

Correspondence ID: 1 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 40206

Name: -

Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual

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Correspondence Type: Web Form

Correspondence: Topic Question 1: Yes, it should relate to Interpretation and Education of recreation in wilderness.

Topic Question 2: No, it overlooks the basic concept of recreation in wilderness. The Merced River is a WILD and scenic river.

Topic Question 3: Yes, a comparison of methods of operation at both Bryce Canyon and Zion Canyon could aid in making for a better scenario at Yosemite.

RECREATION ALONG THE MERCED RIVER IN YOSEMITE

The real emphasize should be placed on the true meaning of recreation: Re-Creation. The Soul can be Re-Created by communing with nature. This was the drift of what John Muir taught.

When having a "wilderness experience", one should be concerned about learning about the wonders of nature, rather than just "doing" the wilderness. Some might see rafting the Merced River, or climbing the walls of Yosemite Valley as a sport. I propose that it should be a learning experience, rather than just a sport.

This will be the challenge of the Interpretive and Education Division to orient the visiting public; to help them understanding the meaning of recreation in wilderness. The Merced River is a Wild and Scenic River.

The NPS has found it necessary to limit the number of people that can climb Half Dome. They may need to limit the number that can participate on other recreational activities. When I was young, I hiked anywhere I wanted to go; but, now Wilderness Permits are required.

I am a Fellow of the National Speleological Society (like Greg Stock), and have been a consultant to a number of government agencies re: caves. The general public is directed to Show Caves, either operated privately or by public agencies. The location of Wild Caves is kept low key, to protect their fragile environment.

The NPS manages Carlsbad Caverns, in New Mexico; Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky; Lehman Cave, in Nevada; and Crystal Cave, in Sequoia National Park. Carlsbad is one extreme in cave management. They feel that everyone showing up at the cave, has a right to see the cave. No one is turned away, but they use techniques that "herd" folk through like cattle.

The other extreme in cave management is at Blanchard Springs Cavern, in North Arkansas, which is managed by the National Forest Service (NFS). A limited number of people are allowed per tour and a limited number of tours are allowed per day. If one shows up at the cave without a reservation, he/she is not allowed to enter the cave.

At Yosemite National Park, we hopefully are far from needing to turn any one away from entering the park. And, if we "play our cards right", we can allow the maximum number of people to engage in the various recreational activities. THE KEY WILL BE IN ORIENTATION AND EDUCATION.

Currently, the public is thrust into the East Valley, where congestion is the worst, with practically no orientation of what to expect; or very little education of the fragile environment. We have a rare opportunity to "do it right", before us.

At Zion National Park, visitors are led to park their vehicles near an Orientation Center; where they are then given the options of how to enjoy and appreciation the valley. Their limiting factor is the small size of the parking area. At Bryce Canyon, their parking lot was placed at the wrong place, which caused much confusion, which was counterproductive to orientation and education.

At Yosemite Valley, the natural setting of the West Valley Loop, which is acting as a gigantic "round about", lends itself well to allowing an initial parking area at Taft Toe, with an adjacent Orientation Center. The various options of how to enjoy and appreciate our magnificent valley, can then be explained. The various recreation activities can be explained and permits issued if necessary.

I have been Re-Creating in Yosemite for 82 years.

Correspondence ID: 2 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 40206

Name: -

Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual

Organization:

Received: Apr,18,2011 17:10:30
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Please add additional camp ground spaces in the Park, especially in Yosemite Valley. The Park belongs to the taxpayers and it has become extremely difficult to acquire reservations during the summer months. It is only fair that the availability of spaces in the Valley expand along with the growing population.

Correspondence ID: 3 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 40206
Name: -
Outside Organization: Private citizen Unaffiliated Individual
Received: Apr,27,2011 13:19:59
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Transportation comments, 27 April 2011

Yesterday, I attended the workshop on Transportation, and decided to comment online rather than leave the prepared form that was distributed.

What's working well today with respect to the transportation system in the Merced River corridor? The shuttle buses in the East Valley are working well. The day use private vehicle's parking and circulation are not working well.

What are the most important issues and concerns that you believe need to be addressed in the Merced River Plan related to transportation?

A. A lack of orientation before entering the East Valley. Currently, folks are thrust into parking at Camp 6, with little or no understanding of their options. B. All day use vehicles being thrust into the East Valley causes maximum traffic congestion and chaos at peak times. This both detracts from visitor experience and makes for maximum negative impacts on the ORVs.

