



Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan
Draft Public Scoping Summary
March 2010

Yosemite National Park
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INTRODUCTION

Public input and comment has been, and continues to be, an important part of planning for the Merced Wild and Scenic River. The purpose of this planning effort is: (1) to provide long-term, comprehensive guidance for the protection of the Merced Wild and Scenic River, and (2) to determine more specifically what programs and services will meet river protection goals along the Merced River corridors. The primary purpose of public scoping in a National Park Service (NPS) planning effort is to gather ideas, interests, and concerns from members of the public to help shape responsible planning. Public scoping and outreach for the Merced River Plan (MRP) has been a multi-year process of collaboration with private citizens, park visitors and neighbors, gateway communities, culturally associated tribal groups, partners in other agencies, national and local advocacy groups, scientists and scholars, and elected officials.

This Public Scoping Report is a summary of the comments submitted in written, oral and electronic format generated during the public scoping period from June 2009 to February 2010.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS SUMMARY

Public scoping was initiated for the Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan with a Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register/Volume. 74, No. 124, Tuesday, June 30, 2009. Public scoping was extended through February 4, 2010 (by Notice of Intent): Vol. 74, No. 163/Tuesday, August 25, 2009. Scoping comments were received until February 9 because of technological issues with the NPS website.

Public input on the plan was gathered at 16 public workshops, in which members of the public could submit comments regarding the MRP through a variety of methods. Postcards with a schedule of public scoping meetings and instructions for submitting comments on the plan were mailed to 30,416 addresses, 70 percent of which were retrieved from the campground reservation website administrator (reservation.gov). Information regarding the public meetings

was also advertised on the park's website. The public meetings consisted of an introductory presentation on the planning process, followed by discussions with the NPS planning team from Yosemite National Park. These public meetings also provided an opportunity for individuals to learn more about the process for developing the MRP. A list of questions was also available for the public to guide their comments at the meetings. During the meetings, ideas and concerns from the public were captured on flip-charts that were then posted for all in attendance to read. The flip chart notes have been incorporated as comments into this scoping report. Throughout the public scoping period, comments were accepted by e-mail, fax, letter, and on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website.

At this time there are approximately 128 correspondences received directly through the PEPC website and 317 correspondences from form letters, email and hand written letter. Of note were 395 identical form letters received from The Access Fund; these letters were counted, although only one was analyzed. There were 152 total individuals who attended 12 of 16 public meetings, with a range of 1 to 24 individuals among the meetings. The number of attendees at Gateway Partners, Delaware North Company, Yosemite Valley open house and UC Merced were not available. At this time there are 758 total comments gathered from the public meetings.

Comments were categorized into 12 major categories and 38 subcategories in order to organize and analyze commenter's concerns and issues. Table 1 provided at the end of this report details the number of comments received by topic and subtopic. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the comments by topic. Comments ranged from detailed suggestions for the MRP to more general accounts of appreciated park features. The topics that received the most input were recreation, transportation, and resources as they relate to what people enjoy about the river and the developed areas of the park. Several comments were considered beyond the scope of this project because the content of correspondence did not pertain to the MRP.

Each response from the public was carefully reviewed and individual ideas were identified and assigned specific category codes according to their content. There are currently about 2,126 public comments received during this scoping process.

Comments were then grouped, and concern statements were developed to identify common themes expressed by individuals or groups requesting particular lines of action by the National Park Service. Currently there are about 59 public concern statements generated from the total public comments.

This Public Scoping Report illustrates public concern statements with one or more representative statements taken from public correspondences. For the purposes of this report, the supporting quotes are just a sample from all comments received on a particular concern or category. A given public concern can reflect one or many supporting comments.

Below is the chronology of public meetings held in the neighboring communities of Yosemite National Park.

10/26/2009	Oakhurst, CA
10-27/2009	Lee Vining, CA
10-28/2009	Yosemite, CA
11/2/2009	Mariposa, CA

11/3/2009 Fresno, CA
11/4/2009 Groveland, CA
11/7/2009 El Portal, CA
11/9/2009 Sacramento, CA
11/9/2009 Berkeley, CA
11/16/2009 Los Angeles, CA
11/30/2009 El Portal, CA
12/2/2009 Yosemite Valley Auditorium, Yosemite National Park
12/4/2009 Wawona, CA
01/14/2010 Gateway Partners
01/28/2010 Delaware North Co.
01/28/2010 UC Merced

CONCERN ANALYSIS AND SCREENING PROCESS.

The comment analysis is comprised of three main components: a coding structure, a comment database and the narrative groups contained in this report. The coding structure was developed to sort comments into logical groups by topics and subtopics. The purpose of coding the comments is to allow for efficient access to comments on specific categories. The coding structure was used to capture all comments, including those that may not have pertained directly to the MRP. The content of each correspondence was analyzed and each comment was assigned a comment code to facilitate grouping of like comments.

Once the identification of public concerns was complete, the coded comments were used to prepare a narrative of the comments. Public concerns are identified throughout the coding process and derived from and supported by quotes from the original correspondence. These concern statements present common themes identified in the comments. Each concern statement is worded to give decision makers a clear sense of what action or issue is being conveyed. The 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 comments or information contained in the original correspondence.

Those comments related to the MRP are captured in public concern statements, whether they were presented by hundreds of people or a single person. The emphasis of the comment analysis process is on the content of the comment rather than the number of people who may support a particular comment. All comments are treated equally and are not weighed by number, organizational affiliation or other status of respondents.

USING THIS REPORT

This report presents concerns raised during the public scoping period arranged by topic along with a representative sample of supporting quotes.

RECREATION

Recreation – Access

The National Park Service should not limit recreational access in Yosemite.

“My concern for this plan is the limiting the access to the river.” Correspondence # 36

“Public access for citizens of ALL financial means and handicapped.” Correspondence # 10

There doesn't need to be access to all areas of the park or for every visiting member of the public.

“I am now 70+, and may never again see many of America's remote but spectacular wilderness areas that I have passed through on foot. I don't want any of these sites made accessible to me, other aged, rich and lazy, infirm, or otherwise incapacitated.”
Correspondence # 52

“Yosemite is as accessible as it needs to be. It does NOT need more paved roads, or more professionally maintained trails.” Correspondence # 424

“I would like to see access to the climbing, camping and recreation protected as you move forward.” Correspondence # 434

Recreation – Hiking

Access to hiking paths needs to remain as it has in the past and they don't need altering for their continued use in the park.

“I want to see hiking dirt paths protected - no wood platforms.” Correspondence # 27

“The Yosemite Falls trail maintenance has done a lot to reduce impacts. Keep the trail system the same - no more asphalt.” Correspondence # 70

Recreation – Biking

Expanding and strategically locating bike paths throughout Yosemite National Park would reduce impacts to the river and may alleviate traffic problems.

