



Draft Public Scoping Report

CAT
Content
Analysis
Team

[Oct., 2007]

Yosemite National Park

Merced River Wild and Scenic Comprehensive Management Plan EIS



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Introduction

During the late spring and early summer of 2007, the National Park Service (NPS) conducted public scoping as part of the early development of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan (MRP). The primary purpose of public scoping in a planning effort is to compile ideas, interests and concerns from members of the public to help shape responsible plans for Yosemite National Park. The public scoping period began a 33-month process of collaboration with elected officials, partners in other agencies, park visitors and neighbors, gateway communities, culturally associated tribal groups, scientists and scholars, national and local advocacy groups, and private citizens to develop a management plan for the Merced River corridor.

The purpose of this planning effort is to provide long-term, comprehensive guidance for the protection of the Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers. This Public Scoping Report is a summary of the voices heard and ideas generated during the public scoping period from March 28 to June 10, 2007. This will serve as an essential tool for park managers in shaping management directives for the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor.

Public Scoping Process Summary

The NPS initiated public scoping for the MRP on March 28, 2007. A Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published on April 11, 2007 in the Federal Register. The public scoping period lasted 74 days, closing on June 10, 2007. During public scoping, the National Park Service solicits comments from members of the public in order to understand the spectrum concerns, interests and issues that need to be addressed in the planning process.

Members of the public were encouraged to submit comments in a variety of ways. Individuals could submit written comments at one of four public scoping meetings. Meetings took place in Yosemite Valley, Mariposa, and San Francisco. These events were advertised in local newspapers, on the park's website, and through the park's mailed and electronic Planning Update newsletter.

Public meetings consisted of an introductory presentation on the planning process, followed by focused discussions with the NPS planning team. The meetings also served as a means to help individuals learn more about the Merced planning process. Informational displays and reference materials were made available, along with take-home brochures, and the Participant Guide: Planning for the Merced River. Ultimately, comments were accepted via e-mail, fax, and letter, on comment forms, and through comments captured on flip charts at public meetings. These materials can be found on the park's website at www.nps.gov/archive/yose/planning/newmrp/.

Throughout the scoping period, the NPS received 109 public scoping responses (including letters, faxes, emails, comment forms and public meeting flip-chart notes). Each response from the public was carefully reviewed and individual ideas were identified and assigned a code according to the subject matter. These discrete individual ideas are known as public comments. A total of 1,244 public comments were generated from the letters, faxes, email and meeting notes received during the scoping process.

Public comments were then grouped into what are called concern statements. These public concerns identify common themes expressed by individuals or groups requesting particular lines of action by the National Park Service. A total of 98 public concern statements were generated from the over 1,244 total public comments.

This Public Scoping Report presents the public concern statements with one or more representative quotes taken from public comments that accompany and support each public concern, conveying the author's thoughts on how, when, where, or why the concern should be addressed. For the purposes of this report, the supporting quotes are just a sample from all comments received on a particular theme of concern. A given public concern can reflect one or many supporting comments.

In addition to presenting the concerns identified in public scoping for the MRP, this report provides an explanation of the comment analysis process, which includes the analysis of individual comments and the development of concern statements. This report also includes a description of the next step in the comment analysis process, called the concern screening process, which will integrate public comments into the planning framework. The concern screening process will begin after the publication of this Public Scoping Report.

Chronology of Public Scoping

- *March 28, 2007*: NPS initiated public scoping for the MRP.
- *April 11, 2007*: A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register.
- *June 10, 2007*: The public scoping period closed (lasting 74 days).

Concern Analysis and Screening Process

Comment Analysis Process

The letters, emails and faxes represented in this Public Scoping Report were analyzed using a process developed by the United States Forest Service (Forest Service), Washington Office Ecosystem Management Staff, Content Analysis Team (CAT). For the last six years, this system has been used to analyze comments for nearly all planning efforts in Yosemite National Park.

The comment analysis is comprised of three main components: a coding structure, a comment database, and the narrative summary contained in this report. Initially, a coding structure is developed to sort comments into logical groups by topics. Code categories are derived from an analysis of the range of topics covered in relevant present and past planning documents, NPS legal guidance and the letters themselves. The purpose of these codes is to allow for quick access to comments on specific topics. The coding structure used was inclusive rather than restrictive—an attempt was made to capture all comments, including those that may not have pertained directly to the Tuolumne planning process.

The second phase of the analysis process involves the assignment of codes to comments made by the public in their letters, faxes, and emails. For each comment in a piece of correspondence, codes are assigned by one reader, validated by a second reader, and then entered into a database

as verbatim quotes from members of the public. The database, in turn, is used to help construct this Public Scoping Report.

The third phase includes the identification of public concern statements and the preparation of this narrative. Public concerns are identified throughout the coding process and are derived from and supported by quotes from original letters. These public concern statements present common themes identified in comments. Each statement is worded to give decision-makers a clear sense of what action is being requested. Public concern statements are intended to help guide the reader to comments on the specific topics of interest. They do not replace the actual comments received from individuals. Rather, concern statements should be considered as one means of accessing information contained in original letters and the coded comment database.

All comments are captured in public concern statements, whether they were presented by hundreds of people or a single individual. Unlike voting, the emphasis of a comment analysis process is on the content of the comment rather than the number of people who support it. Comment analysis is not a vote-counting process and no effort has been made to tabulate the number of people for or against a certain aspect of a specific planning topic. Additionally, all comments are treated equally and are not weighted by number, organizational affiliation, or other status of respondents.

To view the original letters, emails, and faxes in their entirety, visit the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/archive/yose/planning/newmrp/>.

Next Steps - Screening Public Scoping Concerns

Following the distribution of this Public Scoping Report, the NPS staff will begin screening public concern statements. The purpose of the screening process is to identify whether a concern is in or out of a project's proposed scope of work and the level of action required by the planning team. All concern statements and supporting quotes presented in this document will be analyzed by park staff and assigned screening codes according to the criteria described below. Screening codes indicate how concerns will be addressed by the proposed project. When screening a public scoping concern, each supporting quote must be examined for the presence of a rationale (the "why") supporting the requested action. All identified public concerns, whether supported by the comments of one person or many, are considered. The NPS will begin the screening process after the publication of this Public Scoping Report.

Using this Report

This report presents public concerns arranged by topic, along with a representative sample of supporting quotes. The following text present a formal list of public concerns identified during the content analysis process, organized topically into 12 sections: MRP Planning Process and Policy, Alternatives, Park Resources in General, Water Resources, Vegetation and Wildlife, Air Quality and Noise, Scenic and Cultural Resources, Special Land Use Designations, Visitor Experience and Access, Recreation and Visitor Services, Transportation and Parking, and Park Operations. These concern statements are further organized by subtopics within each section.

Note that the numbers associated with public concern statements are generated by the database from which they are input and are for identification purposes and not intended to be in sequential order or to be meaningful to the public.

Each formal statement of public concern is accompanied by one or more sample comments (aka, sample statements) that provide respondents' specific perspectives and rationales regarding that concern. For each sample statement a comment number is provided that consists of the letter number combined with the individual comment number (e.g., Comment #12-1 denotes comment 1 from letter 12), enabling the reader to track and review the original response, if necessary. This formal list is intended to capture the full range of concerns regarding this project; however, it is not intended to obviate the need for the ID team to review the database report and original responses separately. Its primary purpose is to provide a topical review of voluminous comment in a format that aids in careful consideration and agency response.

The following list of acronyms has been developed to maintain brevity and should assist the reader in reviewing the report.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAT – Content Analysis Team

EIS – Environmental Impact Statement

Forest Service – United States Forest Service

HSCs – High Sierra Camps

MRP – Merced River Plan

 MRP#1 – Original 2000 MRP

 MRP#2 – Revised MRP

 MRP#3 – Current 2007 MRP

NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act

NPS – National Park Service

ORV – Outstandingly Remarkable Value

VERP – Visitor Experience and Resource Protection

Yosemite or park – Yosemite National Park

YVP – Yosemite Valley Plan

MRP Planning Process and Policy

Public Concern 1: The NPS should reassure the public of its commitment to creating a legally valid, comprehensive, well-informed MRP.

Before going ahead with new building and development in Yosemite Valley, the Park Service needs to create a legally valid MRP. This was supposed to begin in 1987 and be completed in 1990. It still has not been done to the satisfaction of the court, and it is imperative -- and required by law -- to complete a satisfactory River plan before continuing with new construction. (Comment #12-1)

Please be prudent and use sound, well informed judgment (foresight) when caring and guarding for our last remaining finite natural recreational resources. If not for us, then for our future generations. (Comment #23-5)

A few weeks ago, the Spokesman for the NPS publicly re-iterated the belief that the 9th Circuit (and now the District Court) had merely ordered something akin to a technical correction of an existing CMP [MRP]. The problem is that this has not been the position of any court since 2004, and was never the position of the 9th Circuit. It should not be the position of the NPS now. We think that the NPS should publicly clarify that we -- collectively -- are before the task of producing a new and different CMP. (Comment #95-6)

A new CMP [MRP] needs to thoroughly rethink management elements in order to succeed. We think the best course for a new CMP is a comprehensively new CMP, which freshly proposes management elements which will actually protect the River's values. (Comment #95-8)

BECAUSE THE PUBLIC DOES NOT TRUST THE NPS

Past NPS personnel have tainted the MRP as joint spouses conducted the planning process, carried over from previous plans using different names that deceived the public. Specifically, these were dependents of the past Western Regional Director. (Comment #58-11)

I have not participated in the planning process in quite a while as I am totally disillusioned by the process. (Comment #63-1)

BY CONDUCTING THE MRP PROCESS IN A TIMELY MANNER

Because of this situation, we urge you to expedite this MRP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process to the greatest extent possible. While the current proposed timeline indicates that a record of Decision would result on September 30, 2009, we hope that this can be completed sooner, since delays of some of the projects are adding to environmental problems. (Comment #94-8)

Perhaps with additional staffing and resources, some of the steps can be accelerated, for example the report drafting. We are not suggesting that comment periods be reduced. (Comment #94-9)

BY PROVIDING CLARITY AND LIMITING DOCUMENT SIZE

Overall, our central belief is that the plan should provide greater clarity and specificity than what was provided in the last plan. (Comment #3-13)

NPS should develop the draft and final EIS to be no larger than one volume, and intelligible to the general public. (Comment #64-15)

BY BETTER ALIGNING THE MRP WITH OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND PROJECTS

Fifty years ago, no one talked about environmentalism. Now we have a federal agency, the EPA, and all and sundry declare themselves to be in favor of environmental protection. It is long past time for the NPS at Yosemite to heed the mandate of its Organic Act, adhere to the strictures of the WA [Wilderness Act], the CWA [California Wilderness Act], and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, obey NEPA requirements, and follow the direction of the General Management Plan (GMP) of 1980, by choosing preservation of park resources, scenery, wilderness character, and wild river values over ongoing exploitation and impairment. (Comment #103-8)

Unfortunately, some of the requirements of those general plans [long range plans for Yosemite Valley and Merced River] have not been met yet. (Comment #104-2)

BEFORE GOING FORWARD WITH OTHER DEPENDENT/RELATED PLANS OR PROJECTS

Even after federal courts slapped the hands of the NPS over the MRP, the NPS continued on the same process for the Tuolumne River Plan (TRP) without shame. Would this alone not disqualify the TRP as it now is in planning? A "HOLD" on that plan should be implemented. (Comment #58-10)

A protective and legally valid MRP should be the programmatic foundation for a large scale implementation plan like the YVP. (Comment #64-2)

NPS should not be implementing YVP projects until a legally valid and protective Merced River Plan is in place. (Comment #55-5)

Public Concern 9: The NPS must be willing to acknowledge if the MRP is not being adhered to and have repercussions in that case.

A plan must not simply be a piece of paper – when a vital piece cannot be performed, it must be acknowledged that the plan is not being followed, and repercussions must ensue. (Comment #94-22)

Acceptable/Desired Levels of Development

Public Concern 32: The NPS should limit and control development throughout Yosemite and the Merced River corridor.

The development and commercialization of the valley must stop. (Comment #90-6)

No new construction of any kind outside of developed area footprints. (Comment #95-71)

You are concerned about the trampling impacts on the banks of the Merced from residents of the new employee dorms across the street from the River; you are concerned Southside Drive might fail as a result of the tremendous amount of digging for the utilities as part of the placement under the road should the river rage at some point... Now you have to build fences everywhere to stop what you have created while the River and the visitors bear the brunt of your decisions. (Comment #44-19)

Efforts to significantly expand visitor use in West Valley should not be considered. West Valley remains a relatively pristine area where Valley admirers who abhor East Valley crowds can enjoy the relative solitude of the Merced River. Any plans to develop West Valley to accommodate increased visitation should be quashed. (Comment #52-10)

FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL

Yosemite Valley is unique. It was granted to the State of California so that it would not be homesteaded and privatized. The public's right of access was guaranteed by language in the law that said the area was "... to be held for all time by the United States of America for public use, resort and recreation." (Comment #93-2)

Yosemite is a NATIONAL PARK, preserved so that all people can enjoy Her greatness. (Comment #90-10)

BECAUSE THE PURPOSE OF YOSEMITE SHOULD BE THE PROTECTION OF RESOURCES RATHER THAN COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Yosemite is not a corporation. (Comment #90-8)

Years ago on our field trips students began to notice the effects of stock animals on trails, creeks and meadows. They asked how the park rangers justify the tradition of damage for profit? I have yet to justify for the students the park's tradition of putting profit over the park. (Comment #11-1)

Clarity of Terms in the MRP

Public Concern 3: The NPS should define some terms more clearly in the MRP.

SUCH AS "RESTORATION" AND "ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION"

NPS should clearly define "ecological restoration" in the draft and final EIS. The term "restoration " is being used to mean everything from unleashing the river to go wherever natural forces take it on the one hand, to laying fresh asphalt on the other hand. The same term should not be used to describe both types of activity. (Comment #55-18)

NPS should clearly define "ecological restoration" in the draft and final EIS. (Comment #64-11)

SUCH AS "DEVELOPMENT"

NPS should clearly define "development" in the draft and final EIS. It sometimes seems as though any human activity is viewed as being a form of "development". This results in projects such as re-vegetation or control of invasive exotics being treated no differently than construction of 27 buildings where there was formerly a mixed conifer/oak woodland. (Or projects such as the former being scrutinized more closely than the latter!) The issue is how some level of reason can be introduced into the process to avoid these anomalous situations. (Comment #55-19)

MRP Planning Goals and Management

Public Concern 7: The NPS should ensure that primary goal of the MRP is the active protection of Yosemite.

My concern is that the current proposal is purely defensive. (Comment #1-1)

Public Concern 10: The NPS should promote better management practices.

INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

In particular, concerns are the many areas alongside the river used as construction staging areas. Perhaps the environmental compliance that allows for such use states that mitigation will occur but I have not seen the mitigation and have only seen the staging areas turn into degraded areas, or to put it more bluntly DUMPS. I have witnessed some of the most valuable real estate on the planet earth used as landfill with river oxbow topography filled because of poor construction management practices. (Comment #91-2)

Upper and Lower River Campgrounds were well on their way to the restoration called for in the YVP EIS. Their use as CONSTRUCTION STAGING AREAS for the utility projects left behind compacted soils and dump piles of asphalt and construction debris. As the high water of the previous two winters moved through these areas, we again see why they were set aside for restoration, except this time the water had to negotiate piles of asphalt and construction spoil pile. These actions are not very appropriate management of the river. (Comment #91-6)

BY EXAMINING HISTORIC FLOOD DATA

This campground [Upper Rivers] could only flood about once or twice in a hundred years, which should be mentioned in the MRP, as this scientific data is undisputable, and relevant to the MRP. (Comment #57-12)

Again, I would propose that management policies envisioned for this overlay be incorporated in the existing Flood Plain zone. The 1997 flood provides a recent demarcation of the limits of river management and zoning that are not likely to be challenged. The otherwise inevitable conflicts would be avoided. (Comment #105-20)

BY CLEARLY DEFINING ITS MONITORING MANAGEMENT PLANS

I'm also concerned that there aren't enough resources to seriously monitor areas within the various zones. Who monitors these? How often? (Comment #1-3)

When budget cuts occur, how will this system sustain itself? With park personnel stretched beyond the capacity to maintain essentials, how do we expect them to also monitor these sites adequately? (Comment #1-4)

BY ENCOURAGING MONITORING AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING LIMITATION TO THE ACCESS OF RESOURCES

Specific monitoring protocols should be detailed in the plan, and the plan should explain how monitoring will; (a) be able to quantifiably determine the status of the indicators relative to their standards, (b) directly measure cause-and-effect visitor impacts on indicators, and (c) provide for long term trend analysis. In other words, the plan's monitoring component needs to clearly lay out how the monitoring will truly assess the status of at-risk resources and how that monitoring can realistically be carried out. (Comment #3-23)

For example, if the park lacks full-time enforcement officers, will the park make provisions to for self-policing mechanisms on some trails, hire volunteers, or engage part time officers to fill in gaps? (Comment 94-3)

Public Concern 94: The NPS should have guidelines for the design of facilities in Yosemite.

Of special concern: the aesthetic treatment of buildings or placement of unnatural barriers. (Comment #88-1)

SUCH AS THOSE ALONG THE RIVER

In the park there need to be guidelines that designers would have to adhere to whenever developing plans for development/reconstruction of facilities along the river. (Comment #39-3)

SUCH AS CAMPGROUNDS

Universal designed sites need be incorporated into each campground. (Comment #53-11)

Public Concern 87: The NPS should encourage people from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds to visit Yosemite.

We need to encourage young people and nature lovers to visit and enjoy the park. They will be the potential supporters of parks in the future. After all, the park was established to protect the beautiful natural setting for future generations. It was not set aside as a means of making money. (Comment #38-5)

BY INCREASING CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

It [camping] is the best way lower income families can experience Yosemite. (Comment #74-2)

MRP's Relationship to Other Plans, Acts, and Planning Efforts

Public Concern 2: The NPS should ensure that the MRP is an improvement over previous planning efforts.

SUCH AS THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

I have been involved in commenting on plans for Yosemite since the mid-1970's when the General Plan of 1980 [was completed]. Sadly, I watched the entire plan [General Management Plan] pre-empted by the Superintendent at the time. (Comment #14-2)

The General Management Plan (GMP) was the start of their misguided policies. As it went unchallenged except for this writer's efforts locally and in Washington DC, it has continued on a path of deception and unfair practices. (Comment #58-6)

BECAUSE MRP#1 WAS BASED ON THE FLAWED YVP

Friends of Yosemite Valley have many times made the point that the 2000 CMP [MRP#1] was obviously, and improperly developed in light of decisions in the YVP. The plans were developed simultaneously, but the management ideas of the YVP had a longer history and deeper roots in Yosemite's planning culture. The YVP itself, and perhaps more generally its management ideas, broad redevelopment program, and unchecked environmental impacts, profoundly shaped the invalid 2000 CMP. (Comment #95-17)

The new River Plan should be developed under the assumption that the (extant) 2000 YVP is not providing guidance in the development of the new CMP [MRP#3]. To rescind the YVP ROD [record of decision] is the most important single measure which would assure that the new CMP would actually place the horse in front of the cart, for the first time. (Comment #95-20)

Public Concern 6: The NPS should adopt the previous MRP.

I can't approve of the Judge's decision on the present change. The original proposal was OK. (Comment #4-1)

As you know, NPCA [National Parks Conservation Association] supports the Merced Plan that was issued in 2005, and commends the Service for producing a sound, practical and effective map for the future of the river corridor. (Comment #94-5)

Public Concern 18: The NPS should revisit the YVP when in regards to the MRP.

NPS should re-visit the YVP before implementing its projects. (Comment #55-6)

Move Camp 6 to the north of North Side Drive as the authors of the YVP EIS promised. (Comment #91-11)

NPS should publicly explain that, because it will produce a new CMP [MRP] for the Merced, it will revisit decisions made in the YVP and its tiering documents. We ask that the Chief of Planning correct earlier statement(s) concerning the NPS having no intention to revisit the YVP. We ask that this correction be conveyed through the park spokesman as well. We think the error in this is plain, and should be corrected. (Comment #95-14)

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AND RESCIND THE RECORD OF DECISION

NPS should rescind the YVP ROD [record of decision]. NPS should integrate the rescission of the YVP into the development of this CMP [MRP#3], at this time. NPS should subsequently revisit planning for Yosemite Valley, the Merced Gorge, El Portal, and Wawona upon the guidance of a legally valid CMP... (Comment #95-15)

In order to credibly produce a CMP [MRP] for the Merced which guides subsequent decisions concerning development of lands and facilities, and because of the numerous inescapable conflicts

between the YVP agenda and the protection of ORV's, we have said that the YVP ROD [record of decision] should be rescinded. (Comment #95-21)

REGARDING REMOVING THE RIDING STABLES

The Park Service needs to implement the Valley plans to remove the riding stables from Yosemite Valley. (Comment #24-4)

Then there are the riding stables in Yosemite Valley. The YVP which was adopted in 2000 (and still exists) demanded removal of the riding stables from Yosemite Valley. They are still in operation. How can this be?? (Comment #49-4)

AND CHANGE ITS ZONING PLAN

A crucial goal in the development of the CMP [MRP] -- which depends upon rescission of the YVP ROD -- should be the abandonment or complete re-thinking of "zoning" proposed in the 2000 CMP, also noted below. (Comment #95-24)

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Public Concern 17: The NPS must revisit the Wilderness Management Plan in regards to the MRP.

AND HAVE CROSS-COUNTRY TRAVEL LOOPHOLE REMOVED

Two harmful loopholes in the current WMP [Wilderness Management Plan] must be addressed during this planning process for the Merced River corridor. First, the exceptions in the WMP (Appendix G) for cross-country travel by stock animals must be removed. (Comment #103-80)

Secondly, nowhere does the plan list or define "designated" or "established" trails. (Appendix G lists "authorized" exceptions but not the "designated" or "established" trails on which large groups are permitted). Some older maps, still in use, show trails that are no longer maintained, and which are not suitable for travel with stock or by large groups. A list or map clearly defining what trails/routes are open to travel with stock and by large groups in the Merced River corridor should be included in this planning process. This will make clear, to both the public and agency personnel, which routes are open and closed to travel with stock and to large groups. We request the opportunity to review the map or list described above before it is adopted. It should be included in the draft environmental impact statement(s) (DEIS/s) for this planning process. (Comment #103-81)

Public Concern 13: The NPS should revisit the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic Comprehensive Management Plan in regards to the MRP.

Tuolumne CMP [Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan]; We would like to re-iterate as a follow-up to last summer's comment that the Tuolumne CMP was scoped inappropriately. The representation that VERP would be the capacity mechanism available for discussion under all alternatives of the Tuolumne CMP replicates a glaring error of the 2005 Plan for the Merced, and improperly constrained scoping. We think the scoping should be re-opened, and the lessons of the failed Merced plan, including the direction of the court concerning VERP, incorporated into the public process for a new beginning on the Tuolumne. (Comment 95-141)

Last thought, The Tuolumne River Plan will succeed in eliminating most camp sites from the Meadows, what are you going to do about that? (Comment #63-10)

BY INCORPORATING ITS SCOPING PRACTICES INTO THE MRP PROCESS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE GREATER PUBLIC INPUT

We urge you to incorporate the outreach approach you have been using in the Tuolumne Wild & Scenic River plan processes. We feel you have been very successful with inviting participation and attracting input from disparate groups, through an extremely open and well-publicized public process. (Comment #94-31)

After the public scoping phase [of the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan], the planning team at Yosemite National Park offered a series of public workshops, to explain and offer public input into the second phase. These include helping to develop management prescriptions

based on the public comments and legal requirements, and “painting” the river corridor with proposed management prescriptions. (Comment #94-32)

Public Concern 14: The NPS should ensure that the MRP adhere to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARK RESOURCES

Unfortunately (for them/you), the best laid plans hit a pesky snag when in 1999 the U.S. District Court found the Park in violation of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act for failing to develop a comprehensive management plan for the Merced River. And for the past 8 years, it’s been more about how to get this River Plan thing over with and to get on with the bigger plans of spending all that money to remake Yosemite Valley. (Comment #44-4)

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides that, unless otherwise designated by the managing agency, the planning boundaries of a river “shall generally comprise that area measured within one-quarter mile from the ordinary high water mark on each side of the river.” For the Merced River, this area includes most if not all the major climbing areas in the Valley, including its big walls. The Valley’s climbing resources are recognized as having worldwide significance. Consequently, climbing should be recognized in the Plan as one of the outstanding recreational values of the river corridor. (Comment #46-33)

The 1984 CWA [California Wilderness Act] also stated: “Because of the importance of continuing monitoring and assessment of this situation, immediately upon enactment of this bill into law, the Secretary of the Interior should document current baseline operational and environmental impact conditions of all of these facilities [HSC camps], and he should also, within one year of the date of enactment, report in writing to the relevant committee of the House and Senate, his findings and recommendations as to this matter. Annual assessments of this situation should thereafter be made by the Secretary to assure continued monitoring of conditions.” Has the Park Service at Yosemite prepared the baseline reports and submitted the annual monitoring reports as requested by Congress? If such reports do exist, they should be made public at once and included in the record for this project. (Comment #103-12)

Public Concern 15: The NPS should disregard the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act when preparing the MRP.

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OR IT WILL RESULT IN LIMITED ACCESS TO PARK RESOURCES

Later, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed and applied to the Merced River, it also infringed upon the Yosemite Grant. Only 3 percent of the original Yosemite Grant is unencumbered by the Wilderness or River Plan designations. (Comment #93-4)

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The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not apply to private property. Yosemite Valley is unique and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not apply. The public's right of access to Yosemite Valley should not be limited by a law that was written to limit construction of dams and reservoirs on public land. (Comment #93-6)

Public Concern 16: The NPS should ensure that the MRP adhere to the Wilderness Act.

IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARK RESOURCES

The Park Service has been derelict in its duties as outlined in the California Wilderness Act of 1984. It has never conducted the requested monitoring or prepared any of the “annual assessments requested by Congress. (Comment #17-5)

There are a couple issues that absolutely need to be addressed in this plan, especially considering the historic failure of the National Park Service to act on congressional legislation, specifically the California Wilderness Act of 1984, designed to assess the environmental impact of the High Sierra Camps and excessive stock use around the Merced River. (Comment #26-1)

The 1984 CWA [California Wilderness Act] also stated: "Because of the importance of continuing monitoring and assessment of this situation, immediately upon enactment of this bill into law, the Secretary of the Interior should document current baseline operational and environmental impact conditions of all of these facilities [HSC camps], and he should also, within one year of the date of enactment, report in writing to the relevant committee of the House and Senate, his findings and recommendations as to this matter. Annual assessments of this situation should thereafter be made by the Secretary to assure continued monitoring of conditions." Has the Park Service at Yosemite prepared the baseline reports and submitted the annual monitoring reports as requested by Congress? If such reports do exist, they should be made public at once and included in the record for this project. (Comment #103-12)

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Implementation Funding and Park Fees

Public Concern 8: The NPS should include plans for future funding issues in the MRP.

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Anticipating funding problems makes this plan more realistic and more likely to be successful. (Comment #94-39)

Second, the discussions should include predictions of likely or potential funding problems, and identify alternatives if a shortfall should occur. (Comment #94-37)

SUCH AS DEFICIENCIES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

For example, if the park lacks full-time enforcement officers, will the park make provisions to for self-policing mechanisms on some trails, hire volunteers, or engage part time officers to fill in gaps? (Comment #94-38)

Public Concern 11: The NPS should reexamine park fees.

AND NOT INSTITUTE THE PLANNED INCREASE

[What kinds of services or facilities would you like to see offered, improved or removed?] no entry fees at park entrances (we pay thru our federal taxes) and financially poor individuals cannot afford paying twice. (Comment #102-11)

[Of the management methods you may be familiar with, how do they fare in providing equal opportunities for visitors of various economic, social and ethnic backgrounds?] financially strapped individuals and carloads cannot afford paying fed taxes and entry fees or additional fees, such as bus rides. (Comment #102-31)

AND INSTITUTE THE PLANNED INCREASE

And as for increasing the park entry fee from \$20 to \$25, I wholly support that increase. That difference is less than two gallons of gas and it is important for users to contribute more to the cost of maintaining and restoring this wonderful park. (Comment #87-3)

AND REMOVE ALL CHARGES FOR ACTIVITIES

[How might various methods for managing human use help achieve these conditions?] no financial charges for activities. (Comment #102-27)

Flood Recovery

Public Concern 12: The NPS should follow through with its flood recovery effort.

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The park had been given money by congress to do just that in the flood recovery effort. The fact that Bruce Babbitt even made that statement about the “Divine Hand” being involved before the original MRP#1 was finished, clearly suggest that it was actually the park’s plan to circumvent the planning process with that one statement. (Comment #57-15)

When the 1997 flood occurred and Park officials conned Congress into front-loading Yosemite with \$200 million—plans approved or not—all in the feel-good name of flood repair, the planning process was permanently corrupted. With so much money burning a hole in the Park’s pocket, officials admittedly gathered their special interest friends (i.e., Johanna Wald, Jay Watson, etc.) and together they redesigned Yosemite to fit their vision—the public be damned. (Comment #44-3)

In the beginning the process looked like it might lead to something good, then the courts were brought in to “supervise the process” much later the flood came and the wackos won and removed the river campgrounds in a classic knee jerk, heavy on the JERK, reaction (fully supported by the Park Service (light on the service part). (Comment #63-3)

AND REBUILD THE LOST CAMPSITES

Rebuild drive-in campgrounds to pre-flood 1975 numbers (in and out of the Valley). (Comment #43-35
I think the valley campgrounds that were closed because of the flood, should be replaced, even if they
have to be replaced every 100 years because of flooding. (Comment #74-1)

Consultation, Coordination, and Public Involvement

Public Concern 19: The NPS should involve, or continue to involve, a wide variety of individuals and sources in its public consultation stage for the MRP.