What key recommendations do you believe should be considered in the Merced River Plan related to transportation?

A. Develop alternative parking at Taft Toe, as considered in the original Yosemite Valley Plan. The West Valley loop is essentially a gigantic "roundabout", which must be traversed by all vehicles entering or leaving the Valley, no matter which entrance they enter or leave by. It would be easy to spin them off that roundabout at the El Capitan Crossover, into the Taft Toe Parking Area. B. Construct an Orientation Center, with Rest Rooms, adjacent to the Taft Toe Parking Area. Visitors could be offered the following alternatives: 1. Overnight visitors would be directed on to their places of camping or lodging. Reservations could be made, if available. 2. Day use visitors could be offered the following alternatives: a. Proceed on to Camp 6 and ride the shuttle bus system, with an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the ORVs. Day use recreationists (hikers, climbers, rafters, photographers, etc) might choose this option. If it becomes necessary to limit any activity (i.e. climbing Half Dome, etc), permits could be issued here. b. Drive the East Valley loop in their private vehicles, to briefly "eye ball" the Valley and it's ORVs. Picnicing could be made available nearby. c. Stay parked at Taft Toe and ride a West Valley shuttle bus that takes them to the Visitor Center for further interpretation of the ORVs. That bus stop could be a transfer point to the East Valley shuttle bus system. The West Valley shuttle bus system could make stops at various places along both the East Valley loop and the West Valley loop. d. For those on a "tight" time schedule, they might consider that they had "seen" the Valley (Bridle Veil Falls & Meadows, Ribbon Falls, El Capitan, the Cathedral Rocks, the Three Brothers, Sentinel Rock and Half Dome). They could re-enter the roundabout and take the El Capitan Crossover, to exit the Valley. They could either exit the Park, or enjoy other areas of the Park (Glacier Point, Wawona, Crane Flat, White Wolf, Omstead View, Tenaya Lake, Tuolumne Meadows, or Hetch Hetchy). e. Delaware North might consider offering their Valley Tours from the Orientation Center, so that many visitors would not need to enter the East Valley with their private vehicles. This might appeal to those on the tight time schedules, and be another opportunity to interpret the ORVs, with minimal impact.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute.

Ralph Squire, Owner, Marble Quarry RV Park, Columbia, CA Founder, Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau Long time visitor to Yosemite (82 years)

Correspondence ID: 4 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 40206
Name: -
Outside Organization: CSERC Unaffiliated Individual
Received: Apr,28,2011 17:17:08
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: From the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center P.O. Box 396 Twain Harte, CA 95383

April 28, 2011

Yosemite National Park planning staff Merced River Wild and Scenic Management Plan P.O. Box 577 Yosemite, CA 95389

Dear planning staff: The following comments are our Center's response to your strong encouragement for feedback on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Values draft Baseline Conditions report. We apologize that with so many irons in the fire and a pulse of Park planning meetings to further stretch our resources, the limited comments are not as exhaustive or as refined as we normally aim to provide.

Executive Summary of Input

It is clear that this current attempt at finalizing a River Management Plan has the Park planning staff involving more members of the public, utilizing more scientific information, and attempting to respond openly to input and concerns. Our staff is appreciative. We have already significantly broadened our understanding of some issues and resource impacts within the river corridor thanks to the workshops to date and the information that has been made available. We appreciate the general strategic approach the Park planning staff is taking.

Having shared that praise, there is one key frustration tied to input our Center has provided at every stage of every Merced River management plan to date. Park planning staff appears to be entrenched against providing basic, essential, necessary information describing the wildlife species that are most at risk within the river corridor and spelling out known information about the status of those species, the potential for recovery or enhancement, and eventually a comparison between current strategies and potential strategies that would be even more effective.

To put this simply: There is no clear list or description of which wildlife species (that are tied to riparian habitat or the river system) are most at-risk/vulnerable within the corridor due to human activities or cumulative impacts. There is no assessment of which of those species are stable (but rare), or recovering, or fading or likely extirpated. There is no consideration or description of how recent/current actions have resulted in significant declines in the species, nor is there any consideration or description as to how the potential range of management actions for the Outstandingly Remarkable Values has potential to restore, rehabilitate, or enhance the populations of these at-risk wildlife species.