“The Valley Loop trail could be made into a bicycle path which, again, would disburse visitors throughout the valley rather than having them only in the campgrounds, Curry Village, etc.” Correspondence 45

“It would be great if there was more biking opportunities along the loop and better access around the valley floor.” Correspondence # 31

“The plan to make one side of the valley a bike-only road is not a horrible thought, but it isn't really very good either. The one-way loop works well for auto traffic, and gives options for when work, accidents, whatever partially or fully blocks northside or southside drive. Let's

just add to the existing bike paths around the valley. And restore the old Big Oak Flat road as a bike path into the valley, while we're at it. "Correspondence # 144

"What a wonderful place to put a paved rails to trails bike path. That would take the bike traffic from the road and make it safer. It would also be great to have a paved bike path around the perimeter of Yosemite Valley and not on the road. This again could lead to better utilization of the park. " Correspondence # 441

Recreation – Climbing

Climbing in Yosemite National Park is an essential recreational activity and has little impact to other park resources.

"Allow for climbing in lower Yosemite Falls Amphitheatre and other areas typically off limits. Use education of climbers to prevent user group conflicts or resource management." Correspondence # 413

"I strongly encourage the NPS to allow technical climbers the same access that has historically been afforded to them. Climbing has been a crucial part of the history of the park since the times of John Muir and the more time I spend in YNP the more I am impressed with the respect shown the natural resources by the climbing community. The impact the climbers have on the resources is negligible compared to that of the tourists that throng to the park." Correspondence # 444

"My favorite part of Yosemite is the access to rock climbing. The ability to access all cliffs and climbing areas within the park is, for me, the most important of the park that must be protected." Correspondence # 420

"As a frequent visitor to Yosemite Valley, I am writing to support the preservation of climbing access to in Yosemite Valley. Specifically in regard to the Merced River plan, we need to preserve access to iconic climbing areas such as The Rostrum, Cookie Cliff, and Middle Cathedral Rock. These areas are important from an historical and recreational perspective and are some of the more popular climbing areas in the Valley." Correspondence # 80

Recreation – Rafting

Several comments were directed toward reducing or stopping rafting in the Merced River because of either scenic resources or because of destruction to riparian habitat.

"Limit or eliminate rafting or boating in the river above El Portal." Correspondence # 28

"The number of rafts currently allowed on the Merced River must be significantly reduced to mitigate view shed impacts, protect riverbank resources and benthic biota." Correspondence # 44

"Current policy allowing rafting, tubing, etc. on the Merced inside the park should be reversed. Swimming in appropriate and safe areas should certainly be OK, but anything but human bodies should not be allowed. The visual pollution is bad enough, but that many people in the River can't be doing it or its banks any good." Correspondence # 119

"Remove distracting activities from the river, i.e. mass commercial raft rentals. It's OK for folks to bring their own, with specific put in and take out areas designated." Correspondence # 456

Rafting or kayaking on the Merced River should be an allowable recreational activity.

“Hello, I’ve lived in El Dorado County 50 years. In my younger days my brother and I hiked extensively in Yosemite, especially those regions distant from Yosemite Valley. We shared our trips with horse packers on occasion, had wonderful experiences with memories that have lasted for decades. In the more recent past I have been white water kayaking the Merced, and have been eager to boat the entire river and some of its tributaries. Kayaking is an extremely low-impact sport. Some of the other currently allowed activities in the park are MUCH more damaging; I know, I used to participate in them. I would strongly encourage you to extend those areas where white water kayaking is allowed into currently unapproved areas. As I said, kayaking is an extremely low-impact sport.” Correspondence # 457.

“I have canoed the Merced in the valley and kayaked it from below the park boundary. I have also paddled the S. Fork. Please retain existing canoeing and kayaking in the valley subject to reasonable use and traffic limitations. When it becomes necessary to limit river traffic, a system must be implemented to ensure non-commercial individuals have equitable access. Properly equipped paddlers should be able to paddle anywhere in the park including the Merced below Yosemite Valley” Correspondence # 449

“I’d like to see white water kayaking promoted within the park boundaries.” Correspondence # 190

Recreation – Swimming and Fishing

Visitors swimming in the Merced River enjoy it as a recreational resource and as a park amenity.

“I love the clean water to swim/cool off in”. Correspondence # 16

“I love the Merced River because you can swim in it”. Correspondence # 30

What is the National Park Service doing to protect and manage fish in the park?

“What steps are you taking to ensure the safety of the indigenous trout, whether planted or wild?” Correspondence # 62

“With shock and disgust I discovered that my National Park Trustees are engaged in gill netting and extinguishing a fish species in the park.” Correspondence # 26

The National Park Service should restrict fishing activities in the Mercer River.

“The fishing regulations in the park leave a section from Pohono Bridge to the park boundary open to all types of angling and the standard bag limit of 5 trout. This section of the river should have a zero (0) bag limit, barbless hooks, no bait allowed.” Correspondence # 431

Recreation – Camping

Most comments were directed toward tent or car camping in Yosemite National Park and many comments related concerns for the closure or the lack of camping areas in Yosemite.

“There are three major impediments to accessing the wonderful climbing, hiking, and site-seeing opportunities: lack of camping/campsites in Yosemite. Camping shortage: This is the largest headache and source of tension in the park for me and all of my friends. Quite simply, there is not enough camping available from April through October on the Valley Floor (the area from camp 4 to curry village, which includes Camp 4, Upper Pines, Lower Pines, and Northern Pines). As someone who comes for each weekend during May and

October, it is virtually impossible to find camping in these campsites--forcing me to pursue one of two options: camp nearly an hour from the climbing cliffs (either outside the park or at an outlying campsite) or find an illegal solution. The first solution increases the amount of driving congestion and pollution within the Park; the second is one of the main drivers of the animosity between climbers and rangers. Heightening the tension is the one week limit imposed on camp 4 patrons from May until October. This solely leads to illegal camping--as climbers who are spending a month in Yosemite have no other option than to break the rules. I believe this scenario--lack of camping on the Valley floor--has led to the deterioration of relations between climbers and rangers, especially camp 4 rangers. I propose three solutions that could remedy this situation: First, expand camping in camp 4, upper pines, northern pines, and lower pines--leaving a certain percentage available for a first come, first serve basis in the later three campsites. Second, explore the possibility of building a climbers-only campsite just out the park in El Portal. Three, eliminate the one week camping restriction in camp 4 (plus, please add soap dispensers in those bathrooms!).” Correspondence # 420

“I want to add my voice to the need to restore previously lost campgrounds to Yosemite Valley. As a camper at Yosemite since the mid-1940s, I regard this Valley as "sacred ground" for campers everywhere. The flood-damaged campgrounds should be immediately returned to their original use and quality. I cannot believe or understand how the Park Service can mis-appropriate funds allocated for this restoration?? How dare the Park Service and its management dis-regard the citizens' right to what they are entitled. The tradition of "family auto-based drive-in camping" should always have a place in Yosemite -- after all, this gave the Valley its historic foundation in the first place. How else can one thoroughly enjoy the pristine beauty of camping outdoors without this access? Impossible. Listen to your constituents -- they have a right to be not only heard but to gain back what you have stolen from them ... put back our camp sites!” Correspondence # 148

