Chapter VI: Consultation and Coordination

Consultation

Scoping History

The National Park Service published a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement on the Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS in the *Federal Register* on July 27, 2004. A series of public scoping meetings were held in mid-August in Oakland, Mariposa, Yosemite Valley, and El Portal, California. In response to public comment, the public scoping period was extended by two weeks and closed on September 10, 2004. All scoping comment letters, as well as a scoping report, are available for viewing on the park's web site (*www.nps.gov/yose/planning/mrp/revision)*.

Public Review of Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS

The *Draft Merced Wild and Scenic River Revised Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* was released for public review in January 2005. The Notice of Availability was published in the *Federal Register* on January 14, 2005 and the official review period continued through March 22, 2005. The National Park Service contacted local, regional, and national media outlets, issued press releases that were faxed and emailed to media outlets, and phone calls were made to newspaper and news reporters to generate interest in the plan. In addition, paid newspaper advertisements were placed in the Mariposa Gazette, the Sierra Star (Oakhurst, CA), the Union Democrat (Sonora, CA), the Merced Sun-Star, and the Mammoth Times. Paid public notices were placed in the San Francisco Chronicle, the L.A. Times, the Sacramento Bee, and the Fresno Bee. Numerous stories about the plan and the schedule of public meetings appeared in local and regional newspapers. In addition, the National Park Service posted several project fact sheets on the park's web site, posted fliers on community bulletin boards, post offices, and local businesses in communities where public meetings were hosted, and posted press release announcements in the park's Daily Report throughout the entire comment period on the plan. In addition, the planning update newsletter was mailed to over 8,000 subscribers, and notices regarding the plan were emailed via Yosemite's Electronic Newsletter to over 4,500 subscribers.

A series of public meetings were held throughout California in February and March 2005 to discuss the draft document. In addition to public testimony received at the public meetings, 147 comment letters were received during the public review period. The public comments received and transcripts from the public hearings are available for viewing on the park web site listed above. Public comments and responses for this project are included in Appendix F, Summary of Public Comments and Responses.

During the public comment period on the Draft SEIS, the National Park Service hosted eleven public meetings between February 22, 2005 and March 7, 2005 across California in Yosemite Valley, El Portal, San Francisco, Burbank, Oakhurst, Mammoth Lakes, Sacramento, Fresno, Merced, Mariposa, and Groveland. An additional National Park Service Open House was hosted in Yosemite Valley prior to the end of the public comment period.

Each public meeting was set up to allow for informal conversations between park staff (including consultants) and the public to discuss elements of the revised plan. The second portion of these public meetings was dedicated to a presentation by park staff on the plan, followed by formal

public hearing recorded by a court reporter. Participants could address their comments on the plan either to members of Yosemite National Park's Management Team and the audience, or in a private session with the court reporter. Following the public hearing, open dialogue continued between the public and park staff in group or individual settings.

During the official comment period, the public was encouraged to submit written comments on the Draft Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS via letter, email, or fax. Written comments were also accepted at all public meetings.

The National Park Service specifically initiated dialogue with several interested local parties. These included National Park Service employees and their families, Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts at Yosemite (primary concessioner) employees and residents, and park partner staff such as the Yosemite Institute, the Yosemite Association, and The Yosemite Fund. In addition, the National Park Service did extensive outreach within the local communities of El Portal and Wawona through participation at local Mariposa County Planning Town Advisory Committee meetings. The National Park Service also conducted a "walking tour" in El Portal to discuss the process for identifying Outstandingly Remarkable Values within the El Portal segment of the Merced River and the rationale for the various El Portal boundary alternatives. The National Park Service engaged Gateway communities throughout the process through personal communications and meetings between the park staff and gateway community members.