Because we have consistently pressed for this "at-risk wildlife information" as an essential basis for the Park developing alternatives for management of the river corridor, it is a struggle to understand why none of this information appears in the Baseline Conditions report. Please see the following more detailed comments. Comments on Biological section: If there was a single, basic question that Park planners should ask before developing management strategies to protect the ecological web of life and ORV's within the Merced River's river corridor, it would be: "Of the historic native plant and animal species of each river segment, which species are either apparently extirpated, or believed to be highly at-risk, or are thought to potentially be in decline to the point where future viability is questionable?"

What species are most at risk within the river's management area, and what are the known or probably causes of that risk?

In the Baseline Conditions report there is an overall lack of detail concerning the specific at-risk species within each of the river segment areas, and therefore Park staff's concerns about their habitat needs may or may not be addressed in the Management Considerations section.

For the at-risk flora and fauna that are located within each river section that are reliant upon or directly tied to meadow and river systems as part of their habitat, it is important that at-risk species be addressed in each section -- with mention of threats that each of the species faces. Based upon this approach, the Management Considerations will display more clearly whether or not these species are likely to end up being protected or not by an alternative or actions within that alternative.

It continues to be a concern to our Center that there are no Biological ORV's identified within River Section 3 (the Merced River Gorge), River Section 5 (South Fork Merced River above Wawona), and even in Section 6 (the Wawona Impoundment). Are there no rare or endemic species found within these sections? Is there no high value habitat that has the potential to provide an area of recovery for rare species that are nearby? If these sections were to be left out of the Biological ORV, then having the Baseline report provide an explanation would be helpful in showing the Park's consideration of these areas.

A side note concerning the overall layout of this document is that the segregation of the Biological, Recreational, etc. ORV's into separate chapters makes it difficult to analyze the effectiveness of the Plan, since each of these is intimately connected to each other in every River Section. For example, not discussing the volume of pack animals that impact meadows and riparian areas in River Section 1 (above Nevada Falls) in the Biological ORV section, and instead only providing that information in the Recreation ORV section many pages later, is problematic since obviously the volume of pack animals has potential to significantly impact the Biological ORV's of this area.

River Segment 1 (Above Nevada Falls)

The document repeats multiple times that the forthcoming meadow assessment (summer 2011) will provide a clearer picture of the present condition of these meadows, and thus it seems that planning staff is holding back management considerations until that data is available. However, the report does mention that planning staff believes the meadows and riparian corridors in this part of the meadow are "generally in excellent condition" (pg. 2.1-6). This vague statement is problematic considering that the meadow assessment report has not been presented as information to base that analysis on. Likewise, there is no listing of at-risk flora and fauna, or whether there is a need to protect or restore any habitat for at-risk species. There is no information about the threats that at-risk species are facing in this section of the Merced watershed. As in all river segments, mentioning diversity and that there are a range of at-risk species found within this segment is not adequate or informative. Our Center urges the Park to list the species that are at-risk in this section and address their habitat needs and present threats.

Grazing impacts from pack stock are briefly mentioned; and the document mentions that grazing was eliminated from meadows around the High Sierra Camp in the 1990's, and that "no obvious grazing impacts remain" (2.1-6); this is a questionable and vague statement because it is unusual for impacts from substantial grazing effects to disappear so quickly from Sierra meadows. One meadow still is utilized for pack stock grazing (east of Merced Ranger Station), which has evidence of damage such as "grazed vegetation, roll pits, manure and trampled soils". The lit review for the Biological-ORV talks about the impact of pack-animal grazing (2.1-4), yet continued pack stock use seems to be of little concern in the biological assessment of this area. We encourage this section to be more detailed and to contain stronger language addressing the impact that stock animals have had on meadows they have used as "pasture" in recent past. It also appears to be subjective to have left out any description of the impacts that pack stock create as the animals travel through riparian and meadow areas. There is no mention of the possible impact that horse manure/non-native seeds may have on the soil, vegetation, and water quality of River Segment 1. There are no numbers provided or discussion about the volume of the stock that utilizes this area, but on pages 2.2-21 and 2.2-22 of the Recreational ORV assessment the number of nights pack stock spend in the Yosemite Wilderness in this section is discussed. The high number of nights with pack stock (with no tally on numbers within those nights) implies that impacts of packing, new trails, grazing, and water contamination are not being addressed.

Conifer encroachment occurs in several small meadows in Little Yosemite Valley and Echo Valley areas. Management Considerations address whether the hydrological function of these areas may need to be assessed or restored in order to prevent this condition from worsening, and this should be addressed. This is helpful information.