NPS should communicate respectfully and productively with interested stakeholders in all park planning efforts. This includes local grassroots and national environmental groups, all concerned Native American groups, even those not previously consulted in park planning efforts, and well-informed recreation groups. This actually is a planning issue, as the lack of respectful and productive communication will render any adopted plan useless, no matter how well written it may have been. (Comment #55-1)

The people's voice should prevail more in this planning process than in the last planning process. (Comment #57-13)

Private individuals from the public should assist in this planning procedure process. (Comment #58-3)

When I received that Valley Plan book in 1997 you listed all the people and different groups that had been sent a copy to get their input. You did not include any campers on that list. Your "public" process has been flawed from the beginning. I write you again with the same concerns I have had over the years regarding camping. (Comment #90-7)

I participated in the public process of preparing long range plans for Yosemite Valley and the Merced River, and was very pleased with the resulting plans. (Comment #104-1)

INCLUDING VARIOUS DOCUMENTS

Some distribution and abundance data for these and other at-risk species may already be available as a result of the National Park Service Sierra Nevada Network Inventory and Monitoring Plan. The Inventory and Monitoring Plan, and information that it has generated, should be utilized as part of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. (Comment #3-21)

NPS should consider the findings of the SNEP [Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project] Report in this planning process, especially regarding the El Portal segment. (Comment #55-38)

INCLUDING FEDERAL AGENCIES

Of those who have been ignored so far, we regretfully include the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. We would ask that the NPS recognize that the courts often play a key and productive role in changing agency culture and ideas, and in shaping the thinking about plans in an evolving legal environment over time. Admittedly there is an element of "pain" if an agency is corrected by a court. But we think it is a mistake for the NPS to merely react to this, and to resist a new opportunity towards a directed change. (Comment #95-4)

At a minimum, Congress, including the House Resources Committee, should establish guidelines so as to prevent the private interests within all our parks and the Department of Interiors from conflicts of interest. (Comment #109-2)

INCLUDING TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

Again in the case of the cultural landscape: full inclusion and consultation with any and all individuals, tribes and other native american groups with ancestral ties to Yosemite. Real, meaningful consultation is doubly required because not all of the cultural landscape in Yosemite has been disclosed to the NPS (which, based on the behavior of Euro- Americans in Yosemite including NPS, has been a wise move by Native Americans). (Comment #95-68)

BUT NOT PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS OR BUSINESSES

Private individuals/businesses from the public should not assist in this planning procedure process. (Comment #109-3)

INCLUDING SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

We initiate these CSERC [California Sierra Environmental Resource Center] comments for the new plan with the sincere wish for the Park planning staff to approach this third planning process with at least the open-minded perspective that plan critics may honestly be right - and if that is the case, then consider what needs to change in this plan to overcome valid criticism or another court judgment against the Park Service. (Comment #3-4)

TO PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Further, they have limited their open houses, scoping meetings, comment hearings to very local communities and have confused the public on when and where they take their public outreach. (Comment #53-6)

I also wonder why so many meetings are held in San Francisco? (see my elitist comment, and follow the money) Has there ever been a meeting in Stockton? Meetings in the Yosemite Valley are great for the people who live there, but they are employees and people who have a NIMBY small town opinion of "their" park. (Comment #63-7)

TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC AS TO THE VALUE OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT

In the past we've spent days, even weeks, analyzing and researching information in an effort to provide meaningful comments with the hope that the planning process would be conducted with integrity and that Park officials really were interested in guaranteeing protection for the River. We no longer believe that. (Comment #44-2)

The public participation in the planning process has dwindled to a few over the years based upon the public continuing negative view of our NPS. Simply count the numbers of respondents over the years, plan by plan. They only get smaller. (Comment #58-8)

BY ALLOWING ONLINE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Technology can be a beautiful thing, but creates mostly inflated expectations and nightmare logistics. So here's my plea: Is there a source on-line where one can either retrieve interesting stastical data -- like on visitorship, number of high-country reservations requested in a given year or for any given day, cars-per-visitor, and all sorts of other useful data -- or interact with available data to construct one's own queries? (Comment #72-3)

NPS should make all public comments related to this planning process easily available for citizens to view on the NPS website. (Comment #55-20)

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AT VARIOUS STAGES OF THE PROCESS

Can there be opportunities to interact at early stages when scoping is done, rather than to be solicited for input after the drafts come out? I have received Prep Notices for assistance in scoping, but that is such a wide-open invitation; it doesn't track the issues that caused the initiative in the first place (what's the problem?). I'm going to guess that millions want to be kept informed, but few actually venture beyond their commute zone (temporally or intellectually). (Comment #72-4)

NPS should make proposed Draft Alternatives available for public comment prior to publication of the DEIS. (Comment #55-21)

Public Concern 5: The NPS should incorporate public comments from its previous drafts into the MRP .

This is the third time we've participated in scoping. Though you've indicated our earlier comments will be considered, we've pasted in our 2005 comments anyway.... (Comment #44-22)

Development issues within the corridor such as conflicts between County and NPS zoning were addressed in the Record of Decision for the earlier plan. These should be included in any new MRP. (Comment #105-4)

MRP Alternatives

Public Concern 20: The NPS should choose Alternative 2.

In Alternative no. 2, that [remove the proposed zoning from within Section 35] would mean removing the proposed 2B Discovery zone and incorporate appropriate language in the present Flood Plain zone. (Comment #105-13)

I stated that WAPOA [Wawona Area Property Owners Association] could support Alternative no. 2, if these changes were made to the Draft MRP. (Comment #05-22)

Public Concern 21: The NPS should choose Alternative 4.

Of the alternatives presented, I prefer and support Alternative 4. (Comment #33-1)

Park Resources in General

Public Concern 22: The NPS should work harder to protect Yosemite's natural resources.

Yosemite National Park is one of America's treasures. We need to save it for future generations to enjoy in its pristine state. (Comment #17-6)

It's crucial that we do whatever we can to reduce pollution and save this [Yosemite National Park]. (Comment #20-7)

It would be a tragedy for the allure of Yosemite to prove the death of it. (Comment #75-8)

Failure to address the above egregiously breaches the duties of the NPS, charged with care, custody, and control of its original 1864 commission by President Lincoln (a good camper). No doubt President Theodore Roosevelt felt the same and loved to camp. Contrary to Yosemite's Superintendent, Mike Tollefson in his May, 2007, newsletter (Volume 31), the NPS does not have the "privilege" of managing the Merced River; it has the DUTY to manage it for the public trust via preservation and enjoyment to perpetuity. (Comment #109-17)

INCLUDING THE BACKCOUNTRY

The Yosemite area and backcountry are pristine, fragile environments that we need to manage extremely well. (Comment #24-1)

It is clear to me (with this history) that the Yosemite Backcountry needs Wilderness protections, which means protection from human overuse. This requires rationed use for backpackers. (Comment #15-1)

FROM VISITOR USE

The plan should specify the resources that are most at-risk from visitor use and clearly detail how those resources will be protected from visitor use. (Comment #3-16)

Further, the current group size limits have been shown to significantly and adversely affect park resources and values. In order to adequately protect Yosemite's environment and wild & scenic river values, the group size limits must be revised downward. (Comment #103-73)

Public Concern 25: The NPS should include current, baseline information for specific resources within Yosemite in the MRP.

Currently, we don't know exactly what resources are most at risk and are in need of protection. (Comment #3-17)

[Informational input relevant to a visitor capacity decision might include:] current resources, conditions, uniqueness, capability, and trends (see prior discussion of baseline conditions and monitoring). (Comment #95-103)

Such a scientific base of information would need to document the resources that are to be protected and preserved in the park; the condition of those resources; any changes in condition over time; and actions needed to ensure preservation (Natural Resource Challenge Action Plan, 1999). Such a program needs to be in place FIRST, to provide information critical to this planning process for the Merced CMP [MRP]. While we hold out hope that the deficiencies will be remedied, we have great concern. (Comment #95-55)

FOR BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Included in this analysis should be baseline distribution and abundance data for applicable species and habitat. (Comment #3-19)

NPS should do a complete biological inventory of the Merced River corridor as part of this planning process and include at least a condensed version of this inventory in the EIS. (Comment #55-28)

FOR AIR QUALITY

NPS should conduct air quality studies for the entire Merced River corridor and include the findings in the EIS. (Comment #55-29)

FOR NOISE

NPS should conduct soundscape studies and include findings for each segment on the Merced River in the EIS. (Comment #55-26)

FOR ORVS

So, in order to identify which resources are most at risk within the Wild and Scenic River corridor and management area, it is essential that the new plan clearly analyze the baseline cumulative threats that now pose risk to the ORVs and natural resources of the River system, including:

- visitor use, which at excessive levels results in trampling, disturbance, pollution, etc.;
- impacts of vehicle use and traffic congestion, no matter at what level of visitor use;
- global warming impacts, both already observed and scientifically predicted;
- pesticide drift/air pollution/water pollution;
- chytrid fungus and other threats to amphibians within the river system;
- introduced invasives; and
- other cumulative or direct impacts. (Comment #3-8)

The NPS should document resource baseline conditions for ORVs, and establish a monitoring program including each of these conditions. The NPS should immediately and diligently identify data needs, so that a truly effective ORV monitoring, protection, enhancement program can be enacted as a part of this CMP [MRP#3]. (Comment #95-53)

Public Concern 26: The NPS should examine and protect resources in El Portal.**INCLUDING THE PLACEMENT OF A BULK FUEL FACILITY**

NPS should re-consider having a bulk fuel facility such as Odger's Petroleum next to the Merced River in the El Portal segment. (Comment #64-34)

INCLUDING THE CREATION OF A SCENIC ORV

NPS should develop a "scenic" category for El Portal ORVs. (Comment #55-39)

SUCH AS WETLANDS

NPS should zone all wetlands in El Portal for maximum protection rather than for high visitor use. (Comment #55-41)

NPS should have and make available to the public accurate and up-to-date maps of wetlands in El Portal. (Comment #55-40)

VERP**Public Concern 27: The NPS should use VERP as a factor to determine carrying capacity and public access.**

The only answer seems to be the need for an offensive, self-sustaining VERP – and I think that unfortunately means actual head counts in certain areas. It seems like if we set limits in advance on the numbers of people the corridor can handle, it will provide better protection of the river without waiting until damage occurs to set limits. (Comment #1-5)

While CSERC [California Sierra Environmental Resource Center] recognizes the value of VERP as a defined decision-making process, simply proposing a decision making process, without setting limits as to what can be decided and acted on, will not be accepted by the public, and perhaps, the courts. (Comment #3-26)

Public Concern 28: The NPS should inform the public on the evolution of the VERP.

Finally, it may be useful to explain in both the public meetings and in the draft plan itself the evolution of VERP. Many of the groups challenging the earlier plan possibly based their objections to misunderstandings about where VERP has gone in the last twenty years. (Comment # 94-21)

The public meetings and plan might benefit from a very short recitation of this. No more than a paragraph is necessary. But park users and potential litigants must realize what are the alternatives to VERP, and understand what they are criticizing when they call for going back to outmoded and less effective ways of limiting visitors. (Comment #94-24)

Public Concern 29: The NPS should differentiate between VERP and visitor capacity in the MRP.

We sharply contrast VERP type monitoring and visitor capacity as follows: visitor capacity is an administrative decision about the supply of available recreation opportunities in an area. VERP is a monitoring program of indicators, standards, and data collection protocols. A visitor capacity is not an indicator, a standard, a process, or a research finding. Conversely, VERP is not a visitor capacity decision. (Comment #95-132)

[Contrast VERP type monitoring and visitor capacity] Visitor capacities require the integrated consideration of many factors (e.g., goals, actions, desired future conditions, proposed actions, management capability). One important factor in the decision is the best available monitoring information and science, be it from VERP or any other monitoring effort. We have addressed this under "ORV's, above). VERP or another monitoring system can provide important information, but in and of itself, VERP information does not determine a visitor capacity. (Comment #95-136)

Water Resources

Public Concern 24: The USFS needs to undertake a scientifically based program for assessing and redressing negative impacts to both ground and surface waters.

The USFS needs to undertake a scientifically based program for assessing and redressing negative impacts to both ground and surface waters. (Comment #14-10)

Rivers & Streams

Public Concern 31: The NPS should examine objects that obstruct free-flow in the Merced River.

Allow the free flowing river to shape the landscape, unhindered by construction spoil piles. (Comment #91-12)

(Hidden issues:) fallen trees. (Comment #5-9)

AND REMOVE THEM

This CMP [MRP] should comprehensively study and propose future enhancement of surface hydrology, particularly in Yosemite valley, through the removal of development, unnatural drainage features, riprap, and obstructions of free flow. (Comment #95-84)

I think leaving massive amounts of fallen trees in the river is silly, and dangerous, for young children, and all the signs placed to explain the trees in the river must cost a fortune! (Comment #5-5)

Public Concern 33: The NPS should restore certain moraines.

INCLUDING THE EL CAPITAN MORAINE

Take action to restore the function a healthy river system including the retention of woody debris, logjams, and the restoration of the El Capitan moraine. (Comment #91-13)

INCLUDING THE TERMINAL MORAINE

This CMP [MRP] should propose to restore Yosemite's Terminal Moraine as an enhancement of the Valley's hydrology. (Comment #95-83)

Public Concern 4: The NPS should change certain designations in or around the Merced River Corridor and reflect those changes in the MRP.

INCLUDING TRIBUTARIES OF THE MERCED RIVER BY CHANGING DESIGNATED BOUNDARIES WITHIN THE MRP.

NPS should include all tributaries of the Merced River within its designated boundaries. (Comment #55-24)

Tributaries such as Tenaya Creek at Tenaya Lake should be included in the River Plan [MRP#3]. Other tributaries such as Bridal Veil Creek and Yosemite Creek should be included as well. (Comment #93-8)

EXCLUDING THE YOSEMITE GRANT

I believe that you should exclude the Yosemite Grant from the MRP corridor. (Comment #93-7)

Management Direction

Public Concern 30: The NPS should use at-risk species to monitor the health of the Merced River.

At-risk species that we would like to see be used as indicators include, but should not be limited to; California red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, mountain yellow-legged frog, California spotted owl, Yosemite toad, American marten, Pacific fisher, and whichever birds (such as the willow flycatcher) that are most clearly tied to meadow and riparian habitat and which actually have historic and current presence in the Merced River management area. (Comment #3-20)

Public Concern [# to come]: The NPS should protect Merced River and its water quality.