“We need to maintain the High Sierra Camps as they have been for almost a century. They allow the opportunity for a diverse group of people to experience the wilderness who would not otherwise experience it. Once experienced, these folks become some of the most important lovers and protectors of the parks. I hope that in our effort to protect the park, we Don't forget why we are protecting it - for the enjoyment of the people, all people, not just a select few. Mather's ideas are just as important now as they were when he founded the NPS. Let us continue to honor them. Thank you.” Correspondence # 162

“Upper Pines and Yellow Pines Campgrounds and Housekeeping Camp should be kept in place, despite the local impact their use generate in the river shores. Promote overnight trips, in my opinion, is better to the environment than to promote the day use of the park. I would like to see Merced River High Sierra Camp open for generations to come and Little Yosemite Valley and Moraine Campground open as well.” Correspondence # 31

“It seems to us that the campsites and lodge buildings that were lost due to the flood should not be rebuilt or moved to another location. There are enough campsites and lodge rooms in the valley right now. Do not increase the amount to the level prior to the flood.” Correspondence # 37

The National Park Service should better supervise campers and consider other options for allowing camping availability in the park.

“Better supervision of numbers of campers per site. Valley campgrounds should be run like Tuolumne - half reserved, half first-come, first-served.” Correspondence # 70

“What would make a better camping experience? NOT having to listen to generators, breathe wood smoke, or have the glare of bright lights from the bathrooms and bright lanterns. A little more space would be good, and a separate campground for us tent campers (not like overcrowded Camp 4), or at least make the outside of the loops for tents only, for a little more seclusion and quiet.” Correspondence # 67

"Out of bounds" camping should not be enforced by law enforcement when safety of drivers is concerned. Park exits are too far if driving late due to unforeseen delays. This is a lawsuit hazard that the NPS is ill equipped to handle, and Rangers are belligerent about enforcing this issue. Provide alternatives! 2-3 hr bivi sites to sleep in car? not 'camping' but not driving while tired either. save lives!. Most important also, INCREASE ANNUAL CAMPING STAY LIMIT and continuous camping stay limit.” Correspondence # 413

“Relax stay limits. 7 days is not enough, as it is well known fact that many abuse the system and stay longer.” Correspondence # 440

Recreation – Horseback Riding

Comments received regarding horseback riding in Yosemite National Park were either in support or opposition to continuing this recreational activity.

“All commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor”
Correspondence # 49

“Reduce the NPS stock use and keep to minimum essential levels and eliminate concession stock and stables to reduce stock waste and pollution and to minimize other stock related impacts to Valley resources.” Correspondence # 44

“I'm still interested in keeping our wilderness "wild" for the enjoyment of everyone for generations to come. As I indicated before, I am very concerned about the harmful effects of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as the use of stock (pack) animals. I have read and support all the comments and recommendations made on this issue by the High Sierra Hikers Association. If John Muir were alive today, he would be appalled at the condition of his name-sake wilderness trail. The feces and urine from pack animals on the trail were utterly disgusting. Because it was so bad, I was forced to walk beside the trail many times. I would not normally do this because it creates a double-track, which exacerbates the erosion effects from both pack-animal traffic, and human foot-traffic. If pack-animal usage increases, we may eventually end up with a pack trail (sewer trough) and an adjacent human trail. A double-track is more in keeping with an urban, dirt road experience than a wilderness experience. 2) The stench makes it impossible to enjoy the complete wilderness experience.” Correspondence # 58

“Regarding the use of pack stock: There is so much to say but I will try to keep it focused. I have backpacked the John Muir Trail and many other Sierra areas. The erosion and pollution I have witnessed from excessive pack usage is disheartening ... In general, the groups should be smaller than they are and the "camps" they build and "live" at should be monitored. The manure on the trails is excessive. Why can't the animals wear catchers? This should be required. There should not be any grazing allowed. This wilderness is too fragile and was not meant to supply horses with grass. The food that is brought in must be weed free because of contamination by invasive plants. Please, these things are a must for responsible wilderness management.” Correspondence # 100

“I want to address the continued use of horses and allowing equestrians to have great access not only to the Merced River areas, but also throughout Yosemite National Park.

There are many of us concerned about limitations that more and more have been placed on the ability to ride reasonably within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. I've talked with a number of people in regard to this matter, both as a concerned citizen and as the Mariposa County Supervisor for District 1 which includes a large portion of Yosemite National Park. I wish to go on record again to offer my concerns and to keep an open dialogue as we progress through the various stages and on to approval of the Merced River plan. Historically horses, mules, & donkeys have been ridden throughout the land that is now Yosemite National Park. In fact, equine transportation used to be the primary method of visiting the park. In the past twenty or so years we have seen and experienced a reduction of our ability to enjoy the park on horseback. I'll say time and again that if you haven't experienced the feeling of joy and freedom and closeness to nature that you enjoy on the back of your own horse, you have missed one of the greatest ways to experience Yosemite. Also think of people that are handicapped that can ride a horse, but can't hike all these trails. As I have gotten older, I would never be able to hike into many of the areas that I can easily ride my horse to. Believe me, there are many others that could take advantage of this opportunity and that's why it should be encouraged, not restricted. As I'm sure you are well aware, there are many riding groups within California and the western United States that should be taking part in the final development of this river plan. They should have the opportunity to offer their suggestions and opinions to be considered in the final draft of the Merced River plan. My point at this time is to keep the horse concept and not let it be lost in the ongoing discussions and to include equestrian use in the final implementation of the Merced River plan." Correspondence # 189

Management Planning

In developing the MRP the National Park Service should consider natural resources, the historical context of the park and alternatives that will result in the least amount of damage to resources.

"What is best for the park is what is best for the animals, environment they live, the trees, vegetation, and rivers and those who choose to visit and admire them. Somewhere along these many years the National Park Service has forgotten this and their mission statement. If you the national park Service, go back to your roots and avoid the traps of corporate America then Yosemite would be a much better place. I would like to make my statement that the Merced River Project and the protection of it should be viewed as a whole, rather than being segmented. The visitor experience needs to be defined objectively." Correspondence # 60

"The Merced River should be viewed holistically throughout this planning process rather than discussing its protection segment by segment." Correspondence # 53

"Going forward with the new Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the Merced River, this plan should not re-hash prior Merced River Plans (MRPs); the new CMP must be a fresh, science-based, fact-filled, accurate and honest presentation of the Merced River CMP goals to be achieved and available alternatives. 2. The CMP for the Merced River must include valid scientific studies and analyses that support NPS assumptions and proposed alternatives; the science must support NPS reasons for desired changes, and resulting effects of proposed alternatives upon the Merced River and its Outstandingly Remarkable Values, as well as the natural habitats and animal species, and the archeological resources above and below the soil....The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is not a license for NPS to usurp the General Management Plan. Yosemite's NPS has long favored implementation of a development and commercialization agenda that diminishes the goals of the General Management Plan, and dresses up Yosemite Valley to look like a world-class resort.