Results of Draft Review Comments

As a result of the public comment period, the park received comments from 114 individuals, 25 organizations, 6 government agencies, 2 tribes and 1 university, including public testimony given by individuals at public meetings. A total of over 900 separate comments were received. The analysis of these comments generated about 400 general concern statements, which were categorized and considered for incorporation in the planning process. Some of the main concerns raised during the public comment period and addressed in this Final Merced River Plan/SEIS include the following:

- The relationship between the *General Management Plan* and the Merced River Plan in the context of proposed user capacity limits.
- The process for ensuring that the *Yosemite Valley Plan* and projects associated with it are reviewed for compliance with this Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS.
- The relationship between existing elements of Yosemite National Park's User Capacity Management Program, proposed visitor limits, and the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection component.
- Criteria used for the selection of Visitor Experience and Resource Protection indicators and standards and suggestions for additional indicators and standards.
- Clarification of what types of management actions would be implemented associated with the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection and what management actions would require further National Environmental Policy Act review and public involvement.
- Clarification on how visitor use limits would be implemented.
- Clarification regarding the interim facility limits and how the park would make a determination on maintaining or removing these limits.

- Concerns from culturally associated American Indian groups relating to continued access within the river corridor for traditional practices, as well as protection and enhancement of important natural and cultural resources within the entire corridor.

- Concerns from residents in local communities and American Indian groups regarding management zoning prescriptions that allow for placement of administrative facilities within El Portal and Wawona.

- Specific and general desires relating to management of Yosemite National Park's natural, cultural, physical, and social resources.

- Concerns regarding the complexity of the document and the user capacity program in particular.

The issues and concerns not addressed in this document include the desire to have the Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS address all elements of the existing Merced River Plan, the desire to have the document address specific projects, such as the types of campgrounds or road realignments, the desire for the National Park Service to commit to a day use reservation system or other specific management actions in this document, and support or opposition of numerous specific activities or park implementation projects. All comments received during the comment period have been duly considered and are now part of the administrative record for this project.

Comment Analysis and Response Process

Public comments received during the public comment period were reviewed and analyzed using the park's Comment Analysis and Response Database system. Analysis of public comment letters is comprised of a series of stages which require review by staff and members of the Management Team during review and processing. For example, each letter received is read to determine the discrete points the author is expressing. Each discrete sentence or paragraph is then "coded" in order to associate that "comment" with a particular resource topic or element of the plan (such as air quality or the plan's relationship to other projects).

Once all letters have been coded for individual comments, similar comments are grouped together and a "concern statement" is generated, which is intended to capture the main points of what the comments are addressing. Concern statements are worded in a way that affords the National Park Service the opportunity to respond to a requested action. Concern statements are then screened to determine whether or not further clarification needs to be made in the document or whether they call for a modification of the proposed action. In the case of the later, these types of concerns would be brought to park management for deliberation. Finally, the planning team prepares responses presenting the National Park Service's reasoning as to how and why public concerns will be incorporated into the planning process.

As a direct result of public input, all comments are made available for review on the park's web site. The posting of public comments is a result of requests made during the scoping process for this planning effort, and will continue for future planning efforts. The Summary of Public Comments and Responses generated through the comment analysis and response process is included as Appendix F.

Coordination

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 USC 1531 *et seq.*) requires all federal land agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded or carried out by the agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or critical habitat. The National Park Service initiated consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in August 2004. The species list for special-status species to be evaluated for this project was obtained from: http://sacramento.fws.gov/es/ssp_lists/auto_list_form.cfm on October 6, 2004 and was used as the basis for special-status analysis in this environmental assessment (see Appendix D, Special-Status Species Considered in this Analysis). Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue, as defined by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as environmental compliance for the Final Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS is finalized.

California State Historic Preservation Officer

A Programmatic Agreement among the National Park Service at Yosemite, the California State Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Planning, Design, Construction, Operation, and Maintenance (NPS 1999w) was developed in consultation with American Indian groups having cultural association with Yosemite National Park, and was executed in October 1999. Pursuant to Article VI of this Programmatic Agreement, the review process for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, is being conducted in conjunction with this National Environmental Policy Act review process. The National Park Service initiated consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer on September 29, 2004, regarding the development of the Draft Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS. On January 21, 2005 a letter was sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation requesting for review and comments on the Draft Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS to be provided to the park by March 22, 2005. No comments were received from the three agencies.

