

# Chapter VI: Consultation and Coordination

## Consultation

### Scoping History

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

### Public Review of Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Results of Draft Review Comments**

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

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

- Concerns from culturally associated American Indian groups relating to continued access within the river corridor for traditional practices, as well as protection and enhancement of important natural and cultural resources within the entire corridor.
- Concerns from residents in local communities and American Indian groups regarding management zoning prescriptions that allow for placement of administrative facilities within El Portal and Wawona.
- Specific and general desires relating to management of Yosemite National Park’s natural, cultural, physical, and social resources.
- Concerns regarding the complexity of the document and the user capacity program in particular.

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

### **Comment Analysis and Response Process**

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

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

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

## **Coordination**

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

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

### **California State Historic Preservation Officer**

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

### **U.S. Forest Service**

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

### **California Department of Transportation**

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

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

### **Bureau of Land Management**

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

### **American Indian Consultation**

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

### **Gateway Communities**

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

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

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

## **Federal Agencies**

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Public Health Service

Department of the Interior:

Bureau of Land Management, Folsom, California Office

Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento Office

National Park Service:

Air Resources Division

Alaska Regional Office

Denver Service Center

Geologic Resources Division

Intermountain Regional Support Office

Pacific West Regional Office

Water Resources Division

National Parks:

Big Cypress National Park

Canyonlands National Park

Channel Islands National Park

Crater Lake National Park

Death Valley National Park

Everglades National Park

Flagstaff Area National Monuments

Golden Gates National Recreation Area

Joshua Tree National Park

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Mount Rainier National Park

Point Reyes National Seashore

Sequoia and Kings National Parks

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest

Service:

Angeles National Forest

Boise Interagency Fire Center

Coconino National Forest

Humboldt National Forest

Lassen National Forest

Inyo National Forest

Missoula Fire Science Lab

Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station

Sierra National Forest

Stanislaus National Forest

Tahoe National Forest

Toiyabe National Forest

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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

U.S. Department of Justice

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

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

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

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

U.S. Postal Service, Yosemite National Park

## **United States Representatives**

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator Diane Feinstein

Congressman George Radanovich

Congressman John T. Doolittle

Congressman James Hansen

Congressman John Kasich

Congressman Ralph Regula

Congressman George Miller

Congressman Mark Souder

## **State Agencies**

American Indian Heritage Commission

California Department of Fire

California Department of Fish and Game

California Department of Justice, Attorney General

California Office of Historic Preservation

California Department of Parks and Recreation

California Office of Planning and Research, State Clearing House

California Department of Transportation

California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Department of Forestry

Resources Agency of California

## **American Indian Tribes**

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

Bishop Paiute Indian Colony

Coarsegold Chuckchansi

Mono Lake Kutzadika Paiute Indian Community

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

## **County and Local Governments**

### **Fresno County:**

Board of Supervisors  
 Chamber of Commerce  
 Planning and Resource Management

### **Inyo County:**

Planning Department

### **Madera County:**

Board of Supervisors  
 Oakhurst Chamber of Commerce  
 Planning Director

### **Mariposa County:**

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

### **Merced County:**

Association of Governments  
 Planning Commission  
 Planning Department  
 Visitor Bureau

### **Mono County:**

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

### **San Francisco County:**

Planning Department  
 Public Utilities, Hetch Hetchy Water and Power

### **Stanislaus County:**

Council of Government  
 Environmental Review Committee  
 Planning Department

### **Tuolumne County:**

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

## **Organizations and Businesses**

Access Fund  
 American Disability Act Compliance Service

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

Friends of the Forest  
Friends of the River  
Friends of Yosemite  
Future Forestry Products  
Geographic Expeditions  
Gill Associates  
Global Environmental  
Gold River Discovery Center  
Greystone  
Griffith & Farrace  
Groveland Yosemite Gateway Museum  
Halff Associates, Inc.  
Havans Foundation  
Heritage Trails  
High Sierra Hikers Association  
Highway 120 Association  
Historic Trails Council  
Jakes Associates  
Law Office of J Wallace Oman  
Law Office of Mark A. Kanai  
Law Offices of Michael Wainman  
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area  
Manitoba Conservation  
Margen & Associates  
Marin Mammal Center  
Mariposa County Visitors Bureau  
Mariposa Horse Association  
Mariposans for Environmentally Responsible Growth  
MorComm Press  
Mountain Defense League  
National Parks and Conservation Association  
National Trust for Historic Preservation, California Office  
Southwest and California Region Offices  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
National Tour Association  
Newfields  
Northcoast Environmental Center  
Nuemiller & Beardslee  
Oakhurst Lodge  
Ormsby & Thickstun Design  
Pacific Bell  
Pacific Gas & Electric, Public Affairs  
Parmelee Art Company  
Pinnacle Economics  
Planning and Conservation League  
Polar Equipment Incorporation  
Provost & Pritchard Engineering Group  
Ramada Limited, Oakhurst  
Reed Construction Data  
Regional Council of Rural Counties  
Renewable Technologies Inc.  
Royal Robbins Inc.  
Salomon Smith Barney  
Save-the-Redwoods League  
Service Employee International Union, Local 535  
Sierra Club:  
    Condor Group  
    Loma Prieta Chapter  
    Miami Group  
    National Office  
    Tuolumne Group  
    Yosemite Committee  
Sierra Railroad Company  
Sonoma County Horse Council  
Sonora Community Hospital  
Soroptomist International of Groveland  
Sparks Studios  
Sunset Magazine  
The Ansel Adams Gallery  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Yosemite Fund  
Theroux Environmental  
Thurmond Law Offices  
Timeless Technologies  
Tioga Lodge  
Tuolumne River Preservation Trust  
Upper Merced River Watershed  
Valley View Trail Riders Association  
VIA Adventures  
Wawona Area Properties Owners Association  
Westar Associates  
Whalen & Associates Inc  
Wild Canid Research Group  
The Wilderness Society:  
    California/Nevada Region  
    National Office  
Wilderness Watch  
Wimmer Yamada & Caughey  
Yosemite Area Audubon

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

### **Libraries**

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

University of California at Berkeley, Main Library  
 University of California at Davis, Shields Library  
 University of California at Los Angeles, Maps and Government Information Library  
 University of California at Los Angeles, University Research Library  
 University of Minnesota, Forestry Library  
 United States Department of Insurance Library  
 Yosemite National Park Research Library

### **Newspapers**

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

### **Radio**

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

### **Television**

KRON – San Francisco

KTVU – Oakland  
KXTV – Sacramento  
NBC Network News – Los Angeles

Utah State University  
Vassar College  
Woodbury University

## **Colleges and Universities**

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