Yosemite is a national park for everyone to enjoy; it is not Disneyland and the cost to visit should not be comparable. 3. Going forward, the new CMP must recognize and coordinate the legal requirements of the 1980 General Management Plan with the legal requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. 4. In the new CMP for the Merced River, Yosemite's NPS must abandon the "Build it and they will come" approach that has dominated and derailed past planning efforts. With the new CMP, Yosemite's NPS upper brass has an opportunity to start with a clean slate and do the right thing; their sincerity and commitment to an honest, forthright process hang in the balance. The printed CMP will be the stamp by which their integrity is measured." Correspondence # 127

"Do not impair any natural force or function, species or food chain, watershed process or landform, nor environment or ecotone. The best way to avoid any impairment is: to (a) plan restoration insofar as possible to pre-European contact state of all Merced River landforms, functions, habitats, faunal and floral relationships within the 1/4-mile planning boundaries; and, (b) to plan and emplace strong and clear limits upon: - further human development and land use therein; - human visitation therein; and, - vehicular routes, parking, and maintenance therein." Correspondence # 415

"I am hopeful that a plan alternative will be developed that produces fewer impacts per visitor to the Merced River corridor, and natural resources of the Park in general, such that potential increases in visitation do not adversely impact the outstandingly remarkable values of the Merced River or the quality of the visitor experience." Correspondence # 79

Management Planning- River Boundary

The ¼ mile boundary along the river is too restrictive and may impact visitor activities in the area.

"I do NOT believe that the Merced River has to be free from human development for 1/4 mile on each side to be wild and scenic" Correspondence # 128

"I think it imperative to re-think and re-evaluate the one quarter mile boundary on each side of the river. It doesn't make sense when the Valley itself is only one mile wide to have one half of it "affected." Correspondence # 151

"Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area." Correspondence # 168

"I'm concerned that the Merced River Plan with its effort to protect the area within 1/4-mile of the River might lead to a further decrease in camping sites; particularly in Lower Pines. There are far fewer sites in the Valley now than before the 1997 flood, so no further sites should be closed." Correspondence # 452

Transportation

The National Park Service should evaluate traffic congestion as it relates to visitor use in the park, and how changing traffic accessibility may reduce impacts to visitor experiences throughout the park.

"Cars are a pain and a nuisance and an unsightly clutter in the Valley. However, the idea of parking cars at Badger Pass or in El Portal or somewhere along Route 120 is not the best option. Yes, it gets most of the cars away from the Valley visitors but it creates a major transportation management nightmare. The park management would be in a major

transportation business running three major. long distance, bus lines. Public support of the Park will not be helped by a citizenry who are mad at the National Park system! We should strongly oppose any expansion or widening of any Valley loop roads including Segment D, the section 900 feet east of the 120/140 intersection to Pohono Bridge. Maintain one way traffic pattern currently in use except for the section between Sentinel Bridge and Curry which would then require two-way traffic if the road west of Stoneman bridge is closed. Widening Valley roads only encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles, RV's and tour busses." Correspondence #44

"Most important! DO NOT PROHIBIT AUTOMOBILE USE IN THE VALLEY. A bus and schedule is NOT the answer for Yosemite Valley." Correspondence # 413

"Create a viable parking and mass transit system on the 140 corridor." Correspondence # 431

"Consider closure of the one-way road between Stoneman Bridge and Yosemite Village, and restore this roadway and former campground and flood plain to natural conditions. 4. Maintain current Valley loop road alignments including Segment D, the section 900 feet east of the 120/140 intersection to Pohono Bridge. Maintain one way traffic pattern currently in use except for the section between Sentinel Bridge and Curry which would then require two-way traffic if the road west of Stoneman bridge is closed." Correspondence # 124

"How about limiting cars in Yosemite Valley to only those who have a reservation to stay there overnight? All other visitors can park outside the valley and take a shuttle into the valley. Zion National Park is run similarly." Correspondence # 297

"I propose the Park adopt a transportation system similar to the one servicing the Grand Canyon. Ideal location would be Catheys Valley Township Planning Area within the western portion of Mariposa County." Correspondence # 56

Transportation - Shuttles

The shuttle service needs to be expanded to more places in the park not just the valley.

"Perhaps, once inside the park boundaries secondary shuttles or rented bicycles could transport individuals to off-shoot locations." Correspondence # 47

"The free shuttle system could be expanded to allow access to the old and new picnic areas, the designated beaches, and Bridalveil Falls/Tunnel View areas. Creating shuttle stops at areas least likely to impact the river's banks would allow the current level of day population in the valley and perhaps allow for additional visitors with little or no impact on the river, its banks, and its quality" Correspondence # 45

"Extend transportation system to west valley - this could be used by folks wanting to hike, etc. along river." Correspondence # 456

"As far as transportation, I have been amazed at how well the L.L.Bean buses in Acadia work. I was very reluctant to give up my private transportation, but the frequency, coverage and responsiveness of the buses in Acadia actually make the park more accessible than it is by car. I suspect that with bigger back country trips and climbs possible in Yosemite, buses would need much more accommodation for carrying big packs." Correspondence # 146

The shuttle system in Yosemite National park needs better scheduling and needs to run more often in the Tuolumne Meadows, El Portal and Bridal Veil areas.

“The two things that I think need to be fixed are: a more consistent/more often running bus system in the Tuolumne Meadows area (which includes the drop off for the hike to Merced Lake) and a management plan for the high travel time of the summer months.”
Correspondence # 416

“Due to the nature of the activities that we conduct in the valley, a bus service needs to cover the entire valley, and include late hours for people who unexpectedly run later for their adventures.” Correspondence # 390

Support for the shuttle buses and mass transit system to access the park and the Merced River.

“Aside from improving the air quality and complimenting the naturalness of the Parks, it would be a showcase project for the NPS commitment to environmental protection. Reducing the number of vehicles traveling these distances and idling in summer traffic congestion by offering electric shuttles would also significantly reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from park visitors.” Correspondence # 47

“I wish Yosemite would incorporate a system like in Zion National Park with shuttle busses. The traffic in the Valley is unsightly, bad for the animals, and defeats the purpose of a National Park.” Correspondence # 423

“Eliminating cars from Yosemite Valley is a good idea, and having energy clean buses available for visitors.” Correspondence # 95

“YARTS: sense that it is for hotels in and out of park, not individual users (hotel tax collected). Others feel it's of benefit to hotel operations, but maybe it's not as well known or publicized to other users....Current Valley shuttle stops at "profit centers" want to see stops at West Valley going all the way to Pohono Bridge, year round. There is no way to get from Valley to Wawona without paying a big charge. Scheduling of Wawona shuttles not good. More shuttles to: Glacier Pt, Chinquapin, M Grove, Bridalveil” Correspondence # 172

“Maybe set up a trolley system, where it goes around the park and people can get off, or get on at designated places, and when they want to leave they ride a trolley to the parking outside the park and to lot. With the trolley drivers taking tickets, the trolley would be able to pass through the front gate without the need to stop, helping create a lot less traffic at the gate, which could be used mainly for campers, elderly and disabled people.”
Correspondence # 205

Opposition to mass transit and shuttle buses particularly as it relates to visitors and logistics of entering the park.

“Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) is not the answer to get people in and out of Valley (camping, gear). For day use could be okay or overnight with a couple of suitcases.” Correspondence # 70

“The Yosemite Valley Plan called for Out of Valley Parking and bringing visitors into the Valley via shuttles. Because of the uniqueness of Yosemite, this method would be doomed before it could start. Experience at Bryce Canyon was a disaster. Experience at Zion leaves something less than desired.” Correspondence # 2.1

Transportation- Parking

Increase the availability of parking spaces in the valley floor, Lower Yosemite Falls and Lodge areas.

"A system based on Y AR TS should be implemented featuring: 1. Large, easy access parking for cars, RV's and none "green" buses outside of Yosemite Park" Park and Ride" Correspondence # 56

In response to "What needs to be fixed" several written and oral Correspondences responded with: "More parking lots/capacities" Correspondence # 140 and 143

The parking facilities in Yosemite National Park should be improved and expanded.

"Parking should be increased for summer visitor use, particularly around the lower Yosemite falls and lodge areas. Also, improved parking locations at popular climbing areas would be a bonus." Correspondence # 413

"While drafting a management plan for the Merced River, please keep parking areas such as the Cookie Cliff, Arch Rock, and the Rostrum." Correspondence # 446

"Do not consider the use of Badger Pass parking as overflow or staged parking! The increased wear and tear on the Glacier Point Road would degrade the roadway. Many people are NOT comfortable driving on curvy mountain roads with a steep drop off adjacent to road shoulder." Correspondence # 12

"Elimination of parking spaces must also be addressed. Day use parking is key." Correspondence # 70

"Return parking spaces to Valley Floor." Correspondence # 12

"The current day use parking condition in camp six is in violation of everything and is completely unacceptable. A significant portion of this parking area especially near the river must be reduced and relocated and the area restored to natural conditions." Correspondence # 44

"Don't want to see a regimented "group think" atmosphere of large parking lots. Build underground parking garage in west end of Yosemite Valley - with bike rental and shuttle stop" Correspondence # 172

The National Park Service should consider additional parking locations to reduce traffic problems.

It would be much better to have parking at Taft Toe, among the trees. With this valley location, for most of the year, all "day use" cars would be fairly near the destination of most visitors. The busses needed to transport folks farther into the valley would have relatively short runs. Wait times would be short. If busses get off schedule the gaps would be relatively short so no big deal. The long runs from the remote locations would require many more busses, drivers and management staff to give anything approaching "good service." Policing the passage of cars destined to be "passing through" would be far easier with Taft Toe parking because "pass through" roads would be at hand and visitors could easily be directed to them. The three long distance parking spots could be used on the few days that are super crowded. Visitors could be told at the Park Entrance, and perhaps by radio, that the over flow parking is in use. Visitors could decide if entry was worth the inconvenience. Yosemite Valley can handle many more visitors without making it look like a traffic snarled city when most of the cars are removed. Correspondence # 42

"Just giving you some thoughts on the parking problem in the park that might be useful. One way to solve some of the problems of parking is to let only campers drive into the park. And once they are at their campsite they can use the trams to get around the park or bring bicycles. (Your tram service is an excellent way to see the park) Day use visitors would park

outside the park and use the trams to come into the park. The problem is where to build a parking lot? (Oakhurst, Coarsegold, Mariposa etc.) 2. One way to solve the parking outside the park is have the various local cities build parking lots and transport visitors to the park for a small fee or paid as part of the entrance fee. Doing this will help these small communities' commerce and business." Correspondence # 137

Transportation - Suggested locations and features for increased efficiency

The National Park Service should consider road closures and other methods of increasing transportation efficiency in the park.

"Construct a by-pass road at Yosemite Lodge." Correspondence # 70

"We should support the NPS proposal to close the one-way road between former Upper and Lower River campgrounds that runs west from Stoneman Bridge to Yosemite Village." Correspondence # 44

"There needs to be a way to cross the road from Yosemite Lodge to Lower Yosemite Falls without stopping the traffic. The congestion happens when cars need to leave the park at the end of the day or Sundays - they get backed up because so many people need to cross to get to the walkway to the falls!" Correspondence # 125

Commercial Operations

Pricing or fees associated with the concessioners are too much and may exclude certain visitors from enjoying the park.

"Next time concession contract comes up there should be public input to prices and providing opportunities for enjoyment DNC has done a better job • Operations excludes lots of people (pricing) ... How will renewal of concession services plan synchronize with this process? The pricing of concessioner operations exclude a lot of people because of their price." Correspondence # 70

"Plan for poor and underclass visitors. DNC charges too much for their goods and services." Correspondence # 413

"The prices are getting a little bit too expensive across the concessions board." Correspondence # 438

Concessioners and their services should not be in Yosemite National Park.

"Corporate America does not belong in Yosemite as this place of natural beauty should never have a price tag put on it." Correspondence # 60

"I want to see all the hotels, and shopping and bus tours shut down. This would help protect this awesome place. We need less people in Yosemite." Correspondence # 430

"Reduce as many unnecessary visitor amenities as possible. Apparel and souvenir shops, a golf course and tennis courts, ice rink, concessionaire stables and stock use in a confined valley and a large screen TV pavilion are some examples of visitor services and activities that are not appropriate in Yosemite Valley." Correspondence # 124

"I am not happy about the licensing of big private corporations for exclusive in-park sales and service. I would prefer to see the park kept non-commercial, the services done by Park

Service and paid for by admission fees and taxes (yes, I'd like to see taxes raised for National Parks, among other things). "Free enterprise" will find a way to re-invent Estes Park or Gatlinburg on one of the park boundaries to provide all the goods and services that visitors need. Yosemite should not cater only to those who have the strip mall mentality. There is no place in this jewel of the national parks for over-development of high priced lodging, Vintner's holidays or Brace bridge performances." Correspondence # 146

Commercial Operations – Hotels and Lodging

Wawona Hotel and Curry Village should be preserved for their continued enjoyment.

"Curry Village should be restored to its approved capacity and upgraded to accommodations that visitors really want, private bathrooms, proper heat etc." Correspondence # 431

"The Wawona Hotel is a historical hotel and should be preserved. The price for staying in Wawona should also be reduced." Correspondence # 63

Additional lodging and low to mid-range prices are needed in Yosemite National Park.

"I would propose that building a hostel with rooms and a large kitchen would provide economy lodging for visitors, and could be placed in an area away from the river. Banff and Lake Louise N.P.s have done this and it's worked out well for them." Correspondence # 432

"Please address the issue of providing for improved and increased visitor housing, since the settlement eliminated the redevelopment of Yosemite Lodge and the creation of 89 campsites. There continues to be a need for modern, good quality visitor housing, and the Lodge is the best location for reasonable cost accommodations." Correspondence # 33

"DO NOT reduce the number of accommodations. There must be places to stay while experiencing Yosemite." Correspondence # 75

"Allow more rooms to be built at Yosemite Lodge so that the number of mid-priced rooms in the Valley is a more reasonable number." Correspondence # 28.

