, Eligible, or Potential Wilderness? (If Yes, Minimum Requirements Analysis required)		No	

E. Does the project or any of its alternatives involve the use of any of the Wilderness Act Section 4(c) prohibited uses: commercial enterprise, permanent road, temporary road, motor vehicles, motorized equipment, motorboats, landing of aircraft, mechanical transport, structure, or installation? (If Yes, Minimum Requirements Analysis required)		No	
If the answer to D or E above is "Yes" then a Minimum Requirements Analysis is required. Describe the status of this analysis in the column to the right.			**Initiation Date:** **Completed Date:** **Approved Date:**
Other Information: TEPS reservations are based on vehicle and transit capacity. TEPS affects the number of visitors in Wilderness, though the park is unsure of the exact impact and continues to gather and analyze trail count data to understand the change. Trends to date indicate changes to timing of visitor use in certain trail corridors (especially Glacier Gorge and Bear Lake). According to trail counter data, the number of people on trails at one time has decreased.			

Data Entered By: Cheria Yost **Date:** Jan 3, 2022

Other Permits/Laws *Questions A & B are no longer used.*

Question	Yes	No
C. Wild and scenic river concerns exist?		No
D. National Trails concerns exist?		No
E. Air Quality consult with State needed?		No
F. Consistent with Architectural Barriers, Rehabilitation, and Americans with Disabilities Acts or not Applicable? (If N/A check Yes)	Yes	
G. Other:		

Other Information:

Data Entered By: Cheria Yost **Date:** Jan 3, 2022

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

Updated Sept 2015 per NPS NEPA Handbook

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Pilot Timed Entry Permit System 2022
PEPC Project Number: 106478
PMIS Number:
Project Type: Other Study (STU)
Project Location:
County, State: Boulder, Colorado
County, State: Grand, Colorado
County, State: Larimer, Colorado
Project Leader: John Hannon

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Park staff are managing for significant increases in visitation to Rocky Mountain National Park, along with continued Covid-19 concerns, ongoing park seasonal staff hiring challenges, reduced shuttle bus capacity and residual fire impacts in some areas of the park from historic fires in 2020. Rocky Mountain National Park was the third most visited national park in the country in 2019 with over 4.6 million visitors. Visitors experience a high level of congestion in many areas of the park from late May through early October. In 2019, visitation from June through September was over 3.2 million visitors. In July alone, almost 1 million people visited the park.

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The park may make minor adjustments to TEPS during the season as needed, based on data available (such as the number of no-shows, traffic counts, etc), weather, Covid response, and staffing.

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In addition to piloting TEPS during 2020 and 2021, NPS staff continued to work through the Visitor Use Management framework to begin developing a long term Day Use Visitor Access Strategy (DUVAS). This includes developing desired conditions, defining zones, and identifying indicators, thresholds, strategies and capacities. The park engaged the public and various stakeholders in 2021 holding virtual meetings and opening a comment period as part of this pre NEPA project (see PEPC 100042). The goals of DUVAS are to protect park resources, offer varied opportunities for high quality visitor experiences, enhance visitor and staff safety, and coincide with the park's operational capacity.

C. RESOURCE IMPACTS TO CONSIDER:

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
Air Air Quality *air quality*	Potential	Issue: Vehicle emissions can degrade local air quality. Impact: The reduced number of vehicles entering the park could improve air quality through reduced vehicle emissions. Traffic at entrance stations may occur in intervals throughout the day, as it did prior to this public use limitation.
Biological Nonnative or Exotic Species *exotic plants*	Potential	Issue: Visitors help transport exotic plants on their tires, clothing, and shoes. Impact: The park continues to monitor the prevalence of exotic plants in the park and treat them according to the Exotic Plant Management Plan. Compared to the baseline prevalence of exotics at the most popular destinations, TEPS will not have an effect because the prevalence of exotic plants is very dependent on the type of species and the mechanism for spread.
Biological Species of Special Concern or Their Habitat	None	
Biological Vegetation *alpine tundra vegetation*	Potential	Issue: Human feet and illegally off-road vehicles trample tundra plants and compact soil, which takes years to recover. Impact: Loss of alpine tundra, especially adjacent to Trail Ridge Road. With fewer people, there should be less trampling of plants and soils in the alpine and montane ecosystems. There will likely be less roadside parking on vegetation, since visitors will be more likely to find spaces available in paved parking areas.
Biological Wildlife and/or Wildlife Habitat including terrestrial and aquatic species *wildlife migration and movement*	Potential	Issue: When wildlife are present, visitors congregate. Some visitors approach the wildlife, changing their movement patterns. Impact: TEPS will reduce the number of vehicle-based visitors entering the park at one time, which may help reduce visitor congregation along roadsides. Visitors with reservations can chose their destinations and activities, including