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service-administered lands are bounded by U.S. Forest Service lands to the north, south, and west of the El Portal Administrative Site, and the U.S. Forest Service administers the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor to the west of the El Portal Administrative Site. The National Park Service initiated consultation with the U.S. Forest Service (Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests) regarding the Draft Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS in September 2004. The National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service will coordinate their planning efforts on the Merced Wild and Scenic River, particularly in areas where the agencies jurisdictions meet. Although the U.S. Forest Service's Merced River corridor boundary currently ends at the western end of the El Portal Administrative Site, the U.S. Forest Service has indicated that additional areas under its jurisdiction between the El Portal Administrative Site's western boundary and its eastern boundary at the Yosemite National Park boundary are likely to be included in the U.S. Forest Service Merced River corridor boundary in the next revision to their Merced River management plan (NPS 2004h).

California Department of Transportation

The National Park Service initiated consultation with the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) in order to discuss rights-of-way within the Merced River corridor.

Sections of Highway 140 in the El Portal Administrative Site are either owned, leased, or maintained by CalTrans. The National Park Service has been in direct contact with CalTrans' survey and right-of-way departments. Consultation is currently ongoing.

Bureau of Land Management

An interagency agreement between the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management guides the policies and procedures for commercial whitewater river rafting within the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor. According to the agreement, the Bureau of Land Management's Folsom Resource Area District is responsible for the permitting and regulation of commercial river guide companies who use the Red Bud Launch Site (at the west end of the El Portal Administrative Site). A dialogue was initiated with the Bureau of Land Management regarding the Draft Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS (NPS 2004i and 2004j). It is expected that the Bureau of Land Management will continue to manage whitewater river rafting on the river west of the El Portal Administrative Site under the existing permitting regulations. Any management actions dealing with use of the Red Bud Launch Site would be coordinated with the Bureau of Land Management.

American Indian Consultation

National Park Service consultation with American Indian groups occurred throughout the development of the original Merced River Plan. Yosemite National Park continues to consult with American Indian groups having a cultural association with the Merced River corridor, as well as those in the immediate vicinity. Information sharing and project planning has included face-to-face consultation sessions at the All Tribal meeting on August 24, 2004. The All Tribal meeting included the following groups: the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc (AICMC); the Tuolumne Me-wuk Tribal Council; the North Fork Mono Rancheria; the Chukchansi Tribal Government (Yokuts); the Mono Lake Kutzadika; the Bridgeport Paiute Indian Colony; and the Bishop Paiute Tribal Council. The Draft Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS was mailed by Certified Mail Return Receipt Requested on January 21, 2005, to the same tribes. Telephone follow-up with an offer to provide a face-to-face presentation similar to the public outreach occurred on February 15, 2005. Face-to-face consultation with a presentation to the AICMC occurred on January 27, 2005, and with the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk on January 25, 2005. Consultation and partnering will continue with the American Indian groups throughout the completion of the Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS.

Gateway Communities

Park management has coordinated with local communities through a series of presentations to local governments and civic organizations. All organizations requesting such presentations were accommodated.

List of Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses that Received the Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS

The names of individuals who received the document are available upon request.

Federal Agencies

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Public Health Service

Department of the Interior:
- Bureau of Land Management, Folsom, California Office
- Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento Office
- National Park Service:
  - Air Resources Division
  - Alaska Regional Office
  - Denver Service Center
  - Geologic Resources Division
  - Intermountain Regional Support Office
  - Pacific West Regional Office
  - Water Resources Division
  - National Parks:
    - Big Cypress National Park
    - Canyonlands National Park
    - Channel Islands National Park
    - Crater Lake National Park
    - Death Valley National Park
    - Everglades National Park
    - Flagstaff Area National Monuments
    - Golden Gates National Recreation Area
    - Joshua Tree National Park
    - Lake Mead National Recreation Area
    - Lassen Volcanic National Park
    - Mount Rainier National Park
    - Point Reyes National Seashore
    - Sequoia and Kings National Parks

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service:
- Angeles National Forest
- Boise Interagency Fire Center
- Coconino National Forest
- Humboldt National Forest
- Lassen National Forest
- Inyo National Forest
- Missoula Fire Science Lab
- Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station
- Sierra National Forest
- Stanislaus National Forest
- Tahoe National Forest
- Toiyabe National Forest