Additional lodging should not be added to the Valley.

"Do not build any more lodges or increase lodging in Yosemite Valley, this is the only way to protect the fragile nature of this park. Correspondence # 14

Commercial Operations – Retail and Food Service

Is it appropriate to have retail commercial operations in Yosemite National Park?

"Are mountaineering and apparel shops necessary at Curry? Eliminating these services and shopping opportunities would help mitigate the chronic human congestion that occurs during heavy use periods in the Curry area." Correspondence # 44

"It seems to me that one of the best ways of limiting impact and visitor confusion would be to limit the array of facilities available within the Valley. All shops should be located solely in the "Yosemite Village" area." Correspondence # 137

The items sold and ability of getting a fair priced meal in the park should be evaluated.

"A small well-equipped grocery store and a mountain shop carrying basic camping, backpacking, and rock climbing gear seem to be the types of retail opportunities appropriate

to maintain in Yosemite Valley. The NPS and Yosemite's concessionaire must work together to audit and edit the multitude of unnecessary goods currently sold in most of Yosemite's retail shops." Correspondence # 53

"There needs to a better selection of dining choices in the Valley - whatever happened to the Four Seasons Restaurant? Can't we have a nice, affordable sit-down restaurant for breakfast, lunch and dinner? I can't tell you how many times I have heard that same refrain from other visitors. The food, prices and hours for the cafeteria at Camp Curry are terrible. Fix it up or shut it down! No wonder there are always lines at the snack stands outside!" Correspondence # 19

"No place to get sit down meal that is moderately priced. Mt Room restaurant too expensive." Correspondence 172

Commercial Operations – Recreation

The livestock operations in the park are causing adverse impacts in the Merced River corridor.

"I am very concerned about the harmful effects of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. When stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group); and all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails," Correspondence # 55

"I am troubled by the negative effects of commercial ventures in the national parks in general, and in Yosemite in particular. I am specially bothered by pack animals used near the river. I'd like to see no public horse stables in the valley." Correspondence # 169

Rafting is an inappropriate activity in the park and should be discontinued.

"Some services that are currently provided in Yosemite are clearly not appropriate. The raft rental stand in Yosemite Valley is an excellent example of a service that is not appropriate and even detrimental to the park to provide. These large heavy rafts, and the way visitors use them, degrade the natural and cultural resources of the Merced River; this is quite obvious on a busy summer day in Yosemite Valley." Correspondence # 53

"Commercial rafts are left blocking the entire exit to the parking, so private rafters have to tramp through the woods to get to their cars. Move rafts to the bus turn around area." Correspondence # 29.

Remove distracting activities from the river, i.e. mass commercial raft rentals. It's OK for folks to bring their own, with specific put in and take out areas designated." Correspondence # 456

Resources (in response to scoping question: What do you love?)

The following represents the comments received in response to the question asked by the park regarding what visitors love about the park. There were many comments received that were very broad statements of appreciation and others that were specific to the resources found within the park and the river corridor.

"The natural eco systems and their proper evolutionary processes. The raw, untouched view of the wilderness, glaciation, natural erosions, and the whole experience. We must

protect this for future generations and it seems to me people are the problem. Must limit their impact on this place.” Correspondence # 22

“The less "civilization" the better meaning few amenities, etc. etc. After all, this is what everyone is trying to get away from for a few days, or should be at least. Protect the river the animals and let nature take its course. Yosemite is a magical place that is truly a gift to all mankind and should be protected as such.” Correspondence # 450

“Hiking trails, views, rivers, Ranger talks” Correspondence # 90

“Views, beautiful scenery, ability to walk anywhere, get away from crowds, naturalist programs, ability to connect with surroundings.” Correspondence # 172

Natural Resources

“The main thing I love is the natural world of Yosemite, including the granite walls, the falls and trails (particularly the Mist trail to Vernal and Nevada Falls, and the 4-mile trail to Glacier Pt.)” Correspondence # 452

“I love the Natural Evolving process(s).” Correspondence # 107

“Trails, wildflowers, park animals, clean air, clean water.” Correspondence # 139

“The Merced River, the animals, meadows, waterfalls and the trails could continue to be allowed in the valley.” Correspondence # 142

“Visual effect of a "free-flowing" river, natural vegetation and boardwalks that protect resources” Correspondence #172

Wildlife and Vegetation

“Comprehensive Aquatic, Riparian, and Terrestrial Invertebrate Inventory: Our knowledge of invertebrates within the river corridor is spotty at best. Unlike flora and fauna in most vertebrates groups, invertebrate species have not been fully inventoried. A thorough invertebrate inventory in the Merced River corridor would likely turn up new species of insects, arachnids, or other invertebrate species...” Correspondence # 166

“Special status wildlife and (e.g., YLF, Willow Flycatcher) -Wildlife & plants in general.” Correspondence # 105

“We've liked the changes that have occurred over the past few years ... the on-going removal of inappropriate vegetation along the River and in the meadows and the commensurate "revegetating." Correspondence # 119

“The wildflowers along the Merced River.” Correspondence # 142

River as a Resource

Repair, restore, create a narrower river channel from Stoneman Bridge to Cathedral Beach. The unnaturally wide channel allows excessive solar exposure leading to increased/unnaturally high water temperatures. Perhaps an effort to narrow the river channel back to it's original/historical width would create faster flows, lower temperatures and higher oxygen concentrations for both fish and other species.” Correspondence # 431

“I love Merced River's clean water and green color. I love the way it runs down through its gorge in the high country.” Correspondence # 31

“The purity of the water” Correspondence # 139

“Ask people to be nice to the river because many people like it and use it for drinking ... In the flyers (DNC activities and NPS newspaper), put an article about not killing our rivers. Correspondence # 427

“The Merced River is dynamic and clearly free. Around every corner there is majesty and mystery. Being able to spend time with the river is a blessing and honor. From Briceburg to the headwaters up Triple Peak Divide, the Merced holds the stories of place. The extremes of the river are one thing I love. From Washburn Lake to the cascades below Merced Lake to Nevada Falls, to the drop out of Yosemite Valley to rafting below El Portal. I want to see the river and its entire neighborhood continue to be protected. First of all I have spent more time in Yosemite's high country than I have in Yosemite Valley.” Correspondence # 454

Cultural Resources

“Signage has been placed in the park representative of only the Miwuk culture .These signs need to be corrected as the pictures indicate these American Indians are Miwuk when in reality they are Paiute people.... There is enough discovery and information in your archeology department and the past has proven that when archeology is done little or no care has been exhibited in caring for remains of the American Indian remains .This practice must stop immediately ... ” Correspondence # 60

“This is where my heritage is from. Please no more destruction!” Correspondence # 412