		congregating to watch wildlife. With fewer number of visitors, the park may be able to use education and enforcement as tactics to protect wildlife.
Cultural Archeological Resources *archeological resources*	Potential	Issue: Damage to cultural resources sites resulting in the loss of archeological record. Impact: Under TEPS, it is anticipated that there would be fewer people at one time on trails and at sites. Regardless of the number of people, defacement or looting of cultural resource sites is possible. So there is no anticipated change to archeological sites from the TEPS.
Cultural Cultural Landscapes	None	
Cultural Ethnographic Resources	None	
Cultural Museum Collections	None	
Cultural Prehistoric/historic structures	None	
Geological Geologic Features	None	
Geological Geologic Processes	None	
Lightscapes Lightscapes	None	
Other Human Health and Safety *emergency response*	Potential	Issue: Visitors with a reservation may opt to recreate in the park during adverse conditions, such as thunder storms, rather than come back another day. Impact: If education, enforcement, and emergency response does not align with visitation, people may be more likely to get inured or killed. TEPS should better distribute visitation throughout the day, which is likely to improve emergency response. The park is analyzing data to understand how traffic patterns and visitor use impact emergency responses (i.e. wildfire evacuation; time it takes for an emergency vehicle to arrive at a trailhead). The park uses all channels to provide safety messages to park visitors and help them prepare for and adjust their trip according to current conditions.
Other Human Health and Safety *human (employee) safety*	Potential	Issue: Visitor conflicts occur over limited parking during peak periods. Visitors frustrated by busy conditions and the need for a reservation sometimes act aggressively toward park staff at entrance stations, at parking lots, and at visitor centers. Impact: By managing access across the day, the number of parking spots available should better align with demand, helping park staff and volunteers manage the busiest parking lots at Alpine Visitor Center, Bear Lake, and Wild Basin (possibly requiring less staff time). According to observational data from park staff and volunteers, TEPS 1 and 2 reduced the number of incidents related to visitors arguing over parking spots that escalated to fights needing law enforcement intervention. When TEPS 1 went into effect, there was an increase

		in aggressive visitors at the entrance station, as reported by park staff, but the number of aggressive visitors has reduced over time.
Other Human Health and Safety *human safety*	Potential	Issue: Lack of parking leads to roadside walking. Impact: Fewer vehicles at one time in the park should reduce or eliminate occurrences of roadside parking as visitors have more opportunities to secure a designated parking spot. This should have beneficial impacts on visitor safety by reducing or eliminating occurrences of visitors walking in or along lanes of traffic to access their intended destination.
Other Human Health and Safety *park operations*	Potential	Issue: Increasing visitation has made it challenging for park staff to maintain facilities and keep up with basic tasks such as custodial and interpretive programs. Impact: TEPS is aimed to distribute visitation across the day, consistently during the busiest months, which allows the park to better plan staffing needs. TEPS should help the park align its operational capacity.
Socioeconomic Land Use *gateway communities*	Potential	Issue: The park and gateway communities are tied geographically and economically. A reduction in the number of vehicles in the park may affect local economies in both negative and positive ways. Some local residents want unrestricted access into the park. Impact: Gateway communities may have surges of congestion when the park is limiting public use. The Town of Estes Park reported higher tax revenues during the previous year, when TEPS 2 was in place, but it is unknown if this is related to TEPS. On the other hand, a reservation system may limit the number of people that visit the local community, if they can not get a permit. Gateway communities may not hire as many people to support tourism industries and may experience changing travel patterns. Some measure of this change relates to the global pandemic affecting how and where people travel, while some of it relates to the TEPS. Prior to implementing TEPS 1 in 2020, the park received letters of support from gateway communities, town officials/managers, congressional members, and the three counties.
Socioeconomic Minority and low-income populations, size, migration patterns, etc. *low income populations and under-represented communities*	Potential	Issue: The cost of transportation to the park and the regular entrance fee affect low-income populations and there is no change to these proposed in TEPS. However, the $2 TEPS fee may be an additional barrier for low-income and under-represented communities. People that do not plan ahead or are not aware of the timed entry permit are also affected. Potential visitors may not have ready access to internet connections, computers, and smart phones to make the reservation. Because the reservations sell out quickly, potential visitors may be unavailable to make reservations at the release times, missing opportunities to schedule. Large groups wanting to enter the park together in separate vehicles may not be able to get reservations at the same time. Impact: The socioeconomic impacts of TEPS are not fully understood at this time, and the park continues to receive and consider comments from visitors and potential visitors. When visitors need help upon arrival, the park provides on site assistance to visitors with technology challenges by staffing rangers in various locations such as visitor centers. Park staff, at their discretion, may issue waivers to park visitors who are struggling with technology of TEPS. TEPS is not anticipated to have significant or disproportionate impacts on minority or low-income populations.