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

U.S. Department of Insurance Office, Environmental Policy and Compliance

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Sacramento

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Francisco Regional Office

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Regional Office

U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, California Office

U.S. Postal Service, Yosemite National Park

United States Representatives

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator Diane Feinstein

Congressman George Radanovich

Congressman John T. Doolittle

Congressman James Hansen

Congressman John Kasich

Congressman Ralph Regula

Congressman George Miller

Congressman Mark Souder

State Agencies

American Indian Heritage Commission

California Department of Fire

California Department of Fish and Game

California Department of Justice, Attorney General

California Office of Historic Preservation

California Department of Parks and Recreation

California Office of Planning and Research, State Clearing House

California Department of Transportation

California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Department of Forestry

Resources Agency of California

American Indian Tribes

American Indian Council Mariposa County Inc (a.k.a. Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation)

Bishop Paiute Indian Colony

Coarsegold Chuckchansi

Mono Lake Kutzadika Paiute Indian Community

Mono County Bridgeport Paiute Indian Colony
North Fork Mono Indian Museum
North Fork Mono Rancheria
Tuolumne Me-wuk Rancheria

County and Local Governments

Fresno County:
- Board of Supervisors
- Chamber of Commerce
- Planning and Resource Management

Inyo County:
- Planning Department

Madera County:
- Board of Supervisors
- Oakhurst Chamber of Commerce
- Planning Director

Mariposa County:
- Air Pollution Control District
- Board of Supervisors
- Chamber of Commerce
- Department of Public Works
- Environmental Health Department
- Planning Department
- Sheriff
- Unified School District

Merced County:
- Association of Governments
- Planning Commission
- Planning Department
- Visitor Bureau

Mono County:
- Board of Supervisors
- Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Bureau
- Mono Lake Visitor Center
- Planning Department

San Francisco County:
- Planning Department
- Public Utilities, Hetch Hetchy Water and Power

Stanislaus County:
- Council of Government
- Environmental Review Committee
- Planning Department

Tuolumne County:
- Air Pollution Control District
- Alliance for Resources and Environment
- Board of Supervisors
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Development
- Department of Public Works
- Planning Commission
- Sheriff
- Visitor Bureau- Groveland

Organizations and Businesses

Access Fund
American Disability Act Compliance Service
All Seasons Groveland Inn
American Alpine Club
American Hiking Society
American Whitewater
Automobile Club of Southern California
Backcountry Horsemen of California
Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll
Bell Sports
Bettencourt & Associates
Biophilia Society
Brecher & Volker
Brooks Institute of Photography
Calabasas Historical Society
California Bus Association
California Cycle Magazine
California Preservation Foundation
California State Horsemen's Association
California Trout
California Wilderness Coalition
Care-ousel Therapeutic Riding
Central Coast Studios
Central Sierra Audubon Society
Comfort Inn
Cycle California
Dames & Moore
David Evans & Associates, Inc.
Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts
Denali Productions, Studio One
Destination America, Inc
Destination Villages
Dornbusch & Co.
Drewe & Associates
Earth First, Santa Cruz
Earth Island Institute
East Bay Bicycle Coalition
El Portal Homeowners Association
El Portal Market
El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee
Environmental Defense Fund
Environment Now
Environmental Science Associates
Fish Camp Advisory Council
Fish Camp Property Owners Association
Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Forest
Friends of the River
Friends of Yosemite
Future Forestry Products
Geographic Expeditions
Gill Associates
Global Environmental
Gold River Discovery Center
Greystone
Griffith & Farrace
Groveland Yosemite Gateway Museum
Halff Associates, Inc.
Havans Foundation
Heritage Trails
High Sierra Hikers Association
Highway 120 Association
Historic Trails Council
Jakes Associates
Law Office of J Wallace Oman
Law Office of Mark A. Kanai
Law Offices of Michael Wainman
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
Manitoba Conservation
Margen & Associates
Marin Mammal Center
Mariposa County Visitors Bureau
Mariposa Horse Association
Mariposans for Environmentally Responsible Growth
MorComm Press
Mountain Defense League
National Parks and Conservation Association
National Trust for Historic Preservation, California Office
Southwest and California Region Offices
Natural Resources Defense Council
National Tour Association
Newfields
Northcoast Environmental Center
Nuemiller & Beardslee
Oakhurst Lodge
Ormsby & Thickstun Design
Pacific Bell
Pacific Gas & Electric, Public Affairs
Parmelee Art Company
Pinnacle Economics
Planning and Conservation League
Polar Equipment Incorporation
Provost & Pritchard Engineering Group
Ramada Limited, Oakhurst
Reed Construction Data
Regional Council of Rural Counties
Renewable Technologies Inc.
Royal Robbins Inc.
Salomon Smith Barney
Save-the-Redwoods League
Service Employee International Union, Local 535
Sierra Club:
- Condor Group
- Loma Prieta Chapter
- Miami Group
- National Office
- Tuolumne Group
- Yosemite Committee