“Consider and protect the rich and diverse communities – past and present – in the river corridor. The Merced River corridor has been home to people for nearly 10,000 years, and it still contains vibrant communities. The Valley and El Portal's ancient cultural histories should be clarified and protected by doing extensive archeological study; delineating where settlements and other areas of significance exist; and by protecting and interpreting these effectively.” Correspondence # 181

Historical Resources

“The same care should be given for the burial areas and remains that the NPS gives to the Yosemite Cemetery/Galen Clarks resting place and those who the NPS consider the original settlers of the Valley after first contact.” Correspondence # 60

“All existing 'historic' structures need to be repaired and preserved. They have value.” Correspondence # 75

“I would also like to see increased information throughout the park pertaining to history that took place in particular areas. Yosemite is rich in interesting history and information with historic pictures located at those historic sites adds so much to the park experience.” Correspondence # 145

“I would like to see Yosemite retain its architectural vernacular by keeping the rustic American log cabin style for all tents, huts, and buildings.” Correspondence # 164

“El Portal has significant historic structures and values that should be documented for designation of the area as an historic district. Correspondence # 166

Scenic Resources

“Yosemite Valley is beautiful! Being amongst the trees and high granite cliffs!!.” Correspondence # 51

“Do scenic restoration tree cutting sparingly.” Correspondence # 70

"I love the natural beauty of Yosemite." Correspondence # 448

"The pristine beauty of this Corridor and the surrounding visual and sensory characteristics." Correspondence # 107

"The freedom to take in views and get away from the crowds throughout the Valley." Correspondence # 172

Visitor Use and Recreation

"Loved the night amphitheater lectures." Correspondence # 23

"Yosemite's beauty is just a few steps away from our campsite. We love to hike and bike the road/paths from Upper Pines to Happy Isles and Mirror Lake." Correspondence # 43

"Wawona is an interesting place that doesn't get much attention from the public, and I like the big meadow close by." Correspondence # 31

"I recognize that there are many types of resource users in Yosemite Valley, and that each category of resource users will have a different set of concerns. My perspective is that of a father who wants to preserve the resources for future generations (including my own young children), and also to enjoy the resources today as a naturalist, hiker, and rock climber. I think any long-term plan for the region must balance the responsibilities that all must bear for preserving the resources for future generations, along with maintaining the flexibility and freedom of individuals to explore and enjoy nature in whatever way they see fit. Of course, individual freedoms must be tempered with boundaries to be respectful of others." Correspondence # 206

"I live close enough that I visit all four seasons for a variety of reasons, day hikes, camping, hiking, backpacking, day trips, and the more leisurely activities of Wawona and the Valley." Correspondence 416

"I am for backtracking to find a sane way to let people see and enjoy this amazing resource without all the hype." Correspondence # 421

"I appreciate the delicate balance between recreation and preservation, and I believe that Yosemite occupies a unique position in America pantheon of parks." Correspondence #459

"The overwhelming feelings and memories that grow each year when I visit. I need to be able to drive along the Merced, swim, wade, hike, and photograph. Walk, bike and hike in the Valley. Be near the beautiful and historic buildings and bridge at Wawona. I am still introducing friends to this new experience for them." Correspondence # 149

Wilderness

"I'm still interested in keeping our wilderness "wild" for the enjoyment of everyone for generations to come" Correspondence # 58

"The raw, untouched view of the wilderness, glaciation, natural erosions, and the whole experience." Correspondence # 22

"I absolutely love Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, its location is wonderful. It is a great place to start long backcountry trips, to introduce children and young adults to the wilderness, to have family reunions." Correspondence # 31

Park Management – General Correspondences

Yosemite National Park should consider increasing signage for park visitors to communicate awareness of sensitive resources and help visitors navigate the park.

“The amount of erosion that is occurring on the Merced River banks is startling. I feel that restoration is a necessity in the preservation and proper management of the area. More informational signage regarding the sensitivity of these areas could attract attention from visitors that swim in these areas.” Correspondence # 236

“Very little exposure to information for visitors who aren't aware of what to expect when they get to Yosemite” Correspondence # 70

“Add more signage in the park-especially in the valley. I think it is still difficult for the newcomer to find their way around. Example: I do not think there is a single sign showing visitors how to find the stables.” Correspondence # 145

“Having spent the last 5 months in US and Canadian NP's, Yosemite has the most difficult to locate Visitor Center of any park. The Visitor Center should be EASY to locate, have convenient in and out parking, and be a quick, efficient first stop for anyone needing info! Yours is exactly opposite!” Correspondence # 34

The National Park Service should increase enforcement or monitoring of visitor activities to reduce smoke, litter and noise in the park.

“Campground campfire monitors are rude; make people put out campfires. Sell appropriate wood and monitor it ...” Correspondence # 172

“Large groups of picnicking users should be monitored for trash clean up after their events.” Correspondence # 413

“Two clean-ups per year (1 more than the Face Lift and possibly river focused)...Not littering --Recycle and throw away trash in appropriate bins. Put trash and recycle bins around major swimming spots ... Trash cans on buses, trams, and public transport” Correspondence # 427

“The primary areas where I think individual freedoms must be curtailed are: - noise pollution (loud motorcycles that instantly break the spell of nature and recall an urban wasteland) - trash and litter (people not using bear-proof trashcans) - reckless vegetation damage.” Correspondence # 206

The online camping reservation system needs improvement as it is very difficult to reserve a camping spot.

“Day use reservation system should be enacted...” Correspondence # 70

“Online campground reservation system is impossible, hard to use "user hostile". Is it a cost cutting measure?” Correspondence # 172

”After the flood which destroyed one of the campgrounds, it has been almost impossible to get a reservation in the campground of our choice. I know the park must be preserved for future generations but what about the now generation? How can it be appreciated if a reservation is unattainable? Correspondence # 252

“With the completion of the park wide computerized communication system providing real time visitor information at Park entrance stations, entrance station employees could advise visitors of the availability of designated parking in Yosemite Valley. If space is available a parking permit would be issued that would allow that vehicle day use access to Yosemite Valley. Visitors planning future day use could apply for advanced parking reservations using off the shelf technology similar to and widely used in the airline industry to select date and seat assignments months in advance of a flight. The reservation could be confirmed with a computer supplied bar code guaranteeing a date for future day use to access Yosemite Valley.” Correspondence # 44

Park Management- Safety

The National Park Service needs to more appropriately consider safe driving conditions and natural occurring hazards for employees and visitors using trails, roads and park facilities.