The South Fork of the Merced River should be protected. (Comment #100-4)

Protection and enhancement of water quality in all reaches of Yosemite's Merced. (Comment #95-76)

[What characteristics of the river-scientific, scenic, geological, recreation, biological, cultural, and hydrologic processes - are important to you?] Free flowing water quality and quantity. (Comment #102-12)

BECAUSE WILDLIFE DEPENDS ON IT

El Rio de Nuestra Senora de la Merced should be protected because of the wildlife that depends on it. (Comment #101-4)

BY REMOVING GROUTED RIP RAP AND GRANITE

I raft the lower Merced frequently and always admire the masonry retaining walls that support Hwy 140. These walls are built of the same metamorphic rock that is present in this section of the river. On the other hand I am offended by the grouted granite rip rap that was placed following the flood. The grouted rip rap and granite materials are out of place in this section of the river. (Comment #39-2)

BY APPLYING DESIGN GUIDELINES TO MERCED RIVER

The park has design guidelines for Yosemite Valley however these are not specific to the river environ and they do not apply to areas of the river outside the Valley. (Comment #39-9)

BY PREVENTING EROSION AND NON-NATURAL RUNOFF

All erosion and all sources of non natural runoff affect the Merced River. (Comment #62-1)

Public Concern 35: The NPS should establish areas for different uses along the Merced River.

I recommend the banks of the Merced River in Yosemite Valley have various areas for public use. (Comment #67-1)

One type of area could allow fishing and sitting on the banks (for reading and quiet contemplation). Another type could allow families to play in the sand and wade in the river, where safe to do so. Other areas could restrict human use. (Comment #67-2)

Public Concern 38: The NPS should not expand commercial operations on the Merced River.

Do not expand commercial operations at the expense of the campers, seniors, disabled, low income families with children, rafters, hikers, climbers, swimmers, fishermen and more. (Comment #43-37)

Public Concern 36: The NPS should take a new approach to zoning and management prescriptions within the Merced River corridor.

NPS should take a serious look at a fresh approach to zoning/management prescriptions within the Merced River corridor boundaries. (Comment #55-25)

Wetlands

Public Concern 39: The NPS should protect wetlands in Yosemite.

NPS should protect wetlands and other riparian areas along the Merced River in the western portion of Yosemite Valley from any increase in impermeable surfaces (additional asphalt and concrete). (Comment #55-45)

No loss of wetlands; no construction in or adjoining wetlands. (Comment #95-70)

INCLUDING THOSE IN EL PORTAL

NPS should zone all wetlands in El Portal for maximum protection rather than for high visitor use. (Comment #34-33)

Vegetation and Wildlife

Public Concern [# to come]. The NPS should protect Yosemite's rare, endangered, and special-status species.

[What do you love about the Merced River and the Yosemite Valley?] rare species. (Comment #102-3)

Based upon up-to-date study of conditions, no loss of special status/ threatened /endangered species or their habitat. (Comment #95-74)

Vegetation

Public Concern [# to come]: The NPS should protect vegetation in Yosemite.

[What characteristics of the river-scientific, scenic, geological, recreation, biological, cultural, and hydrologic processes - are important to you?] native plant species including rare plants and animals. (Comment #102-15)

No loss of sensitive plants or supportive soil types. (Comment #95-75)

Public Concern 40: The NPS should restrict the presence of exotic or intrusive plants in Yosemite.

[What kind of natural environment do you want to see? What kind of social environment? How would you like to see the culture and history of Yosemite preserved and shared?] Natural environment without weeds, introduced species - i.e., birds, plants. (Comment #102-6)

Invasive (i.e., weed) species have been specifically identified-at the national level-as one of the four greatest threats to our national forests, The spread of invasive weeds has also been identified by the Regional Forester as an urgent issue that needs to be addressed in all Forest Service activities in California. (Comment #103-42)

Wildlife

Public Concern [# to come]: The NPS should protect wildlife in Yosemite.

[What I love:] Out near the Mirror Lake turnoff there is a bird sanctuary. (Comment #88-9)

BY DISALLOWING WILDLIFE ACCESS TO HUMAN WASTE AND FOOD

[Significant issues include, but are not limited to:] harm to wildlife that come in contact with sewage, kitchen/bath wastes, and human food sources. (Comment #103-22)

Public Concern 41: The NPS should protect songbirds from invasive species.

[Significant issues include, but are not limited to:] harm to native songbirds due to proliferation of brown-headed cowbirds, etc. (Comment #103-23)

Cowbirds are obligate brood parasites that can significantly impact native passerine species. One study in the northern Sierra found that up to 78 percent of warbler nests are parasitized by cowbirds, resulting in significant decreases in the reproductive success of those species (Airola 1986). Elsewhere in the Sierra, individual female cowbirds have been reported to lay an average of 30 eggs per season (Fleischer et al. 1987). These high rates of parasitism and fecundity by cowbirds indicate that significant local impacts occur wherever cowbird populations are present. (Comment #103-62)

Air Quality and Noise

Air Quality

Public Concern 42: The NPS should improve and protect air quality in Yosemite.

BY QUICKLY EXTINGUISHING UNCONTROLLED FIRES

[Are there other river-related values that you'd like to include? Tell us why.] Put out lightning fires to allow visitors to see views-valley and elsewhere-rather than hinder human health issues, such as asthma. (Comment #102-20)

BY REGULATING PRESCRIBED BURNING

[Are there other river-related values that you'd like to include? Tell us why.] Good air quality, no pine needles burning or prescribed burns. (Comment #102-19)

BY REGULATING VEHICLE EMISSIONS

Emission standards should be set and made a mandatory requirement for entry. Belching clouds of black gas and soot emanating from unregulated numbers of many of these commercial vehicles is simply unacceptable in a National Park. (Comment #52-17)

How much sewer gas and tour bus fumes can one be expected to tolerate? (Comment #64-42)

Noise

Public Concern 43: The NPS should manage and minimize noise impacts and standards within Yosemite.

The [MRP] plan should include noise management The park should manage noise within the river corridor. (Comment #39-10)

How many decibels, for how many years, should be allowed for diesel machinery, back-up beeping? (Comment #66-41)

BECAUSE PEACE AND QUIET IS APPRECIATED

[What do you love about the Merced River and the Yosemite Valley?] The quiet serenity of the area without human noise. (Comment #102-4)

BY REGULATING MOTORCYCLES AND RV GENERATORS

Reduce noise from motorcycles and RV generators. These noises significantly degrade the experience of climbers and other park visitors. The [MRP] presents an excellent opportunity to bring them under control. (Comment #46-5)

I find it very disturbing to hear loud unnatural noise while visiting the park. In particular the park should limit motorcycles access to the park if they do not meet certain noise levels. Many motorcycles have been modified to remove or limit their mufflers. These motorcycles should not be permitted to pass the park entrance station. Decibel meters could be available at each entrance for the staff to check the noise emitted by motorcycles. Those that exceed the standard should be denied access. (Comment #39-11)

...Please do not allow any motors or generators within the sound of the river. (Comment #74-9)

Scenic and Cultural Resources

Scenic Resources

Public Concern 23: The NPS should value and protect the scenic resources within Yosemite.

[What characteristics of the river-scientific, scenic, geological, recreation, biological, cultural, and hydrologic processes - are important to you?] natural views. (Comment #102-13)

[Significant issues include, but are not limited to:] impaired scenery. (Comment #103-18)

AS THEY CURRENTLY EXIST

Appropriate activities: I think that the stopping areas are appropriately placed (for viewing of the scenic views). (Comment #88-6)

[What do you love about the Merced River and the Yosemite Valley?] Views, vista that can be seen by those unable to walk. (Comment #102-2)

I value the outstanding scenic values it [Yosemite National Park] has the entire way from the wilderness to Briceberg. (Comment #106-21)

BY RESTRICTING ROADSIDE PARKING

Roadside parking along El Cap straight significantly impacts the scenic value of the Merced in this high quality view-shed. Alternatives should be considered to resolve the parking problem and the resulting human impacts to El Cap meadow. (Comment #52-12)

Cultural Resources

Public Concern 44: The NPS should consult the Yosemite-Mono Lake Paiute Indian Community in the management of Native American cultural resources in Yosemite.

TO ENSURE PROPER TREATMENT OF HUMAN REMAINS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

What happened or happens to the early Indian remains found at El Portal and along the Merced River? Where are they stored? (Comment 50-5)

INSTEAD OF RELYING ON NON-PAIUTE CONSULTATION

We object to the American Indian Council of Mariposa aka the Southern Sierra Miwuk group taking the lead if they are not a federally recognized tribe. (Comment #50-12)

BECAUSE THEY OCCUPIED THE AREA AT TIME OF CONTACT WITH WHITES

If Yosemite National Park Services uses C. Hart Merriam as identification of sites why is there no mention of trade starting in 1870s? Meaning that Paiute items found in the area were from Paiute items found in the area were from Paiute occupation and not a Miwok presence. (Comment #50-4)

Public Concern 45: The NPS should protect and value cultural resources in Yosemite.

SUCH AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Complete avoidance of archaeological sites/no digging disturbance. The National Parks Service should immediately cease all ground disturbing human activity on and or around these sites. (Comment #95-69)

SUCH AS HISTORIC SITES

Save the old Superintendent's House in Yosemite Valley. The building could be used as an educational center for all types of programs especially the Yosemite Institute. (Comment #31-3)

With respect to the South Fork, my only experience is at Wawona, where it adds to the historic setting. I believe the Wawona Hotel has the oldest buildings in which one can rent a room for a night in any of the major scenic national parks, and its preservation as a well maintained, functioning hotel would be one of my priorities in the plan. (Comment #106-2)

By sheer number of years and numbers of visitors, the campgrounds and sites belong on the National Register for Historical Places. Surely, if the NPS can grant Camp 4 for such status, the other Campgrounds qualify since they precede the climbers camp in years and numbers of visitors. Is the only way to get this point across to sue the YNPS? That is how the climbers got Camp 4 to remain till perpetuity, isn't it? (Comment #53-17)

FOR NATIVE AMERICAN USE

NPS should identify and zone accordingly for Native American cultural ORVs within the entire river corridor; this type of zoning could offer maximum protection from ground disturbing projects while allowing for true ecological restoration AND respectful access/Native American traditional use. (Comment #55-43)

BY REEVALUATING THEIR INTEGRITY

NPS should re-consider the 'historical' status of some significant structures in YNP [Yosemite National Park] that may no longer be appropriate to the NPS mission or cost-effective to maintain. (Comment #55-44)

BY MAINTAINING THE MUSEUM AND OTHER INTERPRETIVE CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

[What kind of natural environment do you want to see? What kind of social environment? How would you like to see the culture and history of Yosemite preserved and shared?] keep museum as is for those wanting historical and cultural perspectives. (Comment #102-8)

Special Land Use Designations

ORVs

Public Concern 46: The NPS should emphasize protection and enhancement of ORVs.

ORV Management Should Protect and Enhance ORV's, in keeping with WSRA [Wild and Scenic Rivers Act]: The CMP [MRP] should apply principles of protection and enhancement to management of ORVs. The NPS should elaborate a list of protection/enhancement principles with respect to ORVs. Below we have begun a list of some important principles which come to mind. (Again, we do not offer a definitive listing of every issue here; we hope NPS Resources Staff will elaborate on this or a similar list, and we will hope to comment further when the draft is prepared.) (Comment #95-65)

BY LIMITING FUTURE FACILITIES AND SERVICES ON OR NEAR THE MERCED RIVER

In terms of future levels of facilities and services, these should be limited to those which would guarantee both protection and enhancement of ORVs (see also our comments under "capacity"). (Comment #95-81)

BECAUSE THEY ARE A VALUABLE PARK RESOURCE

Earlier management elements of the 2000 CMP [MRP#1] should be eliminated, because they do not protect ORVs. The RPO [river protection overlay] allowed construction and development of a variety of amenities. We have discussed this elsewhere in comments on the prior plans. Section 7 was proposed in the CMP [MRP] to circumvent protections of the river channel and riparian areas. We think these should be removed from the CMP until and unless they prove to serve the overarching goal of protecting the ORVs of the Merced River. (Comment #95-85)

BY OUTLINING IN THE MRP SPECIFIC WAYS TO PROTECT THEM

In addition to the clarity and specificity of what the Park intends to do to protect the ORVs, there are other areas of clarification that are needed. (Comment #3-9)

Previous Plans fail to connect the dots. The ORVs are poorly defined. They are supposed to be rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context and must be river-related. The previous plans use the buzz words—scenic, geologic, biological, cultural, recreation, scientific, and hydrologic processes. What do these words actually mean on the ground, what protection needs to occur, and how will that happen? (Comment #44-6)

There will be increasingly frequent periods when the methods preferred by the NPS for a conditions based adaptive management user capacity approach supported by the scientific community will not be sufficient to protect the Merced River's Outstandingly Remarkably Values (ORV's) from excessive use. (Comment #52-3)

BY IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL ORVS

At a previous MRP hearing, I asked the 30 some NPS officials if any of them had floated down the Merced River. Not one hand was raised. I explained that no one can appreciate the awesome experience of seeing Yosemite from such a grand perspective, yet they are doing the planning. FLOATING DOWN THE MERCED RIVER IS AN ORV!!!! (Comment #53-16)

NPS should identify swimming as a recreational ORV for all segments of the Merced River. (Comment #55-36)

Camping in Yosemite Valley is an ORV. (Comment #53-15)

Public Concern 48: The NPS should better define Yosemite's ORVs.

Most important to this [new CMP [MRP#3] is re-thinking ORVs, giving them quantified and geographic substance, and defining a capacity of use which will result in their protection, as we discuss below. (Comment #95-9)

In 2004 we wrote: "The National Park Service has stated that by being more general in their descriptions of the ORVs they can better protect the ORVs. On the contrary, in the River Plan, NPS needs to be transparent and specific in their description and discussion of the ORVs, their locations, interactions with other animals, plants, processes, etc. The public should understand the specifics of the ORVs in order to be able to help watch and follow and participate in working towards and monitoring their protection and enhancement ... (Comment #95-29)

TO INCLUDE A MORE HOLISTIC VIEW OF RESOURCES

With that logical recognition, NPS should also consider a more "wholistic" view of the natural, scientific, scenic, and cultural ORVs. ORVs in Yosemite are interrelated in natural systems, aesthetic landscapes, and cultural landscapes. (Comment #95-34)

Obviously, the at-risk resources that are tied in some way to ORVs are the resources that a court judgment would most clearly require the Park to consider, but ill the over River ecosystem, it is both prudent and scientifically essential for the Park to aim to protect all the natural resources - since all are hitched to each other in one way or another. (Comment #3-7)

AND GIVE EMPHASIS TO THOSE THAT ARE THE MOST CLEARLY RELATED TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE RIVER

WSRA [Wild and Scenic Rivers Act] gives primary emphasis to protection of scenic, scientific, biological and cultural values. NPS should explicitly recognize that this provides needed direction, and hierarchy in order to identify ORVs, and to resolve conflicts between ORVs. To put the question of conflicts simply, we think NPS should adopt the principle that quality, river-related human use of the Merced River is dependent upon the protection and enhancement of the (natural/scientific/cultural) values. Because of this, the (natural/scientific/cultural ORVs) should be weighted differently than those involving visitor experience. (Comment #95-41)

SUCH AS CULTURAL ORVS

Another dimension of Yosemite's ORV "assemblage" is fundamentally cultural: how the native inhabitants of the place have lived from and rendered the landscape sacred, and thus unique and irreplaceable. (Comment #95-38)

Public Concern 49: The NPS should revisit the public's opinions on the definition of ORVs.

