

## Public Scoping Meeting Comments

11/3/2009

4-8 p.m.

Groveland Community Center, Groveland, CA

### *Comments/Questions*

- How does the park manage capacity now?
- It's the amount of traffic, not so much the numbers of people. Perhaps have permit system or eliminate autos in the park
- What you are doing now is impressive and a lot, but court still wants numbers
- Carrying capacity: we could handle more people but not necessarily more cars. The park is a big place to accommodate people, but there's not the space to accommodate cars/buses. The park already has a good sense of what it can handle
- Could this plan touch the fee structure? \$x for cars \$x for buses, \$x for those going to Valley [Congress has authority]
- If you charge more for folks to go in Valley, it limits those at various economic background
- Explore possibility of putting limit on day use. When lot fills, they have to take bus/shuttle in from outlying areas. Those with lodging or camping reservations would still be able to get in
- In previous plans, there seemed to be a priority for additional capacity on staff housing/facilities to be located in Valley rather than providing capacity for park visitors. Appreciate that there is a tension between employee and visitor services. But don't take away opportunities for visitors
- Buses have to be part of the solution for moving people into and through the park
- In previous plans, there was no choice in how to get into park via bus system. Need to incentivize any transportation system
- Process: in my experience doing utility planning, the process included meetings with public, but also an advisory group to deal with more technical issues on a more regular basis. May help share issues to gain better understanding
- For northern CA visitors, seems 120 is the most direct route into the park. We ought to be doing more to encourage this highway. Makes sense from a carbon footprint standpoint
- MPS seems El Portal centric/Mariposa corridor centric in terms of dealing with gateways
- Perhaps create an admin site in Groveland?
- 77% of Tuolumne County is rooted in public lands. With timber industry shutting down, recreation has become a large part of economic focus. We want to be good stewards of the natural resources. but federal lands limit ability to adapt to economic viability and vitality. The interdependence between park and community is crucial

- There is a tension between USFS and NPS. Scenic Byway partnership, NPS said “no”. Would like to see this change, tear down tension between agencies

*What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)*

- Waterfalls on Merced River
- Historic buildings at Wawona and Yosemite Village
- Road and drive from Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Jct
- Fern grotto at Fern Springs near Pohono Bridge
- Pohono Bridge automated river gauge (easy to check online)
- Would like regular emails or web updates on natural events like dogwood blooms, water flow, etc.
- Use of river for rafting and kayaking
- Climbing Half Dome

*What should stay the same?*

- Would like to make sure that people can enter the park in private vehicle. This is important to local people. don't want to be forced to ride a bus. If incentivize it to entice people to use bus, OK
- Being able to observe and appreciate and experience the natural environment. Keep it as open as possible while protecting and while allowing people to enjoy it
- Put additional Ranger-led interpretive programs at other more remote locations to alleviate crowding in Valley, e.g. interp programs or hikes at Hetch Hetchy
- Consider partnerships USFS/NPS/Tuolumne County, Groveland community visitor center. Pool resources for parking, housing
- What would people give up to protect the park? to make it more quiet? to make it better?
- Tramways
- Keep the west end of the Valley the same; there's a tranquility there that doesn't exist between Lodge to Ahwahnee. To keep it the same, don't add parking, make people walk there. Don't move the stress of the East Valley to the west
- Would love to see more local population
- Old Big Oak Flat Rd at far west end of Valley is a peaceful, tranquil place to take in views of the meandering Merced River and Valley

*What needs to be fixed?*

- Move Big Oak Flat gate to Crane Flat on Hwy 120

- House employees outside park in gateway communities supported by good transportation
- Gateway regional bus system
- Planning must extend outward to gateways
- Incentivise the bus system to complement lodging
- Provide financial data and work with community-based organizations to build understanding of park operations and capital improvement plans
- Bring YARTS into Groveland but develop a plan to include operations center, secure parking, etc. Deal with linear issues of infrastructure along Hwy 120; how do you get around once you have parked the car?
- Huge carbon footprint caused by distance from Yose Valley to Glacier Pt. Consider a hidden tunnel and elevator from Curry Village
- Valley is the primary destination. Do more to develop options to stay and enjoy other parts of the park. Hotel at Crane Flat? Encourage people to visit more remote locations (trade-offs with Tuolumne River planning options and alternatives)
- No hotel at Crane Flat
- Crane Flat is subject to winter road closures, which would complicate gate operations and park access
- Initiate busses as one stage in field trips. Ranger-led hikes in park, originating in gateway communities
- Coordinate communications between NPS and Caltrans, with regard to roadway conditions
- Communicate info on user capacity with gateway communities, so travelers know what to expect, when to stop
- Continue or expand use of social networking tools, like Twitter

*What do you want to see protected?*

- Ability to travel to East Side even if park's vehicle capacity is exceeded
- Consider a parking facility at Groveland
- Move Big Oak Flat entrance to Crane Flat because it would serve as a convenient point from which to direct visitors to or away from the Valley
- Explore possibility of free entrance passes for those who stay in gateways, as a way to alleviate demand for park lodging and stimulate bus travel
- Natural tranquility and quiet
- Special status plants and animals
- Water quality
- Riparian areas
- Keep some areas hard to reach to preserve natural quiet and solitude
- Variety/levels of accommodations
- Access to park
- Consider whether any changes in visitor flow would transfer impacts elsewhere
- Consider snowsheds on Tioga to keep the road open year-round