Last, we note that the information for current condition for this segment on page 2.1-6 mentions that high country meadows and riparian habitat is likely similar to conditions in 1987. However, in 1987 the willow flycatcher was generally still found in many meadows that were degraded by livestock or pack stock browsing of willows in the region. As the willow flycatcher's population dwindled, parasitism by cowbirds and other impacts further exacerbated riparian habitat degradation. No mention is provided in this section comparing the existence of the flycatcher historically (and likely in 1987) compared to the lack of the flycatcher in most historic use areas today. Similarly, there may be specific amphibians known by Park staff along this higher elevation corridor that may now have a different status. This information is important and should clearly be provided, since it can lead to management considerations.

River Segment 2: Yosemite Valley

It is emphasized that the vegetation and hydrological integrity of this area is critical in order to prevent further decreasing of meadow size and quality of riparian and meadow habitat. The degradation of the hydrology is strongly attributed to anthropogenic de-watering: "In the Valley, drainage ditches were constructed to dewater wet meadows in order to reduce mosquito breeding areas and to provide open land for grazing and agriculture. Many of these drainage ditches have not been filled and still drain wet meadows in Yosemite Valley (NPS 2005)."; and "Cooper and Wolf (2008) determined that conifers have colonized former meadows for several reasons: (1) the installation of drains, water diversions, and other facilities caused hydrologic changes that lowered the summer water table (the widening of the Merced River may also be a factor in changing hydrology); (2) the cessation of burning by Native Americans allowed fire-sensitive species to persist; (3) disturbance caused by plowing meadows and planting hay crops and apple orchards allowed conifers to invade the bare soils after the rhizomatous meadow species were destroyed; and (4) placement of fill to raise the ground elevation allowed upland species to invade." (p. 2.1-11).

Yet in the Management Considerations for River Segment 2, there is no mention of the restoration of the hydrological function of meadows. There is discussion in the Current Conditions section about meadow/stream/hydrological restoration projects, with the Cook's Meadow Restoration Project and the Eagle Creek Restoration Project given as examples. But not listing the improvement of the hydrological conditions River Segment 2 in the Management Considerations section implies that there are adequate efforts being implemented and there is no need to consider this concern further by putting it into the Merced River Plan EIS. Please include wording in the Management Considerations section that commits to the further hydrological restoration of the meadows and riparian areas that have been degraded by human alterations and impacts of these areas. Again, our Center's staff strongly believes that there needs to be a specific listing of the at-risk species dependent upon riparian and meadow habitat associated with the Merced River that were historically found with each river segment. We believe there also needs to be clear description of the individual habitat threats that at-risk species are presently facing, and how the Park can potential manage with special consideration for their individual needs. For instance, on page 2.1-13 there is a lack of information related to meadows (and riparian habitat) in 1987 to the present time. The Baseline Report provides a brief note that in 1987 there were 17 different bat species and 31 different sedge species that contribute to the Biological ORV's. Nothing is provided for any other the other aquatic, riparian, meadow-dependent species.

THIS IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF WHY A LIST OF AT-RISK, THREATENED, SPECIAL STATUS, OR EXTIRPATED WILDLIFE AND PLANT SPECIES THAT WERE HISTORIC AND NATIVE IS SO NEEDED. There is no discussion of whether the foothill yellow-legged frog was present then (almost assuredly so) or the western pond turtle, or the willow flycatcher, or other species that are either extirpated today or at so low numbers as to not be evident. It is NOT necessary for the Park to have detailed scientific studies that targeted those individual species that can prove that there were healthy or dwindling populations in 1987. All

that is necessary is for the Baseline Conditions report to provide the best available science as to whether those species were historic, native, and ecologically part of the biological diversity of the riparian habitat and meadows within the river corridor in that segment. If those species were indeed native and known to be within the Valley, for example, but were not proven to be present in 1987 or 2010, the fact remains that they have been intricately tied to the ecological web of life over thousands of years in those specific river segments. Why they are fading/have disappeared is potentially pivotal to the overall biological ORV.

River Segment 4: El Portal

Protection measures mentioned in the Conditions section include: "long-term stability of the valley oak population would be enhanced by habitat protection of habitat in the vicinity of valley oak trees and under the drip line of existing oak trees, and removal of invasive plants" (2.2-21).

However in the Management Considerations section for El Portal the only consideration suggested is how more development will negatively affect the valley oak population and that the "health of the population should be monitored to ensure sapling recruitment and long-term viability" (p. 2.1-21). Our Center suggests that the Management Considerations includes language that follows up on the needs stated in the Conditions section, and goes beyond monitoring the health to further ensuring the viability of this population by taking actions such as removal of invasive species, and actions to protect the oak's dripline, and habitat protection from future impacts.