During the scoping meetings and plan formulation, NPCA [National Parks Conservation Association] urges you to repeat the exercise of generating ideas from the public about the most important Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) of the River, and how best to protect them. (Comment #94-28)

AND DESIGNATE YOSEMITE VALLEY IN ITS ENTIRETY TO BE AN ORV

Consideration should be given to declaring Yosemite Valley in its entirety to be an ORV. We proposed this during the 2000 planning process. We still believe it to be a valid idea. (Comment #55-10)

AND DESIGNATE WAWONA AS AN ORV

Wawona itself is an "Outstandingly Remarkable Value" in the river corridor. (Comment #96-4)

AND DEFINE THE MERCED RIVER'S ORVS

One of the goals of the planning process is to define the ORVs of these rivers. (Comment #106-1)

In our dry part of the world, the value of an actual free flowing river can only be well appreciated by those who see it. By dividing the route of the River into zones one can create areas of different expectations for social interaction. For example, those walking from Happy Isles up (and it is certainly up) to the bridge from which one can see Vernal Falls (Vernal and Nevada Falls are certainly another ORV) can expect to encounter many other people on the trail. (Comment #106-7)

Public Concern 50: The NPS should replace zoning maps with maps documenting ORV status.

To the extent that NPS may rely upon a geographic depiction of areas of the corridor and conditions, we think a map of ORV status, management, and monitoring oriented towards protection should replace the old "zoning" maps. (Comment #95-61)

We think that the "land use zoning" map adopted by the former CMP [MRP] was completely misguided, because it completely lacked relationship to ORVs. It involved experiences, not ORVs. Instead, in this CMP (we hope) a geographic component of an ORV protection and enhancement program should replace the prior "land use zoning" map. We think a true focus on ORVs in this plan, and a geographic treatment of them, should completely re-focus any subsequent discussion of land use, or "visitor use" decisions, as the case may be. (Comment #95-62)

Public Concern 68: The NPS should recognizing climbing as an ORV.

Recognize climbing as one of the outstanding recreational values of the river corridor. The Valley's granite walls are recognized by the U.S. and international climbing communities for the seminal role they played in the development of climbing and for the challenge they continue to present to climbers today. If there is one place in the U.S. where the climbing opportunities present a remarkably outstanding value to the world community, Yosemite Valley is the place. (Comment #46-6)

Climbing should be explicitly recognized as one of the outstanding recreational values of the Merced River Corridor. (Comment #46-32)

Wawona/Section 35**Public Concern 52: The NPS should restrict development in the Wawona/Section 35 area.**

Please keep Wawona as it is now so that future generations can enjoy what we all enjoy today. (Comment #37-7)

It appears the fate of Wawona is now in your hands. Will you decide to keep the charm of the last century or make Wawona just another busy "company" town? (Comment #43-3)

NPS planners have a historic opportunity to define a positive future for Section 35 in revising the MRP. (Comment #65-1)

We can think of NO reason to change the environment of Wawona (for all time!). (Comment #92-2)

IN ORDER TO PRESERVE ITS CHARACTER

Because Wawona is relatively small, somewhat isolated and less visited by park visitors, the community provides visitors and residents an increased sense of privacy, peace, and scenic beauty. There is little congestion, noise or pollution. (Comment #96-3)

Please note that former Yosemite National Park Superintendent David Mihalic, in letter to the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors recognized the uniqueness of Wawona: "Based on the congressionally mandated mission, the NPS cannot agree to any amendments to the town plan which change the small mountain community atmosphere of Wawona or which allow for more intensive development of the area" - David Mihalic, 17 February 2000. (Comment #99-5)

AND REMOVE SECTION 35 FROM THE MRP

It was good that the earlier MRP designated the Wawona area as Recreational and not Scenic as had been proposed. Because of the Court's view of user capacity, however, I feel it is all the more important that Section 35 in Wawona be excluded from the MRP river corridor altogether. (Comment #105-2)

Since there are so many parcels of private property in Section 35, my suggestion would be to simply exempt this section from the Management Plan. (Comment #61-2)

AND NOT DESIGNATE THE SOUTH FORK OF THE MERCED RIVER AS SCENIC

The section of the South Fork of the Merced River, from the containment dam to the Wawona Campground has many improvements in the flood plain. Therefore this section of the river cannot be considered wild and scenic. (Comment #99-8)

According to the WSR Act [Wild and Scenic Rivers Act], classification is to be based on the level of existing or prior development. The river in Wawona is readily accessible by road, it has extensive development and has now and in the past had impoundment and diversion. For Wawona to be properly classified as Scenic, it would have to be "...free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads." (Comment #105-16)

AND WORK WITH PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS TO PREVENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO THE AREA

Private property owners are historically responsible for serious environmental violations and we're obligated to cooperate with NPS and Mariposa County to ensure that similar violations don't occur in the future. (Comment #65-8)

AND NOT ALLOW DEVELOPMENT OVERFLOW FROM YOSEMITE

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] no expansion of Yosemite Valley overflows into Wawona. (Comment #102-39)

BECAUSE OF RESULTING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The sewer line on the south side of Wawona is operated by lift stations along the line. When the power goes out, the pumps do not operate. A technician from the plant must come to the lift stations and manually turn on the generators. At times, heavy snow prevents that happening in a timely manner creating the possibility of a sewage spill. Is there a plan to prevent sewage spills in the South Fork of the Merced? (Comment #43-15)

INCLUDING THE SWINGING BRIDGE AREA

The Wawona "Swinging Bridge" area has become very busy, with the Wawona Campground and the Wawona Hotel directing visitors there. The SDA [Seventh Day Adventist] Camp Wawona especially sends large groups (100s) of guests there simultaneously. (Comment #99-6)

IN ORDER TO PRESERVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS

As a property owner in Wawona (on the south fork of the Merced River) since 1968, I am concerned about maintaining the quality of life we have enjoyed there. (Comment #54-1)

IN ORDER TO PROMOTE GOOD WILL WITH PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS

NPS undergoes radical policy shifts over time as administrations and budgets change. These shifts create permanent suspicion in the minds of long-time private property owners. Ironically, many park service employees and concessionaire employees share this institutional suspicion. After all we shop at the same stores, go to the same social events, send our children to Wawona School, hike the same trails, swim in the same river, and ski at Badger Pass. (Comment #65-9)

AND NOT USE IT AS AN ALTERNATE SITE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Wawona is a vital part of Yosemite National Park for the benefit of all visitors and should not be considered as an alternative site for possible development. (Comment #43-4)

BY LOOKING AT THE IMPACT OF OTHER RELATED PLANNING ASPECTS

Not discussed in our meetings but of equal importance is the proposed River Protection Overlay. To manage this variable-width corridor through Section 35 would be a nightmare. Management actions taken on one portion of the river invariably affect upstream property. (Comment #105-19)

Public Concern 54: The NPS should establish a user capacity for the Wawona area.

“However, in the ruling on the 2005 revised Merced River Park Plan, the US District Court ruled that the park needed to present a maximum number of people allowed in the river corridor (especially Yosemite Valley)...” & Wawona! (Comment #102-21)

Public Concern 53: The NPS should restrict the expansion of the Seventh Day Adventist Camp (Camp Wawona).

Aside from the safety issues THIS [Camp Wawona] DOES NOT BELONG IN A NATIONAL PARK THAT IS SET ASIDE TO BE ENJOYED AS BACK TO NATURE FROM WHICH ONE CAN'T EVEN REMOVE A PINE CONE!!!! (Comment #70-5)

The Seventh Day Adventist Camp expansion threatens to overwhelm this small area, and bring pollution as masses of additional people utilize the river for recreation. Anything beyond this expansion, which we fear will be approved, has us worried even further. (Comment #71-3)

BECAUSE OF ITS IMPACT ON THE MERCED RIVER

I just got your Yosemite NP Planning update for the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers and am quite confused how the current planning for a HUGE expansion by the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), right next to the south bank of the south fork of the Merced river inside Yose Nat'l Park can continue to move ahead while my tax dollars are being spent on mailing after mailing (and lots of payroll) on keeping the rivers in the park "wild and scenic". (Comment #70-2)

BECAUSE OF ITS IMPACT ON THE SWINGING BRIDGE AREA

The expansion of Camp Wawona and the camp's adverse impact on the use of the Wawona Swinging Bridge area should be examined. (Comment #43-11)

BECAUSE OF ITS IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The Camp Wawona EIR fails to adequately address the project's adverse impacts on Park Service lands and resources, including the South Fork of the Merced River, water quality, fish and wildlife, noise and air pollution, and hydrologic resources. Will this be addressed in the new [MRP] before the Camp Wawona expansion is approved in its entirety? (Comment #43-12)

The Camp Wawona Environmental Impact Report acknowledged the limitations of Forest Drive, but discounted the problem and increased the risk by recommending that Camp Wawona be resized to handle year-round operation at peak historic occupancy levels. (Comment #98-4)

Public Concern 55: The NPS should prevent condemnation/seizure of private property within the Wawona area.

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] No condemnations/seizures/condemnations of private properties/Wawona homes. (Comment #102-38)

Public Concern 56: The NPS should consider providing water for homes within the Wawona area from the Merced River

AS AN APPROPRIATE USE OF THE MERCED RIVER.

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] Water for established Wawona homes. (Comment #102-33)

High-Density Employee Housing and Campgrounds Adjacent to Wawona

Public Concern 51: The NPS should not allow high density employee housing or campgrounds in the Wawona/Section 35 area.

Re: The Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan revision, my wife and I urge the responsible committee to eliminate any thought of placing high density housing and/or more public campgrounds in Wawona. (Comment #37-1)

The proposed re-zoning of Wawona for NPS or concessionaire employee housing should not be approved. (Comment #43-5)

We would like to go on record commenting that any designated land use placed in the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan which would permit public campgrounds or high density employee housing within section 35 would be severely detrimental to our quiet Wawona community. (Comment #60-2)

This high density would be severely detrimental to our small mountain residential and vacation home community [Wawona]. (Comment #68-2)

I am opposed to dormitories or housing units for Park Service employees or concessionaires as well as public campgrounds and high density housing in Section 35. (Comment #100-3)

AND SHOULD MODIFY THE MRP TO REFLECT THIS SENTIMENT

So we propose that park planners modify the Revised Merced River Plan language to remove the threat of high-density NPS development on Wawona's south side. (Comment #30-5)

We invite park planners to join us through our representative organizations (WAPOA [Wawona Area Property Owners Association] and WTPAC [Wawona Town Plan Advisory Committee]) to develop mutually acceptable revisions to the original Merced River Plan language. (Comment #30-8)

BECAUSE RESIDENTS UNANIMOUSLY OPPOSE IT

There have been many contentious issues in Wawona over the years. However, resisting high-density development is one issue where Wawonans are nearly unanimous. This includes Section 35 property owners, concessionaire employees, and NPS personnel that reside here. (Comment #30-7)

BECAUSE OF CONFLICTS WITH COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Since its founding as privately owned property, Wawona has offered visitors the opportunity to experience Yosemite in many unique and different ways. Today, visitors can still enjoy the character and quaintness of the Wawona Hotel, take a stage coach ride, walk through the restored pioneer village, rent their choice of rustic or modern cabins, enjoy the South Fork, swim and hike, and generally step back in time to see how life "used to be". (Comment #37-2)

High density office or dwelling units in Wawona would change the character of the area drastically. This would be strongly opposed by WAPOA [Wawona Area Property Owners Association], the property owners' association. (Comment #54-3)

BECAUSE OF THE RESULTING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

If this plan were implemented in Wawona, it would cause long-term major adverse impacts on Wawona population as well as traffic and congestion. (Comment #68-3)

We are owners of a home in North Wawona since 1968 and we are strongly opposed to any plan that would permit public campgrounds or high density development in the Wawona area. These kinds of projects would produce an unwanted environmental impact on Wawona, a single home area. (Comment #92-1)

BECAUSE IT WOULD CONFLICT WITH CAMP WAWONA

Our camp ministries [at Camp Wawona] would be forever negatively altered if the above changes were made [high-density housing]. The experiences that we so value and want to continue to pass on to future generations would certainly be compromised. In time – maybe even extinct. (Comment #45-3)

Camp Wawona as a Seventh-Day Adventist camp, does observe the Sabbath from Friday sundown until Saturday at sundown. This leads to a quiet atmosphere for worship, prayer, reflection, and the avoidance of unacceptable activities. It is seen as a "safe haven" in the beauty of Yosemite and nature for the carrying out of Seventh-Day Adventist beliefs and teachings. Adjacent uses which prevent or negatively influence that Sabbath observation could deprive Adventists of their right to worship according to our beliefs. (Comment #47-4)

BECAUSE OF THE RESULTING IMPACTS TO TRAFFIC

If this plan [MRP#3] were implemented in Wawona, it would cause long-term major adverse impacts on the Wawona population and add lots of traffic and congestion. (Comment #34-2)

I would like to urge you to consider locating such high-density uses in an area that can more easily handle increased noise and traffic. I respectfully request that you look elsewhere for the land to develop this use [other than Wawona]. (Comment #56-3)

BECAUSE OF THE RESULTING INCREASED CRIME

Whenever huge crowds with outside interests congregate in an area, i.e. campers, part time employees, or whatever, there is a greater chance of unlawful conduct and the trouble and strife that comes with it. (Comment #37-5)

Additionally, the crime element [in Wawona] would increase with high density. That is a known. (Comment #68-4)

Wawona Golf Course

Public Concern 70: The NPS should maintain the Wawona golf course.

Verify that when the Park Service purchased the Wawona hotel in the 1930's they agreed that the golf course would always remain a golf course. (Comment #43-19)

[What kind of environmental conditions and recreational activities you would like to see for various areas along the Merced River?] Continued Wawona golf course use. (Comment #102-25)

The Wawona Golf Course, established in 1918, should be classified as recreational in the river plan. (Comment #100-8)

Visitor Experience and Access

Visitor Experience

Public Concern 71: The NPS should protect visitor experience from impacts by visitor activities.

