

Mineral King Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

Planning Participant Workbook



Message from the Superintendent

I would like to invite you to participate in public scoping for the Mineral King Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (MKMP). The last comprehensive plan for the Mineral King Area was completed in 1980. The purpose of this plan is to evaluate recommendations from the park-wide planning documents and determine which would be implemented through the MKMP; to address current and future needs related to visitor use, natural and cultural resources protection, and land protection; to provide long-term management direction for the Mineral King area; and to establish direction and guidance for the protection of the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District.



Public scoping is an opportunity for interested individuals, organizations, agencies, and tribes to provide thoughtful, relevant information or suggestions for consideration by park managers before alternatives are developed and analyzed for the MKMP.

I hope that this planning participant workbook and the four scheduled meetings will help facilitate public involvement and provide you with more information on the draft project purpose, needs, and objectives, and the planning timeline.

We look forward to your participation in this planning process. Thank you for your interest in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Sincerely,

Karen Taylor-Goodrich
Superintendent

For more information or to share your comments

If you would like to be on the mailing list for this project please provide your name and mailing address by mail or email to:

Superintendent
Attn: Mineral King Management Plan
47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, CA 93271
SEKI_Planning@nps.gov

To submit comments, please visit the Planning, Environment and Public Comment System (PEPC) at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/seki> or submit written comments to the address above.

Guide to Commenting

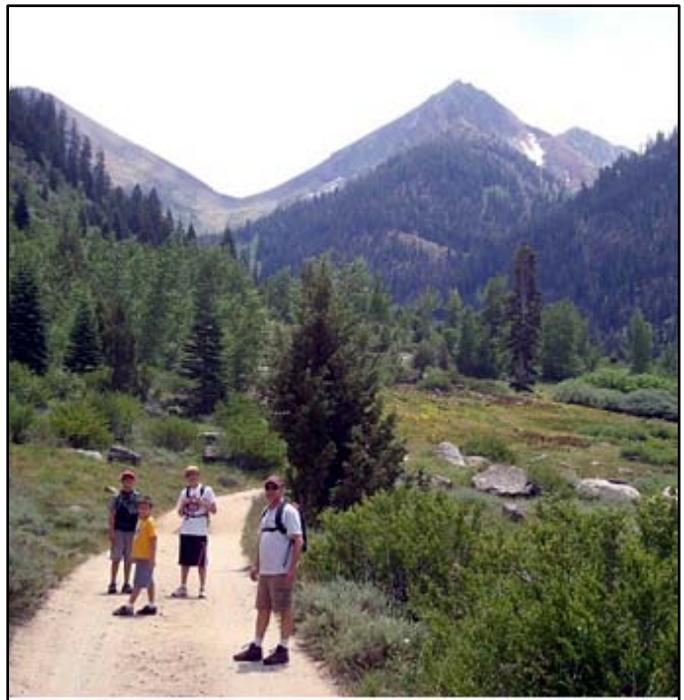
Each person has an important perspective on the management of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and can make a unique contribution that will help the National Park Service plan for the future. The type of comment that is most useful in evaluating a plan or project depends on how far along the agency is in the planning process.

Currently, the Mineral King Management Plan and Environmental Assessment is in the scoping phase. During this phase, the parks' project team solicits comments from the public to help determine the range of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the plan, and to help us focus on the most important issues to guide our planning for the future.

At the time of scoping, the park generally provides a description of the project purpose and need, a list of project goals or objectives, and preliminary issues identified through internal scoping. These are included as part of this workbook. We would appreciate your comments, concerns, and suggestions related to these items.

The most useful types of scoping comments consider the following:

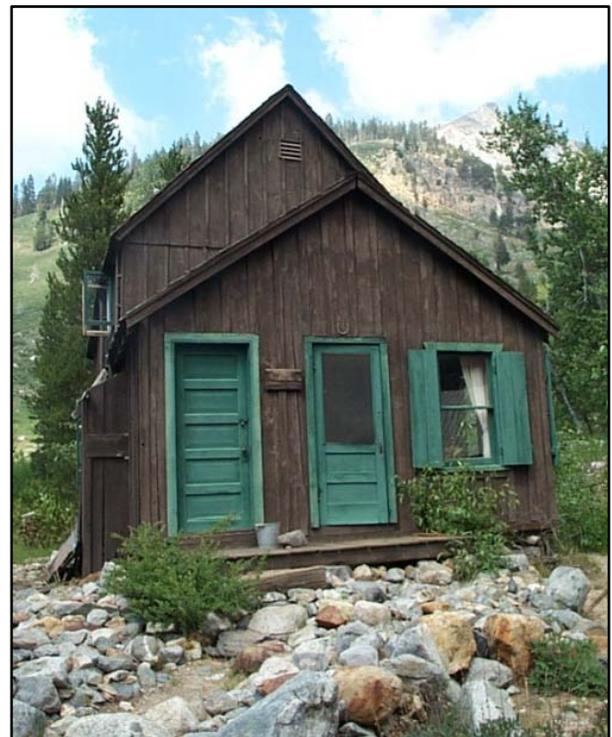
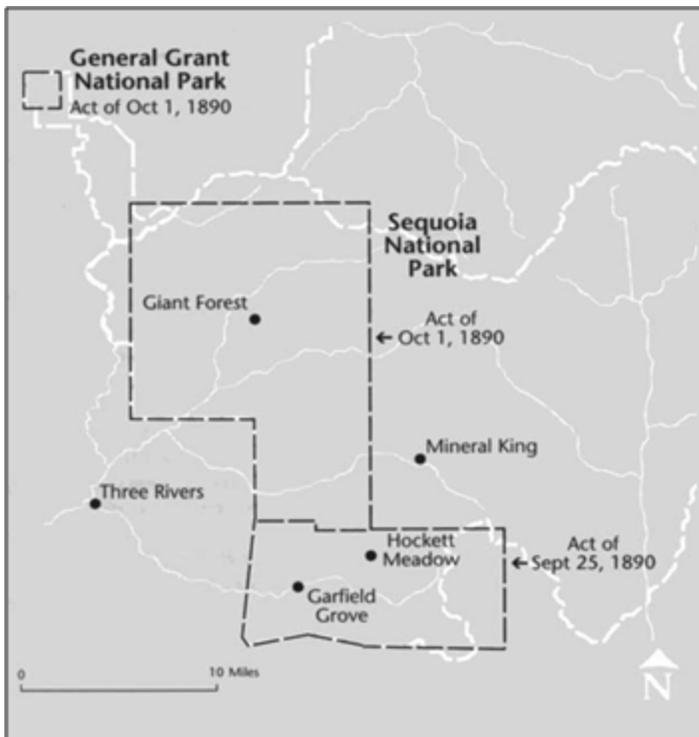
- Alternative approaches and ideas for accomplishing the project objectives
- Potential environmental and socioeconomic issues that need to be considered
- Other projects in the area that might affect or be affected by the proposal
- Information that needs to be considered (such as related research) and why
- Information on how you use the park and how project objectives might affect your use



Mineral King Administrative History

- Late 1800s Mining period and construction of the Mineral King Road
- 1890 Sequoia National Park established (Atwell, Cabin Cove, and Hockett, but not the upper valley or area east of Cabin Cove)
- 1893 Sierra Forest Reserve (DOI) established (includes the upper valley and area east of Cabin Cove)
- 1905 Sierra Forest Reserve transferred to U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- 1908 MK Valley (east of Cabin Cove) folded into new Sequoia National Forest
- 1915 USFS Term Occupancy Act allows for private cabins via renewable permits: permits can be issued for up to 30 years
- 1915-1942 Most of current 64 Special Use Permitted (SUP) cabins built according to USFS rustic design guidelines
- 1926 Sierra Forest Reserve becomes Sequoia National Game Refuge

1978 Mineral King Valley added to Sequoia National Park "to assure the preservation...of the outstanding natural and scenic features...and enhance the ecological values and public enjoyment of the area."



Legislation and Related Laws, Policies, Guidance, and Plans

Organic Act of 1916

This legislation established the National Park Service... to conserve the scenery, natural and historic objects, and wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of those resources in such a manner as to leave them unimpaired for future generations.

Sequoia National Park Enabling Legislation

Sequoia National Park is dedicated and set apart as a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and managed for the preservation from injury of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities or wonders and for their retention in their natural conditions.

Public Law 95-625, Sec. 314

This legislation added Mineral King Upper Valley and the area east of Cabin Cove to Sequoia National Park (approximately 16,200 acres). The purposes of the Act are as follows:

- ❖ To assure the preservation for this and future generations of the outstanding natural and scenic features of the area
- ❖ To enhance the ecological values and public enjoyment of the area
- ❖ To insure the permanent conservation of wildlife within the area

The 1978 Act required development of a Mineral King Comprehensive Management Plan, which was completed in 1980. In 1984, a Mineral King Land Protection Plan was completed (1991 addendum). The Act also settled a ski development conflict, "...development of permanent facilities for downhill skiing would be inconsistent with the preservation and enhancement of its ecological values."

Consolidated Appropriations Act (2005 Amendment)

In 2005, P.L. 95-625, Section 314 was amended by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which deleted any end date for vacation cabin special use permits and allowed for the transfer of the cabin permits to current permittee's "heirs, successors, and assigns." The 2005 amendment changed the status of the cabins, thus requiring the NPS to manage this qualified use *for the future*, at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior.