Socioeconomic Socioeconomic *socioeconomic*	Potential	Issue: Economic impacts on local and regional commercial operators. Impact: Commercial operators are exempt from the reservation requirement, so there are no anticipated impacts on opportunities for commercial operators to conduct their business in the park.
Soundscapes Soundscapes *natural sounds*	Potential	Issue: Vehicle-based visitors add noise along busy road corridors. Impact: Fewer vehicles at one time will have a positive impact by reducing noise levels in the park.
Viewsheds Viewsheds *scenic views from Trail Ridge Road and other road corridors*	Potential	Issue: Cars lined up along Trail Ridge Road and other road corridors affect the quality of scenic viewsheds by introducing a "traffic jam" to the scenic viewshed. Impact: Fewer vehicles at one time will have a positive impact on natural and cultural viewsheds, especially "long views" associated with Trail Ridge Road.
Visitor Use and Experience Recreation Resources *Access to recreational opportunities*	Potential	Issue: Ability of potential visitors to recreate in the park during TEPS Impact: The number of visitors turned away because they were unaware of the reservation requirement is unknown but is predicted to lessen over time; through continued outreach and communication, more potential visitors would be aware of the reservation requirement. Visitors are able to recreate in most of the park without a reservation before 9 am and after 3 pm. TEPS affects spontaneity. To mitigate impacts on the more spontaneous visitors, the system has been designed to set-aside 30 percent of reservations for last-minute bookings (day-before). It is unknown what percentage of potential park visitors may be unable to visit the park during their desired time/date due to timing constraints or other factors and therefore forego a visit to the park altogether.
Visitor Use and Experience Recreation Resources *demand*	Potential	Issue: Rocky Mountain National Park is the 3rd busiest national park, evidence to its high demand. TEPS will redistribute the number of vehicles entering the park during the busiest months and busiest hours of the day. Impact: TEPS changes the availability of vehicle park entry and shuttle buses. There is no reduction to concession contracts or commercial use authorizations or special use permits. Once inside the park, visitors will be able to go to all open areas, and they are able to chose their activities. Visitors may have to visit the park earlier or later in the day than they had originally intended, or earlier or later in the season, but the system is not anticipated to displace visitors altogether and therefore recreational access and opportunities should not be significantly diminished.
Visitor Use and Experience Visitor Use and Experience *visitor experience*	Potential	Issue: TEPS will help reduce overcrowded parking lots and shuttle capacity in the park between 6 am and 5 pm at Bear Lake and 9 am and 3 pm in the rest of park, while also distributing entries over the day. Impact: TEPS should prevent mid day surges that overwhelm points of entry, parking lots, trails, and park operations. Less congestion in most areas of the park for most of the day should improve the visitor experience by returning a sense of solitude to wilderness areas, the ability to see wildlife from roads, and the ability to find a parking space.
Water Floodplains	None	

Water Water Quality or Quantity	None	
Water Wetlands	None	
Wilderness Wilderness *opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation*		Issue: Less visitors entering the park at one time during peak visitation periods should equate to less visitors entering the wilderness of the park. There is no change to Wilderness camping, which remains a permitted activity. Impact: TEPS reservations are based on vehicle and transit capacity. TEPS affects the number of visitors in Wilderness, though the park is unsure of the exact impact and continues to gather and analyze trail count data to understand the change. Unconfined recreation refers to types of recreation in which Wilderness visitors experience a high degree of freedom over their own actions and decisions. Once inside the park, visitors will have the same opportunities for unconfined recreation as currently exist today.

D. ESF ADDENDUM QUESTIONS:

Question	Answer	Notes