In addition, for this segment, it is less important that there is a diversity of age classes of young to old Valley Oaks than it is to assess whether there is a high number of young trees, a somewhat smaller number of medium young trees, fewer medium age tree, and then a solid, but limited number of ancient trees. If there are 10 old trees and only 10 young trees, the young trees are not abundant enough to survive statistically at levels that will lead to even a few of them being large, old trees. Accordingly, a lack of a large number of young trees should be a trigger for some action to assist regeneration or reduce impacts that interfere with a larger number of young trees surviving and persisting.

River Segment 7 & 8: Wawona and South Fork Merced River below Wawona

The Sierra Sweet bay is the only Biological ORV listed for this segment of the river. Our Center supports this plant's listing as an ORV, however, since this plant is not listed as threatened or at-risk it comes as a surprise that it takes precedent as being listed when there are so many at-risk species found within other sections (and possibly this segment as well) of the Merced River. CSERC urges that this document provide a listing (for each segment of the river) spelling out the most accurate available science information concerning the numbers of plant, animal, and fungi species found in each river segment (to better understand each segment's diversity). We also urge that in each segment, the Park provide a description of each known rare, threatened, and endangered species found within the Wild and Scenic corridor, and as much information on their population status in each segment that is reasonably available.

Additionally, CSERC notes that in Segments 7 & 8 as well as Segments 3,4, & 5 - riparian habitat is not recognized as an ORV. Since riparian habitat's value is highly proclaimed in Segment 1 and 2, for example, it is hard to understand what makes riparian habitat less important in these areas. CSERC asks that this document more clearly define what qualifies a riparian area to be considered an ORV, and uses that definition to more openly determine each segment's riparian corridors potential to be considered an ORV.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (features section)

On page 2.1-2, the report spells out conditions that can serve as indicators to assess changes in the Biological ORV. The report includes species diversity, aerial extent of meadows, habitat condition, El Portal Valley Oaks, and Sierra Sweet Bay.

NOWHERE DOES THE REPORT OR THE PARK'S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE ORV'S DISCUSS THE PRESENCE OR LACK OF PRESENCE OF HISTORIC NATIVE SPECIES AS AN INDICATOR.

We underscore again this important point. To assess a change in the Biological ORV for a river segment, for example comparing the time when the River was designated and today, the overall species diversity may be relatively unchanged (65 species versus 62 today, for example), but the loss of just three species could have significant long-term impacts on the ecological web of life in those riparian habitats.

Accordingly, for the purpose of accurately assessing the true condition status today compared to 1987 or some other period, it is essential that the Park describe the best available science about the presence, decline, or lack of presence of at-risk wildlife and plant species.

Literature, Data, and Monitoring information

On page 2.1-4, the document notes that ongoing baseline condition studies include an evaluation of special-status wildlife distribution and condition relative to existing conditions in the river corridor. This is positive, and our staff looks forward to seeing where that "special status" label refers to known, historic native species that are apparently no longer present in the riparian or

meadow habitat areas within the river corridor.

MERCED RIVER PLAN ? BASELINE REPORT COMMENTS (RECREATION)

Document Organization and Content

The organization of this document is a bit disconnected and hard to follow as it breaks down the individual ORV's into chapters rather than by geographic river segment. It would be easier to read and understand if, for example, the baseline conditions of Segment 1 ? (The Merced River above Nevada Fall) were presented in a manner to: 1. Describe briefly the geographic setting, 2. Describe the ORV's found within it, 3. A description of the existing conditions and what studies/information has been collected and what data is missing to inform the Park Service, and 4. How each ORV relates to other ORV's and ultimately to management considerations.

The management considerations should tie the ORV's together and show how one affects another and can be managed concurrently in a particular geographic area. The management considerations for the Recreational ORV in each segment should also include a brief discussion of how the management of one recreational use may have an impact on other uses and ORV's in the segment (meadows, water quality, wildlife).

The Introduction notes that a number of additional studies are being completed that will fill in some of the gaps for existing conditions and these will be released in the next draft of this Baseline Report. It would be helpful to know what these studies are, and what ORV's and river segments they will address. If these additional studies will affect a particular ORV in a particular segment, this should also be included in the body of the document under the discussion of current conditions and management considerations.