After all, visitors travel to Yosemite to enjoy nature's beauty unimpaired for generations to come – not to suffer stifling crowds and degraded riverbanks. (Comment #94-4)

“What kind of experience should an area provide? Is it more suited to a solitary experience, or would it be acceptable to encounter many other visitors in this environment?” NO! (Comment #102-22)

BY ESTABLISHING A CARRYING CAPACITY

A carrying capacity for the Valley needs to be established. Overcrowding means no place to park and degraded enjoyment of the Valley experience. (Comment #100-10)

LIKE RAFTING

...and [rafts] are an eyesore when you see hundreds of people at a time. (Comment #101-3)

Visitor Access

Limiting Access

Public Concern 57: The NPS should not establish limits on visitor access to Yosemite.

I feel that access is important and those who want a quieter experience can find it if they just go to the right places, rather than trying to legislate limits on the number of people near the river, (something I doubt is enforceable). (Comment #106-10)

I agree with the comment in the "Planning Update" for May 2007 (page 4) that having courts define "user capacity" is both dangerous and improper. If labeling the portion of the Merced River within the Valley as "Wild and Scenic" can result in such an absurdity, including overriding your excellent current MRP, then either that "Wild and Scenic" status needs to be removed within the Valley or the laws for what such a designation means need to be revised. (Comment #87-1)

AND CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ACCESS OVER ENVIRONMENTAL RESTRICTION

The NPS produced a General Management Plan that recognized the public's right of access. However, when the Wilderness Act was passed, it was made to infringe upon the Yosemite Grant and limit the public's right of access. (Comment #93-3)

Now all planning is in the hands of the courts and we all know where that will go. The ultimate goal is not to make Yosemite user safe and friendly, the goal is simply the elimination of all visitors except the chosen few who feel that they are above use "normal folk" because they are true "protectors of the environment." "Fence it off" they say, close it, remove it, don't use it. This is elitist plain and simple. (Comment #63-4)

Public Concern 58: The NPS should establish and enforce limits on visitor capacity and visitor access within Yosemite.

I'm particularly supportive of the lower annual visitor numbers. (Comment #33-2)

Address use limits – we do not have room for unlimited parking. (Comment #91-10)

We have an opportunity with this new Merced River planning process to explore the many alternatives that will be required to regulate access when demand becomes excessive and overwhelms present NPS policy to regulate use. (Comment #52-2)

TO PROTECT THE PARK'S NATURAL RESOURCES

If proper care and maintenance require restricting the numbers of humans that can visit the area, then so be it. We humans have ruined enough of the wilderness, the rivers and the animal world, we need to protect what little we, as a nation not to mention the world, have, and that's all I have to say. (Comment #85-2)

TO RESTRICT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ALLOWED INTO AREAS OF THE PARK

The Yosemite backcountry, including portions of the Merced Wild & Scenic River corridor, is so popular that quotas on its use have been implemented to prevent unacceptable impacts. We support the implementation of restrictions designed to protect park, wilderness, and wild & scenic river values. (Comment #103-29)

AT THE EL CAPITAN CROSSOVER

As to the question of how many people should be allowed east of El Capitan crossover at any given time, I would suggest that procedures already developed be used. On the few occasions that the road in the east end of the valley become hopelessly clogged, there is an existing system for limiting the number of day users. (Comment #106-17)

BY LIMITING FACILITIES

[What kind of natural environment do you want to see? What kind of social environment? How would you like to see the culture and history of Yosemite preserved and shared?] limit human social enviro. To present hotels, campsites, and store complexes already built and historical in use. (Comment #102-7)

TO PROTECT YOSEMITE'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The plan should specify the resources that are most at-risk from visitor use and clearly detail how those resources will be protected from visitor use. (Comment #3-16)

Further, the current group size limits have been shown to significantly and adversely affect park resources and values. In order to adequately protect Yosemite's environment and wild & scenic river values, the group size limits must be revised downward. (Comment #103-73)

BY ESTABLISHING A BACK-UP RESERVATION SYSTEM

A properly designed back-up reservation system with a first come first serve component should emphasize guaranteed entry during heavy use periods and not be presented as a restriction of access as many now fear. (Comment #52-6)

Carrying Capacity

Public Concern 59: The MRP needs to reexamine its plans for establishing a carrying capacity.

We appreciate all of the work the NPS has put into identifying ways to measure and act on carrying capacity concerns. We understand the difficulties that have arisen as NPS has attempted to manage a river much loved by millions of people. (Comment #94-2)

Establish a carrying capacity for the Valley. (Comment #43-36)

Focus on this issue [user capacity] should be the primary objective in the new planning process for the Merced, and it should proceed regardless of the outcome of future court actions. (Comment #52-8)

In other words, a "carrying capacity" which would allow a set number of people allowed into the park on a busy day should be established as a part of a well conceived Merced River Plan. (Comment #57-2)

BY INCLUDING DISCUSSIONS ON RELEVANT INFORMATION

[Informational input relevant to a visitor capacity decision might include:] Regional supply of the same and similar recreational opportunities. (Comment #95-107)

AND COMPARE THEM WITHIN THE ALTERNATIVES

Each alternative should clearly compare and contrast the visitor capacity(ies) for the area or units within. Furthermore, in that visitor capacities are decisions made as part of a rational public planning process, such decisions should be guided by accepted principles. While it is true that alternatives can allow for varying intensities of use, alternatives should describe actual measures of visitor use which will protect and enhance the ORVs of the river. (It would be unacceptable to describe alternatives which allow degradation of river values). Additionally concerning alternative development: in the development of alternatives, the CMP [MRP] should include different user capacity limits that not only protect ORVs, but that would help restore degraded ORVs. (Comment #95-117)

BY USING PROFESSIONAL OPINIONS

The Substantive Standard for Visitor Capacities Recreation carrying capacities, or visitor capacities, are administrative decisions. Sound professional judgment is the substantive standard for decision making by responsible public officials. Sound professional judgment is defined as a reasonable decision that has given full and fair consideration to all the appropriate information, that is based upon principled and reasoned analysis and the best available science and expertise, and that complies with applicable laws. (Comment #95-98)

BY BASING IT ON PRINCIPLES THAT REFLECT IMPORTANT AND CENTRAL VALUES

[Principles that reflect important and central values for visitor capacity decision making] A visitor capacity helps to sustain the integrity of natural and cultural resources, as well as the important recreational and nonrecreational benefits they afford to local, regional, and national publics. (Comment #95-120)

[Principles that reflect important and central values for visitor capacity decision making] The effectiveness of a visitor capacity depends on an adequate program of monitoring that is commensurate with the level of potential consequences, risk, and uncertainty. See above. (Comment #95-130)

IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE PARK'S ORVS

Visitor Capacity: The CMP should establish a user capacity for the Merced River Corridor which will protect and enhance the Merced's ORV's. According to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Interagency Guidelines (1982), user capacity is defined as: the quantity of recreation use which an area can sustain without adverse impact on the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing character of the river area, the quality of recreation experience, and public health and safety." (Comment #95-86)

The overarching function of a visitor capacity is to serve as one tool to help sustain natural and cultural resources, as well as the recreation opportunities and other benefits these resources afford the public. As discussed above, a determination of visitor capacity is essential and necessary for a program of protection for the ORV's of Yosemite's Merced, including those related to visitor experience. (Comment #95-94)

AND USE THEM AS A SAFETY VALVE DURING PEAK TIMES

Current visitation in Yosemite has declined in recent years and is presently far below the intolerable levels that prevailed during the 1960's. Lower visitation levels observed in recent years does not diminish the need to address "excess capacity" that occurs on a few spring and summer holiday weekends now or how to manage the inevitable increased day use that will certainly occur as future population pressures increase. (Comment #52-1)

It is our opinion that this safety valve approach to limiting user capacity on federal lands should not be used to invalidate management plans across the NPS, USFS, and other federal agencies but that it be used to support those efforts when conditions become extreme. (Comment #52-5)

BY INCLUDING A CURRENT, BASELINE STUDY ON VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS AND CARRYING CAPACITY

It might be interesting to study who exactly is your "day visitor." Did you actually manipulate increased day visitation by removing 60+% of overnight accommodations? And won't your plans to develop campsites outside of the Valley end up creating even more day visitors? (Comment #44-18)

NPS should, at the very least, have some type of baseline data so that they can adequately address user capacity-- an accurate count of people and vehicles through the entrance gates, accurate population statistics for El Portal, etc. (Comment #55-9)

BY INCLUDING SPECIFIC PLANS FOR MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

The plan should set long-term ground rules defining and limiting allowable management actions. The ground-rules should include all of the following: (a) a specific, absolute maximum limit on the number of users that will be permitted in a management area (river segment or management zone) per day, (b) a specific, maximum limit on the number of users acceptable for the entire corridor per year, (c) a specific, maximum limit on the development of facilities. Tied to these limits there needs to be specificity as to what the Park Service will do if such limits end up being approached, and then what the Park Service will do if responses fail and the limits are exceeded. (Comment #3-25)

SUBPUBLIC CONCERN: SUCH AS IN THE SWINGING BRIDGE AREA

The Swinging Bridge area in Wawona should have a user capacity established. (Comment #43-9)

Public Concern 60: The NPS should further explain its plans for visitor capacity limits.

Again, we are not saying that these [limits on facilities and visitor capacity limits] were not included in the overturned plan – but perhaps the use of them could be more fully shaded in, so that anyone reading could see that the park has a plan for protecting the carrying capacity of the land. (Comment #94-20)

Access for Special Populations

Public Concern 61: The NPS needs to provide for better access for visitors with limited mobility.

[Of the management methods you may be familiar with, how do they fare in providing equal opportunities for visitors of various economic, social and ethnic backgrounds?] Poor for senior citizens with limited mobility (can't climb into buses) (Comment #102-29)

INCLUDING APPLYING DISABLED STANDARDS TO CAMPGROUNDS

Disabled standards need be applied to all campground restrooms as the YNPS has failed to meet minimum federal standards of their own Rehab Act. (Comment #53-10)

Park Reservations

Public Concern 62: The NPS should make park reservations for Yosemite easier to obtain.

I am 50 years old now, disabled, and I am unable to bring your children here because reservations are so difficult to obtain to camp in the Valley, and to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. (Comment #5-1)

Recreation and Visitor Services

Recreation

Public Concern 63: The NPS should further examine recreational activities and their impacts on park resources.

Reduce visitor impacts along sensitive river shoreline by allowing access to non-sensitive sand and gravel bars, and restricting access to resource sensitive river sites and to high level view-sheds like Woski Pond. (Comment #52-11)

After visiting this area for the past 54 years, I have seen many changes in the wildlife and water quality of the Merced River. We used to see pollywogs and frogs in the summertime. They disappeared about 40 years ago. We used to freely drink the water in the Merced River, as it was always very cold and crystal clear, without moss. That changed about 25 years ago. There used to be trout, albeit small in size. In the last 15 years we see a foreign kind of bottom-feeding sucker fish, no trout. About 5 years ago, for two seasons, there was a family of ducks living on the river - entirely unheard of in the past. Lastly, in the past the river in our area was frequented only by the neighboring cabins. Now, there are hundreds of people using the river, all summer long, wearing sun block in the water. And they don't often pack their trash. (Comment #10-1)

SUCH AS BIKING

NPS should consider more seriously the impacts of concession bike rentals on the Merced River and its related meadows in Yosemite Valley. (Comment #55-35)

[Appropriate activities:] climbing hiking and biking should be encouraged. (Comment #88-7)

SUCH AS RAFTING

Some type of real limit (below whatever it is now) on how many concession rafts can be floating down the Merced on a given afternoon. (Comment #55-14)

Visual and physical impacts of rafting on the Merced's ORV's are excessive. The numbers of rafts permitted on the river should be significantly reduced. (Comment #52-13)

Why is there a commercial rafting concession? Do the profits justify destruction of Sentinel Beach? Again, the NPS is allowing the concession and the oversized diesel pick-up vehicles knowing full well that the "effect" will be destruction of the riparian area and the solitude of this tucked away low amenity family picnic facility. (Comment #44-20)

SUCH AS GOLFING

The northern half of the Wawona meadow is a 9-hole golf course, which was opened in 1918, and is the spray field for the reclaimed water from the Wawona Sewer Treatment Plant. The water in the meadow south of the golf course flows through two ditches, which were constructed to irrigate the meadow when it was a pasture. Most of the water in the creek, which flows through the golf course in the summer months, comes from seepage from the Wawona Sewer Treatment Plant spray field. The golf course is watered with treated sewer water. (Comment #43-18)

SUCH AS SWIMMING

I'm not sure what the solution is, short of not allowing swimming, or allowing it in designated areas. But from my experience, uncontrolled tourist use of the Merced River contributes dramatically to its decline. Thank you, and best wishes to you on this much-needed project. (Comment #10-2)

[Appropriate:] Swimming, floating. Impact: none. (Comment #5-6)

SUCH AS CAMPING

The HSCs pollute the Merced River and hurt the recreation experience by all of us visitors. (Comment #66-3)

In terms of bank preservation, I think the part of the Housekeeping Camp that immediately abuts the River should be removed and I think all camp sites should be set back from the River's edge. (Comment #106-13)

SUCH AS HIKING

[Appropriate activities:] climbing hiking and biking should be encouraged. (Comment #88-7)

SUCH AS PICNICKING

Picnic tables should also be set back from the River's edge, but they (and campsites) can be within viewing distance of the River. (Comment #106-14)

Public Concern 64: The NPS should encourage certain recreational activities.