General Management Plan

The guiding document for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks is our general management plan, which many of you were probably involved in. It was a ten year public process that ended with an approved plan in 2007. This plan establishes the vision for the park, determines the appropriate visitation and facilities, establishes desired conditions, and provides direction to park managers for the next 20 years.

Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District (2003)

The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. The listing consists of the road, 63 structures, and the surrounding landscape within the district boundary.

Significance of the Mineral King Area

Excerpt from the Mineral King Comprehensive Management Plan, 1980

- A visit to Mineral King takes visitors through the range of Sierra environments, from the foothills and oak woodlands, through the forests and giant sequoias, to the alpine valley enhanced by rugged mountain peaks and rushing high-country streams.
- The historic Mineral King Road provides access to private cabins, primitive public campgrounds, a ranger station, and the Silver City Resort and cabin community.
- Mineral King provides an alternative experience for park visitors, in contrast to the experience offered at more highly developed and visited areas of the park.

Why do you value Mineral King? What makes Mineral King special to you?

Draft Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the plan is to evaluate recommendations from park-wide planning documents and determine which would be implemented through the MKMP; to address current and future needs related to visitor use, natural and cultural resources protection, and land protection; and to provide long-term management direction for the Mineral King area.

In accordance with Public Law 95-625, Sec. 314, the National Park Service must manage the Mineral King Valley to:

- Assure the preservation of the outstanding natural and scenic features for this and future generations
- Enhance the ecological values and public enjoyment
- Protect against the effects of siltation on the ecosystem with regard to routes of access to and within the Mineral King area, and
- Ensure the permanent conservation of wildlife

Additionally, plan needs to:

- Evaluate recommendations from park-wide planning documents (GMP and others) and determine implementation priorities.
- Address current and future needs related to visitor use, natural and cultural resources protection, and land protection.
- Establish management direction and guidance for the protection of the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District.

Does the purpose and need statement meet your needs? Should they be modified?

Draft Planning Objectives

Objectives may arise from many sources – a law, agency mission, a prior planning document, or another agency’s regulation or guidance. The following draft management objectives have thus far been developed for the Mineral King Management Plan and EA.

- Preserve and maintain the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District
- Accommodate slightly higher levels of public use
- Reduce human and bear conflicts
- Provide a framework for long-term management of permitted premises (cabin use)
- Protect lands as identified in 1984 Land Protection Plan and P.L. 95-625
- Protect wetlands and water resources (EO 11990 and Clean Water Act)
- Prevent introduction and spread of invasive plants
- Define a long-term strategy for the Atwell Mill campground and protection of the Atwell Grove.
- Explore suitable alternative campground locations to meet the current and projected camping needs of the area.
- Provide better delineated trailhead parking in the Upper Mineral King Valley serving the needs of wilderness users.
- Provide guidelines to address marmot proofing vehicles.
- Determine the need and locations of picnic areas.

What is your long-term vision for Mineral King and how could this be accomplished?

Mineral King Potential Issues and Concerns

Natural Resources

- What natural resources do you consider most important to address in the plan?
- How do the water/wastewater systems affect area resources?
- What should we do to ensure resource protection for future generations?
- What steps should we take to better protect the Kaweah East Fork Wild & Scenic River?

Cultural Resources

- What historic resources are most important to you?
- How can we better protect the area's cultural resources?

Visitor Use

- What recreational opportunities would you like to see at Mineral King?
- What types of interpretive or educational programs do you expect or desire?
- How can your visitor experience be enhanced by the National Park Service?
- What are your safety concerns?

Land use

- How should we update the Land Protection Plan and what should be our priorities for willing seller land acquisitions in the future?

Special park uses

- How should the change in vacation cabin permittee status be reflected in the Mineral King Management Plan?

Existing facilities

- What facilities are important to you?
- Do existing facilities meet your needs or enhance your visit?
- Are the campgrounds what you expect in a remote area?

Access

- How does the road affect your experience?
- What transportation and access issues are important to you?
- Do trailheads and other parking areas meet your needs?



What issues are important to YOU?

Mineral King Draft Planning Timeline

Winter 2010	Internal Scoping
Ongoing	Public Scoping through June 30, 2010
Summer 2010	Scoping Comments Analyzed Data Collection Alternatives Development
Fall 2010	Finalize Alternatives
Winter 2010/2011	Public Review of MKMP/EA
Spring 2011	Analyze comments and select final alternative Prepare decision document
Summer 2011	Superintendent recommends alternative to Regional Director
Summer/Fall 2011	Regional Director approval and public notification

