

Public Scoping Meeting Comments
11/30/09
4-8 p.m.
El Portal Community Hall, El Portal, CA

Comments/Questions

- What does collaborative planning mean?
- Town Planning Advisory Committee is already functioning in El Portal. There is an avenue in place to engage with the NPS on El Portal planning
- Yosemite Valley planning meetings are often held during business hours. Would like to see those hours extended for those who are local but work during the day (or eves)
- Will the MRP amend the 5 broad goals of the 1980 GMP?

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

- El Portal's diverse community of artists, writers, retirees, YA, YI, NPS, schools, etc
- "Small town feel" of El Portal – a village, a town, a neighborhood and community – not a housing complex
- Minimal development on river plain (ie post-1997 flood)
- A variety of trails/pedestrian bridges near river in Yosemite Valley
- The efficiency of clustered housing in EP – makes for good potential for walking to work or for having bus stops that serve many people
- Being able to live and work w/in a walkable distance
- No streetlights in Old El Portal
- The "hidden village" effect of Old EP (not obvious from Hwy 140)
- The wild south slope of the canyon – no development
- Clean water
- Swimming
- Clean water
- Thriving wildlife along the river
- Diverse botanical community, including rare species
- I love bike riding – establish safe bike paths/lanes connecting parkline/Old EP/Rancheria/Cedar Lodge, etc
- Having beautiful places to hike in the area that are beautiful and not crowded
- The lack of commercial venues
- Having a general store vs a minimart
- Liked having a mechanic at the gas station to fix flat tires
- The community hall and community meeting space
- Would love to improve the town center
- Having a refuge from the tourism hub

- All of the community events and being part of a community that supports each other (family friendly)
- Being in an organic, architecturally diverse community (old EP) with old rock walls and narrow winding streets that people walk on and you can see your neighbors and talk
- Living in a safe community
- The musicians and their opportunity to plan
- The heritage trees in the river corridor (valley oaks and other special trees... would like to see them designated and protected like other communities are doing). Check Visalia and Austin, TX
- Being a community of people who love and know the park well, who have a vast well of institutional knowledge
- Elders living side-by-side with young families
- Affordable lodging opportunities in Yosemite Valley (i.e. maintain or increase camping. Do not increase lodges, hotels, buildings)
- Quiet in the wilderness; establish and enforce noise limits on vehicles (they do this in cities. we need to protect natural quiet in park)
- Our planners

What should be protected/stay the same?

- How do you make decisions to keep or close an area (like Merced Lake) without evaluating the ramifications/impacts on other similar or nearby or related facilities?
- Transportation issues extend beyond park boundaries. There is a circuit that involves only outside communities. Only regional solutions will resolve the park's needs. (consider what works best for the region as well as the park)
- Various designations within WSRA were an issue of concern when Merced River was designated. Existing private development was regarded as exempt from reach of management plans. (court decision settlement agreement may have clarified this point?)
- Keep the planning process open and accessible – an educational, explanatory approach will be appreciated
- EP should stay – housing essential services for park employees and park partners. Size should remain as is: Rancheria, Old EP
- Protect archeological resources
- Water quality – seasonal issues, smell? sometimes in late summer
- ADDRESS increases in recreational use of the river – parking, riverbank erosion, loss of riparian veg, swimming
- Lose the roadside parking
- Find ways to keep the community whole, it functions well. EP community is an ORV
- Do not increase development here
- Areas should be restored – everywhere – restore ecological function

- Camping in Yosemite Valley – it’s not overly developed, provides a rustic experience. Don’t need a lot of restroom or shower facilities

What needs to be fixed?

- How does the effort to designate High Sierra Camps as historic interface with the Merced River Plan?
- When Merced was designated, there was an understanding that existing levels of development would be grandfathered”/allowed to remain
- How will this plan affect the private land parcels in the Merced corridor?
- Remove possibility of hazardous waste spills in river corridor (bulk plant, EP gas station, new sewage treatment plant)
- Complete biological surveys in river corridor (comprehensive invertebrate survey, deer population)
- Leaf blowers and noise pollution – specify and enforce decibel limits on vehicles – esp motorcycles
- Examine impacts of roads – need to armor river banks, impact of sanding, need for storm drains?
- Clarify and enforce housing rules in old EP
- Provide more shuttle buses and more frequent runs in Yose Valley during peak visitation. Also provide more shuttle options from EP to/from the Valley
- Provide a taxi service for hikers to hike back to their cars/hotels/buses
- Restrict parking spaces to assigned sites - have numbered spaces to allow for reservations at peak times
- Traffic calming measures in EP – rumble strips on 140, islands and plantings in old EP
- Acknowledge that staffing is continuously increasing along with housing needs
- Reduce amount of development and surface hardening (ie pavement) in the corridor
- Improve signage on Foresta Rd (the dirt one) not being passable to cars
- Consider impact of stock wastes on streams, including tributaries. Also, impacts on visitor experience and the trails themselves
- Increase # of bear lockers at trailheads and pullouts
- Examine development in all potential rockfall zones and assess the danger to visitors and residents
- Restore pine/oak woodlands in the river corridor
- Designate heritage trees and make efforts to protect them from human impacts
- In EP, use standard planning procedures with new construction or changes to existing uses. For example, providing sufficient parking and transportation
- When constructing new buildings, try to make them conform to existing historic buildings nearby
- Be careful using expedite NEPA review in emergencies