SUCH AS PICNICKING

Preserve and increase picnic facilities. Picnic facilities in Yosemite Valley and along the river are valued by climbers and other day users who are camping outside the Valley or the park. (Comment #46-4)

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] Picnicking. (Comment #102-42)

SUCH AS HIKING

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] Hiking (Comment #102-36)

SUCH AS CLIMBING

The Access Fund supports all types of climbing, from urban sport climbing to pristine alpine wilderness mountaineering, including climbing experiences in protected environments such as those mandated by the Wild and Scenic River Act (WSRA). NPS policies support activities (like climbing, backpacking and camping) that promote a "direct association with park resources." Accordingly, the Access Fund supports the protection required by the WSRA while also supporting NPS planning and management decisions that maintain the current level of climbing activity and facilities used by climbers in Yosemite Valley and the Merced River corridor. (Comment #46-1)

SUCH AS RAFTING

Rafting/floating on the Merced River should be allowed via personal watercraft/floatation devices only, not via concession, spreading out the use along the river from Happy Isles to Sentinel Bridge in a low impact fashion. (Comment #53-13)

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] Rafting (non-motorized) (Comment #102-35)

SUCH AS BOATING

Use of non-motorized/human powered watercraft in rivers provides a low environmental impact form of recreation. Whitewater boaters tend to be a very environmentally conscious user group. Modern whitewater boating is very safety oriented and often involves using specialized equipment and training. (Comment #77-5)

The Merced River offers boaters many sections of world class whitewater. (Comment #78-2)

The current boating restrictions on the Merced River restrict all sections except for the area between Stoneman Bridge and Sentinel Bridge. That's not right. This ban prohibits boating in many areas offering great whitewater and scenery. (Comment #80-3)

SUCH AS FISHING

The fishing issue I am unsure on - we tried to fish in the Valley as children and never caught anything ever - does anyone? In the High Country that would be a big issue. (Comment #5-11)

I think of the South Fork as a recreational river where one can fish, swim or just enjoy the wonderful and beautiful sights and sounds of it. (Comment #100-14)

SUCH AS SWIMMING

[What characteristics of the river-scientific, scenic, geological, recreation, biological, cultural, and hydrologic processes - are important to you?] swimming holes. (Comment #102-14)

[What activities do you think are appropriate for the Merced River area?] Swimming, fishing. (Comment #102-32)

SUCH AS BICYCLING

[Services:] A bike trail should be separately following the river. (Comment #88-5)

I have suggested via these comment forms and at your EYY in 2005 to extend the present bike trail system as far out to Pohono Bridge. (Comment #89-1)

SUCH AS AUTO-TOURING

Experiences valued: seeing it flow from my car. Especially when you first enter the Valley and then when you're leaving. (Comment #88-3)

SUCH AS LOW IMPACT ACTIVITIES

Encourage interpretive activities (natural and cultural) over recreational activities that would be appropriate outside a National Park. Bird watching, floral identification, photography, and hiking have little impacts and should be encouraged. (Comment #52-15)

I believe that the Park Service should be encouraging responsible, low environmental impact forms of recreation. (Comment #79-6)

INCLUDING THOSE THAT FAVOR A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

We can't have it all--comfy camps, profits for pack animal businesses, rides for tourists, and a wilderness experience. We need to choose. We can have all those other things in other places. (Comment #75-4)

Public Concern 69: The NPS should examine recreation examples used by other parks.

We are extending our present trail system in Mammoth into Mono County. (Comment #89-3)

Public Concern 90: The NPS should encourage resource-based, low-cost, low-amenity recreational activities.

NPS should make every effort to allow families to participate in resource-based, low-cost, low-amenity activities in the Merced River corridor (such as picnicking, tent and traditional auto-camping, rafting with their own rafts, sledding with their own snow devices, riding their own bicycles). (Comment #55-33)

Camping

Public Concern 72: The NPS should encourage and promote camping in Yosemite.

The emphasis on fixed roof housing has disproportionately given priority to "visitation for fee" in our park. Other than day visitors, currently paying 20 dollars for a day, camping is the next most accessible and enjoyable and economical way to experience the Park. 20 to get in, 140 for 7 nights = \$160 plus ice and milk. There is no other economical way to access a visitation in Yosemite. For a family to stay at the most modest concession, the numbers climb to \$600 per night for housekeeping.

(Comment #53-22)

For purposes of the MRP, camping is an important recreational activity. The MRP should explicitly recognize camping as consistent with the recreation ORV. (Comment #46-11)

For example, at the Subcommittee Hearing held in the Park on April 20, 2003, Paul Minault provided an excellent analysis on the value of camping as a resource-focused activity: "National Park Service management policy is to "encourage visitor activities that . . . foster an understanding of, and

appreciation for, park resources and values, or will promote enjoyment through a direct association with, interaction with, or relation to park resources." Management Policy 2001- 8.2 Visitor Use (emphasis added). (Comment #95-45)

BECAUSE CAMPING IS GOOD FOR YOSEMITE AND SOCIETY

Camping brings the visitor into a direct relationship with park resources and distances the visitor from the commercial values of comfort and convenience and the expression of social status through consumption that pervade American society. (Comment #46-14)

Campers bring their dry firewood, their bikes, much of their food, recycle their trash, stow their trash in bear proof containers, abide by camping laws and respect the natural scene of the park. We hike the trails, we climb the rock, we take pictures and we make new friends. There is a code of happiness in the Park among campers. There is a sense of "legacy" that we wish to preserve for our children. (Comment #53-23)

Fourth, camping is democratic. In campgrounds, social distinctions account for little, and camping has the potential to bring people together in shared appreciation of their natural surroundings in a manner that reduces social barriers. The nations' great parks present an opportunity to be a force for social equality. Unfortunately, the lodging picture in Yosemite preserves the social distinctions of the greater society, rather than leveling them, which we believe should be a goal of the parks. (Comment #95-49)

BECAUSE MANY VISITORS ENJOY CAMPING

We have enjoyed camping here for 30 plus years and have also stayed at Curry Village tent cabins and log cabins. Our comment is to encourage the continued campground availability for those who enjoy living in the outdoor environment. (Comment #8-1)

It is without question that when President Lincoln commissioned the Park in 1864 to the State of California (Ref: Frederick Law Olmstead's book "Mariposa Grove and Yosemite: A Preliminary Report" camping was the main form of visitation, although for the elite class. Since and before this date, campers have been the major visitors of the Park and continue today. (Comment #53-3)

BECAUSE CAMPING IS PREFERABLE TO OTHER LODGINGS

The NPS Management Policies' emphasis on visitor experiences that foster a "direct relation" to park resources immediately suggests a natural hierarchy of overnight opportunities for park visitors. Visitors' overnight experiences that foster the most direct relationship with park resources should be accorded the highest priority in park planning, while those that foster the least direct relationship with park resources should be accorded the lowest priority. (Comment #46-20)

But the scale should tilt in favor of the camper, not the other way around [towards those who want room accommodations]. (Comment #97-3)

BY MAINTAINING AND INCREASING CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

The NPS should retain and increase camping opportunities in and near Yosemite Valley. (Comment #46-7)

Certainly in the river's long length of meandering through the Park, the section from Happy Isle to Sentinel Bridge can be zoned for camping use. (Comment #53-2)

I am frustrated that I cannot camp in the Valley anymore. I want more campsites for us campers. (Comment #63-5)

BECAUSE CONCESSION FOOD IS EXPENSIVE

Concession food is expensive (This is a big reason why the plan is labeled elitist, and a play to profit the vendor) limited variety time consuming does not provide family time to work together to prepare and clean up, and care for each other. (Comment #84-5)

BY ENCOURAGING SEASONAL CAMPING IN CERTAIN FLOOD ZONES

I would like to suggest, that camping would be a great use for the Merced River's seasonal and hundred year flood zone because campers use the area during the opposite seasons of the year. The average elevation of Upper Rivers Campground, for a point of reference, is easily ten feet above the average spring water elevation of the river. I have measured it. (Comment #57-11)

BY PROVIDING A VARIETY OF TYPES OF CAMPING SITES

We welcome the addition of RV campsites as well as repair of the roads at Lower Pines and other Valley campgrounds. (Comment #8-2)

Camping by car should be THE preferred way to stay and experience the grandeur of Yosemite. This is the traditional way. And it is a very good way. (Comment #97-1)

What about an area set aside for auto-based tent camping separate from RVs and trailers as was suggested in the 1980 GMP [General Management Plan]? (Comment #44-23)

Public Concern 74: The NPS should make lodging in Yosemite more affordable and accessible.

Nevermind the Ahwahnee--but the cabins and rooms have become so expensive, especially the tent cabins. I believe we need to have more of the low cost accommodations to allow families to enjoy the beauty. (Comment #38-2)

Unfortunately, the lodging picture in Yosemite, particularly the Valley, preserves the social distinctions of the greater society, rather than leveling them, which we believe should be a goal of the parks. (Comment #46-17)

Concerns about the number of people in Yosemite Valley should not be a reason for continuing to block the needed conversion of Valley rooms for rent by the night from an over supply of tent cabins (which are inexpensive, but do not have the amenities many people expect) to a more reasonable supply of midpriced rooms by building more rooms at Yosemite Lodge. (Comment #106-16)

TO PREVENT ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION

You may want to call it "environmental justice" but no matter what you call it, it is discrimination. Further reduction or elimination of campsites in the valley is unacceptable. Restore the Rivers campgrounds. (Comment #90-11)

Public Concern 73: The NPS should maintain some lodging for those who prefer not to camp.

Yes, some room accommodations for those who prefer not to camp. (Comment #97-2)

*Specific Camping Sites***Public Concern 75: The NPS should reexamine the use of HSCs in the MRP**

In sum, all four of the HSCs cited above should be subject to site-specific Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) as part of the Merced River planning process. This has never been done, and is necessary to illuminate the scope and nature of the substantial environmental impacts of those facilities. (Comment #103-17)

I have hiked the trail thru Vogelsang camp only once because of all the unnatural clutter that is at the camp. (Comment #62-7)

WITH RESPECT TO THE IMPACT OF THEIR SEWAGE ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

These camps provide luxury vacations in the Yosemite backcountry, including tent cabins, bedding, extravagant meals, showers, and toilets. All the by-products of human occupancy are produced at the HSCs: sewage (human body wastes), "gray water" from showers, grease and detergent from kitchens. But there are no wastewater or sewage treatment plants. Wastewater and sewage from these facilities directly pollutes the meadows, soils, and waters of the Merced River watershed. (Comment #11-10)

The ensuing campers create their own over-use issues with sewage, both gray and solid waste as well as the trampling and destroying of the camps. (Comment #76-5)

AND THEIR EFFECT ON WATER RESOURCES

With no sewage treatment these concentrated waste products [from the High Sierra Camps] directly pollute the water, meadows and soil of the Merced Watershed. (Comment #36-2)

Much as I love the High Sierra Camps, I believe these operations, too should be shut down due to their impact on the Merced River. (Comment #75-3)

AND THE EFFECT OF THE PACK ANIMALS USED TO STOCK THE CAMPS

And in order to service the camps, vast numbers of stock animals parade back- and-forth to haul the needed supplies. The result is badly eroded trails that are covered in stock manure, urine, flies and dust. (Comment #11-11)

My third point, along the same line, is relative to the HSCs...whose horse/mule trains are only a legitimized version of commercial horse packers....The horse packs destroy their own highways as well as the camp where they are picketed. (Comment #76-4)

AND REMOVE THEM

The MRP for Yosemite National Park needs to... include the elimination of all of the HSCs including Tuolumne Meadows Lodge. (Comment #15-2)

All of the HSCs, except the one at Tuolumne Meadows, should be closed, and the sites restored to their natural state. They are an unnecessary commercialization, intrusion, pollution and eyesore in many of the best parts of Yosemite. We avoided having Disney in a far corner of the park, only to continue to put up with pack and saddle animals and luxury camps through-out much of the park. It's time we stopped. (Comment #29-17)

All of the HSCs should be closed, and the sites restored. (Comment #82-6)

Public Concern 76: The NPS should remove or not restore certain campgrounds from Yosemite.

INCLUDING NORTH PINES CAMPGROUND

Meanwhile, plans call for the dismantling of long-established North Pines Campground to create some RV and walk-in sites across the street—a transfer of impacts to a currently undeveloped area. There is no discussion as to how this decision relates to ORVs or to visitor capacity. (Comment #44-12)

INCLUDING UPPER AND LOWER CAMPGROUNDS

Ensure current NPS objectives to restore the Upper and Lower River campgrounds to natural conditions do not yield to pressures to restore camping in these resource sensitive areas. The juxtaposition of the river and these former campgrounds should confirm restoration objectives. (Comment #52-14)

INCLUDING HOUSEKEEPING CAMP

With regard to the Merced River Plan: do everyone the favor of bulldozing Housekeeping Camp. It's an insult to the river, Yosemite, and the people that view it from the road or anywhere. I've seen better inner city slums. (Comment #2-1)

Public Concern 77: The NPS should restore the Upper and Lower River campgrounds.

The YNPS has not given weight to this long standing tradition and passion as they illegally removed Upper and Lower River Campgrounds and refused to repair flood damaged campgrounds in Group Camping, North Pines and Lower Pines Campgrounds after the 1997 Flood and even when Congress appropriated monies for such repairs. (Comment #53-4)

You may want to call it "environmental justice" but no matter what you call it, it is discrimination. Further reduction or elimination of campsites in the valley is unacceptable. Restore the Rivers campgrounds. (Comment #90-11)

Public Concern 78: The NPS should maintain campsites that it already has instead of building new ones.

The idea of cutting more trees and damaging more riverbanks to make way for new sites is absurd! Virgin undisturbed land being graded for new sites when established and repairable sites are already established and available. (Comment #53-19)

INCLUDING NORTH PINES CAMP

North Pines should be retained and improved to include cold showers with waste water control to the new sewer system. (Comment #53-9)

INCLUDING HOUSEKEEPING CAMP

Why [re-consider the plan to reduce the number of units in Housekeeping Camp.]? Housekeeping provides some of the most beautiful and comfortable camp sites in all of Yosemite. (Comment #84-2)

Water Recreation

Public Concern 65: The NPS should loosen restrictions on boating on the Merced River.

During the Merced River Management Plan Scoping, please consider revision of park policy to allow non-motorized boating on all sections of the Merced River and it's tributaries. (Comment #77-7)

One of the current areas of river management in Yosemite Park I would like to see revised is the restriction on boating sections of the Merced River within the park. (Comment #79-1)

During the Merced River Management Plan Scoping, please consider revision of park policy to allow non-motorized boating on all sections of the Merced River and it's tributaries. (Comment #81-8)

Public Concern 66: The NPS should zone swimming holes in El Portal for recreational, not development, purposes.

NPS should zone community swimming holes in El Portal (such as Patty's Hole) for appropriate recreation and cultural activities (such as swimming, lawful fishing, and Native American gathering) rather than for maximum possible impact/development. (Comment #64-29)

Public Concern 67: The NPS should provide adequate support facilities for areas of water recreation.**SUCH AS FLAT ROCK**

[There is a] need for clarification of the use of the Flat Rock swimming area (formerly the Vagim property) and the need for adequate safe parking, restrooms, trash dumpsters, and picnic tables because of high use of river for recreation. The Wawona Area Property Owners Association currently funds portable restrooms at this area. (Comment #43-24)

SUCH AS THE END OF RIVER ROAD

[The] area at the end of River Road in Wawona needs clarification - the need for restrooms, trash dumpsters, and picnic tables at that location because of the high use of river for recreation. (Comment #43-25)

Visitor Services

Public Concern 88: The NPS should establish more visitor programs.

Services: up at Happy Isles there should be Junior Ranger programs in that tranquil area near the Nature Center. (Comment #88-4)

Horseback Riding and Stock Use

Public Concern 79: The NPS should restrict the use of horses and pack stock within Yosemite.