The management considerations sections for each segment are vague and do not include any specific measures that are being considered to address protection and enhancement of the ORV's. We believe that the Park Service has enough information to include at least a minimal discussion of management actions that are being considered (with the realization that this will be fully analyzed in the Management Plan and EIS)

Recreation ORVs

For the majority of the segments, no real assessment of current conditions can be made due to lack of data. This is important for recreation, in particular, because visitor use has the potential to impact all of the other ORV's. The number of hikers, campers, stock use, and vehicles has an impact on the biological, scenic, and cultural, values of the Wild and Scenic corridor. The recreational ORV itself is compromised when user capacity is exceeded in certain areas, due to frequent encounters with other people, and degraded trails and campsites. These data gaps in visitor use could be addressed, in part, by including additional surveys and "adaptive management" mitigation measures in the Management Plan or other methods to maintain a sustainable level of visitor use of certain areas (these may be determined by user capacity models).

River Segment 1- Merced River Above Nevada Fall

The park should include a management consideration addressing improved conditions and reducing impacts to these trails. (Through reduced stock use, continued quota system for Half Dome, etc)

The report has surprisingly little information about why so many stock trips are made by the Park for "administrative" purposes (86% of the overnight stock trips). There is also no information about the number of animals, only the number of overnight trips. These data gaps should be filled in order to consider alternatives or reductions in stock trips.

The baseline conditions should describe the capacity of the septic system used at Merced Lake High Sierra Camp and how it is functioning. This would then lead to a management consideration for potential removal of the system or replacement, in part, with composting toilets. The report notes that residual from the septic system is hauled out by helicopter, however there is no discussion of how frequent these trips are made and the potential disturbance caused by helicopter noise in areas near wilderness.

The last wilderness campground assessment was conducted in 1992. Updated campground assessments of Little Yosemite Valley and High Sierra Camp should be conducted.

Currently, wilderness permits within this corridor per day have been reduced, but the length of stay has increased. A management consideration would be to address how this change in use may negatively affect water quality or other ORV's. River Segment 2: Yosemite Valley

Recent surveys have been conducted that reveal a high number of visitors experiencing a perception of crowding (affecting the Recreation ORV and visitor experience). There is no discussion of any ongoing or additional studies being conducted regarding user capacity in the valley such as parking, traffic or transit feasibility. The report does not include a discussion of transit use as it may or may not be affecting visitor behavior and the recreational experience.

Management considerations should be expanded to describe specific actions that are being considered to address crowding in the

Valley: transit, limiting vehicles, dispersal of traffic, new or different parking options, changes in camping and lodging, etc.

River Segment 3: Merced River Gorge

The Park may want to consider and evaluate whether any of these pull outs and parking areas may be in precarious positions along the road, or if any wash outs have occurred in the past. At a minimum, a management consideration would be whether or not to maintain the current level of use and the improvements that are there now.

River Segment 4: El Portal

The park may want to consider how to enhance this area or draw more visitors to other parts of the park with relatively low use. This may address some of the crowding issues in Yosemite Valley. At a minimum, a management consideration would be whether or not to maintain the current level of use and improvements that are there now (parking, signage?).

River Segment 5 and 8: South Fork Merced Above and Below Wawona

The report notes that trails in this segment are in poor conditions. Management considerations should include trail maintenance and improvement to ensure that this ORV is maintained and the area still accessible. Also attracting visitors to this area may be a strategy to consider for diverting visitor use concentration from Yosemite Valley.

River Segment 7: Wawona

The report erroneously states that "there are few human-made and managed features" in this segment. Improvements in this segment include the campground, roads, buildings, bridges, visitor center, stables, gift shop, hotel, golf course, parking areas and trails. The report mentions the river related activities and hiking, but fails to include golfing as a recreational use in this segment. There is no facility or parking information, crowding-related studies, or trail conditions available. In order for any management considerations to be made, some basic data should be compiled regarding campground use and wilderness permits issued for trailheads in this segment.

A management consideration may be whether or not to retain all of the recreational uses in this segment, such as golfing, and whether or not they detract from the overall ORV.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Our staff recognizes that the draft Baseline Condition was provided even though there was no legal obligation to ask for public input at this phase. We appreciate the requests for input and hope that the comments provided above can assist planning staff to not only produce a high quality overall Plan and alternatives for consideration, but also show the planning staff that we are attempting to be supportive partners in the process.

Julia Stephens, Rebecca Cremeen, and John Buckley CSERC