Sierra Railroad Company
Sonoma County Horse Council
Sonora Community Hospital
Soroptomist International of Groveland
Sparks Studios
Sunset Magazine
The Ansel Adams Gallery
The Nature Conservancy
The Yosemite Fund
Theroux Environmental
Thurmond Law Offices
Timeless Technologies
Tioga Lodge
Tuolumne River Preservation Trust
Upper Merced River Watershed
Valley View Trail Riders Association
VIA Adventures
Wawona Area Properties Owners Association
Westar Associates
Whalen & Associates Inc
Wild Canid Research Group
The Wilderness Society:
- California/Nevada Region
- National Office

Wilderness Watch
Wimmer Yamada & Caughey
Yosemite Area Audubon

Yosemite Association
Yosemite Bug Hostel
Yosemite Campers Coalition
Yosemite Concession Services
Yosemite Guides
Yosemite Institute
Yosemite Motels
Yosemite Medical Group
Yosemite Pines
Yosemite Restoration Trust
Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau
Yosemite Sightseeing Tours
Yosemite West Group

Libraries

Alameda County, Main Brach
Bassett Memorial
Bioscience and Natural Resources Library
California State Library
California State University Fresno, Henry Madden Library
Columbia College Library
Contra Costa County, Concord Branch
Government Documents Library
Government Information, Shields Library
Groveland
Los Angeles City, Central Branch
Marin County, Main Branch
Mariposa, including El Portal Branch
Oakhurst Library
Robert Crown Law Library
Sacramento County, Central Branch
San Bernardino County, Main Branch
San Diego City, Main Branch
San Diego County Law Library
San Francisco City, Main Branch
San Jose City, Berryessa Branch
San Mateo County, Law Library
Sonoma County Library
Sonoma State University, Salazar Library
Santa Cruz County Library
Stanford University, Green Library
Stanislaus County Library
University of California at Berkeley, Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley, Main Library
University of California at Davis, Shields Library
University of California at Los Angeles, Maps and Government Information Library
University of California at Los Angeles, University Research Library
University of Minnesota, Forestry Library
United States Department of Insurance Library
Yosemite National Park Research Library

Newspapers

Antelope Valley Press
Associated Press
Bakersfield Californian
Contra Costa Times
Fresno Bee
Los Angeles Times
Mariposa Gazette
Mariposa Tribune
Merced Sun-Star
Mountain Democrat
Oakland Tribune
San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco Examiner
San Jose Mercury News
Sierra Star
Sonora Union Democrat
Stockton Record
The Modesto Bee
The Sacramento Bee

Radio

KCBS AM – San Francisco
KFBK – Sacramento
KFIV – Modesto
KGO AM – San Francisco
KMJ – Fresno
KMPH – Fresno
KQED – San Francisco
Plus local radio stations

Television

KRON – San Francisco

KTVU – Oakland
KXTV – Sacramento
NBC Network News – Los Angeles
Utah State University
Vassar College
Woodbury University

Colleges and Universities

Bakersfield College
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Humboldt
California State University, Long Beach
California State University, Northridge
California State University, Sacramento
California State University, San Diego
California State University, San Jose
California State University, Stanislaus
College of the Atlantic
Cuyamaca California College
Colorado School of Mines
Colorado State University
Consumnes River College
De Anza College of Environmental Studies
Diablo Valley College
Drexel University
East Carolina University
Florida Atlantic University
Fresno Pacific University
Grinnell College
Institute of the Rockies
Johnson State College
Long Beach City College
Modesto Junior College
North Carolina State University
Pasadena City College
San Joaquin Delta College
Slippery Rock University
Stanford University
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Riverside
University of California, Santa Cruz
University of Florida
University of Minnesota
University of Montana
University of Tennessee
University of Vermont
University of Washington, School of Law