Please include strict limitations on both riding and mule packing in your new management plan. (Comment #13-2)

Please STOP or severely curtail the use of horses in the park. park for generations to come. (Comment #20-6)

I am concerned with excessive commercial activities throughout this area, resulting in trampled meadows, contaminated water, and eroded trails that are polluted by manure, urine, dust, and flies. (Comment #25-1)

It is time for the Park Service to put serious limits on the presence of saddle and pack animals in Yosemite Park, and I believe it is your duty as Park Superintendent, in the service of ALL visitors to recommend such restrictions. (Comment #27-6)

People have lots of other places to experience horseback riding and pack animal benefits: on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands as well as private ranches. They don't need to run down and abuse National Park lands.

(Comment #29-10)

[So, I urge that the new plan include the following:]Reduce the pack and stock impacts which are excessive. (Comment #104-4)

FOR PROTECTION OF OTHER VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

They [riding stables] must be strictly limited to protect the Merced River watershed and the experience of park visitors who are negatively affected by their excessive and polluting operations. (Comment #32-4)

Adoption of group size limits based on science (see below, especially Cole 1989 & 1990, Watson et al. 1993) will reduce the impacts of large stock groups on the experience of hikers. (Comment #103-70)

BECAUSE THEY MAKE THE PARK UNATTRACTIVE AND UNENJOYABLE

We are also concerned about the many aesthetic impacts that result from stock use, such as the presence of annoying bells, dust, manure, urine, and flies, and the proliferation of unsightly hoof prints, drift feces, and over grazed areas. (Comment #103-65)

I love horseback riding. It's lots of fun, gets one out into the wilderness, and sitting in the saddle is a most enjoyable experience. BUT -- I also enjoy hiking, and the manure, urine, and churned up earth left behind on the trails by horses is not at all enjoyable! (Comment #27-2)

TO LESSEN THE IMPACT OF BROWN HEADED COW BIRDS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Your management plan(s) should include the following elements to address the impacts of brown-headed cowbirds: Remove pack stations and stables from national park lands Reduce stock use to the minimum amount that is necessary. (Comment #103-64)

BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPACT ON VEGETATION IN THE PARK

They [horses] also have the ability to spread non-native grasses/plants. (Comment #62-11)

Current direction requires Forest Service units adjoining Yosemite to address these issues. For example, specific Standards and Guidelines applicable to neighboring Forest Service lands include: Encourage use of certified weed free hay and straw. Cooperate with other agencies and the public in developing a certification program for weed free hay and straw. Phase in the program as certified weed free hay and straw becomes available. This standard and guideline applies to pack and saddle stock used by the public, livestock permittees, outfitter guide permittees, and local, State, and Federal agencies. Include weed prevention measures, as necessary, when amending or re-issuing permits (including, but not limited to, livestock grazing, special uses, and pack stock operator permits). (Comment #103-43)

BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPACT ON WILDLIFE IN THE PARK

The bottom line is that many park visitors as well as local wildlife are being adversely affected in the service of a relative few who profit from operating stables. (Comment #29-14)

BECAUSE THEY CONTAMINATE WATER RESOURCES

The Park Service has allowed much of the Merced River watershed to become so degraded by stock animals that visitors are forced to endure a "barnyard" experience rather than enjoying their national park. (Comment #11-3)

I would like to comment against the continued overuse of horses and pack animals in Yosemite National Park. Besides eroding trails and contaminating water, the waste and smell they leave create a much diminished Yosemite experience. (Comment #19-1)

I fail to understand the Park Service continued dependence on stock. In a time when backpackers are being told they may have to pack out their waste. Stock animals are defecating directly into streams if they wish. (Comment #28-2)

Another question is whether specific activities of humans or domestic animals harms the River itself, by polluting it or by destroying its banks by random entrance onto them. (Comment #106-11)

BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPACT TO TRAILS

Also on trails with heavier hiker use, the horse riders should be stopped. (Comment #6-4)

The excessive use of stock animals results in trampled meadows, contaminated water, and eroded trails that are polluted by manure, urine, dust, and flies. (Comment #11-2)

The trails in Yosemite are the most heavily used in the Sierras. People also damage the trails but far less than 1,000 pound horses. To preserve Yosemite, the damage should be minimized and the best way is to ban horses within the park. (Comment #16-2)

Please seriously evaluate the damage done by horses on all trails in Yosemite but, under study currently, in the Merced River drainage. (Comment #76-7)

BY LIMITING GROUP SIZE

To mitigate these impacts of stock use, your Merced River management plan should include the following elements: Groups using stock should be limited to ten or fewer animals per party (as suggested by Cole 1989 & 1990). (Comment #103-49)

Large groups traveling "cross-country" cause significantly greater impacts to resources and the experience of visitors (Cole 1989 & 1990, Stankey 1973). Dr. Cole (1989) has written: ". . . small parties are critical to avoid the creation of new campsites and trails in little-used places. . . . Once a party exceeds a certain number (perhaps four to six), special care must be taken in off-trail travel." As suggested by Dr. Cole, group size should be limited to no more than four to six persons for all off-trail travel. (Comment #103-75)

BY CREATING "FOOT TRAVEL ONLY" HIKING TRAILS AND CAMPGROUNDS

Designation of a network of "foot travel only" trails will provide hikers with a stock-free experience (i.e., no manure or dusty trails churned by stock, etc.). (Comment #103-69)

BY PLACING RESTRICTIONS ON COMMERCIAL PACK ANIMAL ENTERPRISES

Another big problem is how commercial packstock enterprises are allowed to operate freely, with few limits, in the Yosemite backcountry. The Park Service has allowed these outfits to expand their operations substantially in recent years. Research has shown that commercial packstock operations are resulting in eroded trails, trampled meadows, and contaminated water. (Comment #11-7)

Strict limits must be applied to commercial pack trains in Yosemite, especially the Merced River drainage. Research shows that these operations result in contaminated water, eroded trails and badly damaged meadows. Based on my experiences backpacking in Yosemite on the John Muir Trail, I have experienced the aforementioned situations. (Comment #17-1)

Commercial pack stock enterprises do not have an inalienable right to conduct their profit-seeking operations in national parks belonging to us all. (Comment #32-3)

BY FOLLOWING BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The activities of pack and saddle animals need to follow strict Best Management Practices [BMPs]. Such BMPs are used in the Grand Canyon where each animal is required to be equipped with a manure bucket to preclude the deposition of feces from contaminating water resources or providing breeding grounds for flies. (Comment #14-11)

FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

[Pack animals] Then there are the flies, which are obnoxious and can spread disease. (Comment #27-4)
Specifically, Derlet and Carlson (2002) found pathogenic organisms in 15 of 81 manure samples collected from pack animals along the John Muir Trail. This documents that about twenty percent of the manure piles in the Sierra contain potentially pathogenic organisms (i.e., organisms that may cause disease in humans). Pack animal manure collected in Yosemite contained pathogenic bacteria as well as Giardia. (Comment #103-54)

Public Concern 80: The NPS should not allow horses and pack stock in Yosemite.

I would like to see the elimination of these animals in our parks with the exception of emergency/special circumstances. (Comment #18-6)

Minimize, or better still, eliminate horse use in this area. (Comment #76-9)

BY REMOVING THE RIDING STABLES FROM YOSEMITE

The Merced River Plan needs to specify that the stables in Yosemite Valley will be closed at once and the site restored. (Comment #11-6)

The riding stables in Yosemite Valley are resulting in contaminated water and eroded trails that are polluted by offensive manure, urine, odors, dust, and flies. The riding stables should be closed, and the site naturalized, as called for in the Yosemite Valley Plan. (Comment #22-2)

Please specify in the Merced River Plan that the stables in Yosemite be closed immediately and the site restored to pre-use condition. (Comment #36-7)

Since then, I have been aware of the negative impact by horses and pack stock throughout the park. The riding stables should be closed! (Comment #66-1)

Transportation and Parking

Traffic

Public Concern 81: The NPS should examine the effects of increases to traffic within Yosemite.

We also suggest more detail regarding methods for gauging visitor traffic. (Comment #3-11)

BY TOUR BUSESSES

The size and number of tour busses and unregulated emission standards for those vehicles greatly impacts the ORVs of the Merced. Public transportation is an important objective to relieve congestion along the Merced, but the impacts of the number and size of these vehicles needs to be evaluated and reduced. (Comment #52-16)

SUCH AS TO THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CAMP (CAMP WAWONA)

Will the additional construction, bus and automobile traffic created by the Camp Wawona expansion on Forest Drive create adverse impacts on the South Fork? (Comment #43-17)

TO PREVENT CONGESTION

Last summer over July 4th weekend, there was an intersection (near day parking) with 4-way stop & pedestrians that would walk across at leisure, not in groups. This caused cars to be idling for long periods of time, spewing out exhaust fumes. (Comment #74-4)

In-Park Transportation Services

Public Concern 83: The NPS should promote public transportation to and in the park.

As far back that I can remember part of the master plan in the early 1980's was to ban vehicles within the valley and have staging areas for parking?? I thought one proposal was to have two areas one near El Capitan and the other at Foresta? If the surrounding communities were pro active they would work to develop staging area's near their communities. Maybe this would be on National Forest land which would include first class campsites. YARTS and Yosemite Transportation would shuttle to the Valley. (Comment #40-1)

INCLUDING SHUTTLES

[Appropriate activities:] the shuttle bus idea is good. (Comment #88-8)

I like the Valley. I like to be able to take the Shuttle Bus to the Valley to enjoy the unparalleled monoliths, waterfalls, nature and unique scenery. (Comment #100-12)

Roads and Bridges

Public Concern 84: The NPS should remove all grouted riprap from bridges and roadways.

I would also recommend the banning of grouted rip rap. (Comment #39-6)

Whenever rip rap is placed to protect a historic bridge the materials chosen need to match those present in vicinity of the bridge. These are but a few of the examples where guidelines are needed. (Comment #39-8)

INCLUDING AROUND EL PORTAL ROAD

A portion of the El Portal Road is scheduled to be reconstructed this fall. The grouted rip rap in this section needs to be replaced with masonry or dry laid retaining walls. (Comment #39-7)

Public Concern 85: The NPS should maintain the existing bridges, trails, and roads.

My comments for future plans for the Merced River are: Save all the bridges in Yosemite Valley. They are not only National Monuments, they are scenic and useful. (Comment #31-1)

Please retain the beautiful rock bridges whenever possible. They add to the beauty of the river and provide walking paths. (Comment #67-4)

INSTEAD OF CREATING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A PUBLIC-TRANSIT ORIENTED PARK

You want to put visitors on buses as a way of ensuring open-ended visitation. But the "effect" of that decision means over-engineering the roads with increased asphalt, widening/realigning the roads to accommodate oversized vehicles, and the creation of centralized and expanded infrastructure; how many more natural and cultural resources will be destroyed. Does a 22-bay transit depot belong in the heart of Yosemite Valley?? You are changing the visitor experience from one of individualized exploration to assembly-line tourism as individuals are hurried from profit center to profit center. (Comment #44-21)

Public Concern 86: The NPS should construct all trail bridges in Yosemite with wood and stone masonry.

I would recommend all trail bridges be constructed of wood with stone masonry abutments/piers. For example, whenever Swinging Bridge needs replacement, the formed concrete cribbed piers need to be replaced with stone masonry. (Comment #39-5)

Parking

Public Concern 82: The NPS should preserve and increase available parking in Yosemite.**FOR USE BY RECREATIONAL USERS**

Preserve and enhance roadside parking in the Valley that provides access to climbing and other recreational activities. (Comment #46-3)

IN ORDER TO PREVENT CONGESTION

Replace parking spaces that have been eliminated/removed from the floor of the Valley to eliminate road congestion (air pollution) as drivers search for a place to park, or park illegally. (Comment #43-34)

FOR CONVENIENT PICNICKING

Parking spaces are limited and not convenient for picnicking. (Comment #38-6)

IN THE WAWONA AREA

The Wawona store & History Center's parking area is inadequate to handle the car parking for the Mariposa Grove Shuttle and the recently added Wawona to Valley Shuttle.

Park Operations

Public Concern 93: The NPS should demolish abandoned buildings that pose a safety hazard.

Picnic facilities serve the day visitor in much the same way that campgrounds serve the overnight visitor. They offer a place to escape the developed facilities of the Valley and enjoy the park in a more natural, less commercial setting. Current picnic areas are often crowded, however. The west-Valley and mid-Valley areas offer opportunities for additional picnic areas that should be considered in the Plan. (Comment #46-26)

The abandoned government homes in the River Corridor need to be demolished. They are an attractive nuisance and a fire hazard. (Comment #100-11)

Public Concern 34: The NPS should post signs with environmental information along the river.

As for sharing the cultural and natural history of the river area, I loved the new signs set up in the new trail area to Yosemite Falls. They were tastefully done, and they provided good information about the Native Americans, the later settlers, etc. The same kind of signs could be placed near the river with information on the people, animals and plant life before and now. (Comment #67-3)

Public Concern 91: The NPS should construct and maintain restrooms throughout Yosemite.

The restroom facilities should be reopened now since the area around the house is presently being used for art classes for the Art Center as well as Yosemite Institute. (Comment #31-4)

AT SWIMMING HOLES LIKE SOUTH PARK

At swimming holes on the South Fork, porta-potties & trash bins need to be added to prevent the pollution that is now happening at the Swinging Bridge area (end of Forest Dr) and the Flat Rocks area (off of Chilnualna Falls Rd). (Comment #74-6)

AT SWINGING BRIDGE

The Park Service should provide restrooms and trash containers at the Swinging Bridge and at the Vagim property (Flat rock) to avoid contamination of the river in those areas. (Comment #100-9)

AT UPPER PINES CAMP

What about mixing uses—some pockets for camping, some pockets for solitude, etc.? The Park autocratically closed this area down and then zoned it for day use. In a gesture of arrogance, you rushed to tear the utilities out ASAP to further dismantle the area—as if day visitors won't have to go to the bathroom?? (Comment #44-24)

AND PROVIDE HAND SANITIZER IN ALL RESTROOMS

In the interest of public safety and personal hygiene it would be nice to have dispensers of hand sanitizer in the wilderness potties, when soap and water are not available. Thank you for considering this idea. (We have seen such a service in other national parks). (Comment #9-1)

Public Concern 92: The NPS should provide water fountains along trails.

Please provide water fountains along trails so hikers and tourists can refill water bottles or just get a drink rather than drink straight from the river. (Comment #31-2)

Public Concern 89: The NPS should limit the activities of private interests and concessionaires within Yosemite.

[How might various methods for managing human use help achieve these conditions?] No (private or concessionaire) enterprises put in charge of public activities. (Comment #102-28)

The impact of having interpretive rangers providing a service to the for-profit Green Dragon tours. To what extent have legitimate interpretive services been degraded by diverting NPS rangers to the for-profit commercial tours? (Comment #55-15)

However, we remain concerned that commercial outfitters are allowed easy access when the general public is turned away due to use quotas. (Comment #103-30)

IN ORDER TO CREATE LESS NEED FOR EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Fewer concessionaire employees equates to no need for more employee housing. (Comment #97-7)