“Driving is arguably the most dangerous part of any National Park experience. More accidents occur on roads than on trails, rivers, and even rock walls. Yosemite’s roads are windy, narrow, and often icy/snowy from October through March.” Correspondence # 38

“Many employees find themselves in the unfortunate -situation of having to work a long day (9 hours, 10 hours, or more) and late hours (interpretation alone keeps three employees on until 1 ° pm at night for campground roves/programs and several more employees on until 10, 11, or midnight for full moon trams) only to then have to drive themselves to El Portal, Oakhurst, Midpines, or Mariposa. This situation is clearly unsafe for the employee driver and any other drivers on the road.” Correspondence # 38

“Employee housing was built in a known rockfall zone and the new Indian cultural center is also being constructed in a rockfall area . Recently the Awahnee Hotel has had slides as well . The USGS stated in the past data has been inadequate and new and more comprehensive data needs to be done and these slide areas need to be monitored more closely for the health and welfare of not only employees but also the visitors to Yosemite. I would like to see some funding going toward these studies rather than spending funding on unnecessary building of structures that ruin and clog the natural landscape.” Correspondence # 60

“Another location which could use a trail is from the Wawona store to the C -falls trailhead. I have frequently seen lost visitors, claiming they heard there was a trail. A trail would also provide a safer and more enjoyable experience for those riding from the stables. Now the concession operates on the road way, which this year was considerable because the meadow loop was closed to their stock use.” Correspondence # 46

Park Management- Infrastructure in the park

The National Park Service should reconstruct campsites and reduce or eliminate the inventory of obsolete equipment stored in Yosemite National Park.

“Restore the bridge at Happy Isles. Rebuild the campsites as they once were (Camp 16 - Housekeeping). Same number of campsites as before and along the river. Electricity at some sites. After the flood all campsites should have been restored.” Correspondence # 27

“No new construction of major facilities. Keep skating rink, bike rental, visitor center wilderness center. No more paving or concrete. Make pathways of dirt and not cement or pavement.” Correspondence # 90

“Reduce the incredible inventory of obsolete 'stuff' in Yosemite Village. Unnecessary buildings, warehouses, a vehicle repair facility, junked equipment, and an unserviceable helicopter that is no longer necessary for current operations could be or should be reduced or eliminated from Yosemite Village and Valley.” Correspondence # 124

Some structures near the Merced River in Yosemite National Park should be closed.

“All structures closest to the Merced River that have been flooded and destroyed, do not replace these, let the river run wild. Keep people safe by providing naturally made walks over protected meadows, fragile areas and wetlands.” Correspondence # 14.

“Why can't we create mobile restrooms that could be moved in the case of flooding, solar powered lighting, recycled rubber paving, and more earth friendly campground that could be mobilized in case of flooding and restored after the flooding has passed?” Correspondence # 15

“There should be NO New building for 'cultural or educational' purposes. Yosemite is a wild place and learning comes from being out in it not in a building.” Correspondence # 75

“I would like to see the golf course returned to the Ahwahnee and the back lawn area made beautiful again.” Correspondence # 428

Park Management-Housing

Consider increasing employee housing both within Yosemite Valley and in El Portal.

“I think the current commuter workforce situation is unsafe, contributes to crowding problems, pollution problems, and global climate change. I propose that the park consider increasing employee housing both within the Valley and in El Portal. There are previously developed areas within the Valley that are already impacted. Perhaps several apartment buildings could be built in obtrusively in one of those? How about Taft Toe?” Correspondence # 38

“I look forward to the new management plan for the Merced River to accommodate the needs of Yosemite residents. Things like appropriate sized housing for each year-round resident(person holding a position that is considered year-round).” Correspondence # 126

“I suggest adding dorm-style housing in El Portal for seasonal employees and interns, similar to the rangers club in Yosemite Valley and thereby freeing up housing for term and permanent employees so that commutes are lessened.” Correspondence # 74

“All Valley workers should be provided housing within the Valley so they do not add to the traffic (and environmental) problems.” Correspondence # 410

“We need to bring back more employee housing in the park (like Camp 6), so that rangers and managers can walk to work instead of commuting up to 100 mile a day. Rangers and managers need to live in the environment which they manage and regulate in order to know and understand what is going on.” Correspondence 162

Park Management- Administration

The staff at Yosemite National Park Service should strive to meet their mission statement and should also try to manage Yosemite National Park better.

“Why does there have to be a three year public scoping period? Why hasn't the mistakes of the NPS or errors been published, admitted to and let's get on with the changes to the park. The NPS I think wants to do what's best for the park, but it hasn't managed it well, and sometimes has beckoned to the wishes of developers wanting to expand lodging that is pricey and restrictive to most people. Please do not put wheelchair access up the trails of half dome, Nevada falls, and beyond. This is taking things way to far.” Correspondence #14

“Yosemite's NPS should make a stronger effort to live up to its mission statement, and protect and enhance the ORVs of the Merced.” Correspondence # 127

“New people managing the park, planning for the park. Who's going to be here to see it through?” Correspondence # 82

“During my visits, I have been both treated very well, and very poorly by Yosemite Rangers. Some of the staff are helpful and reasonable, others are not. Your problems seems worse than most other parks. Correspondence # 299

“According to the latest Office of Personnel Management government-wide surveys administered in 2007, the NPS ranks 215 out of 216 government agencies in terms of work-life balance. Focus groups, including one held here in Yosemite, have revealed that long commutes and limited resources to complete one's job to the fullest of one's ability take most of the blame for this situation.” Correspondence # 74

The rangers of Yosemite National Park need to monitor visitor activities and be more ethnically diverse.

“I believe that regular and consistent backcountry rangers need to be stationed at Merced Lake all summer season by a ranger who can balance their number one goal of protecting the resource with education and interpretation within the almost 100-year-old culture of the HSC. “ Correspondence # 454

“I think it is important to have American Indian rangers employed.” Correspondence # 60.

User Capacity and Fees

How are park visitors counted to evaluate user capacity and why are the fees for visiting the park continuing to rise?

“How will YI or YA "school/facility" at Yosemite West impact overall count - persons, usage, vehicles?” Correspondence # 12

“How will the "count" be adjusted for the folk who drive in and then purchase the bus tour (DNC) and drive around the Park from Tuolumne to Big Trees and back?” Correspondence # 12

“Cost of visiting the park has gone up and up over the last decade making it more unreasonable for family visitation and catering more to the wealthy and elite.” Correspondence # 60

“I would like to see that the charge of per car rather than per person be kept. This will encourage people to car pool rather than take individual vehicles.” Correspondence # 236

Addressing user capacity:

The National Park Service should consider multiple approaches to address user capacity in Yosemite National Park.

“A good first step toward addressing user capacity in Yosemite would be to start by looking at ways of reducing the human demand for unlimited access, and this could begin with the avoidance of providing goods and services in Yosemite Valley that have no relationship to the reasons for which the park was established.” Correspondence # 53

“Important factors in limiting visitation and impact to segments of the Merced River are both Traffic Circulation and Initial Orientation of visitors.” Correspondence # 5

“Make Camp Curry more family friendly and return some of the Cabins.” Correspondence # 19

“Concerned about 1) how we may limit use in the park (raise fees?) 2) limiting facilities or opportunities for families' experiences - Who are you going to leave out?” Correspondence # 172

“I would agree with ideas like limiting number of visitors in the park at a time, or restricting private vehicles. Or educating people on how to reduce their impact in the park, like noise pollution for example. I heard that Denali National park has a lot of rules that help keep the park wild.” Correspondence # 439

“Reduce # of vehicles in Valley, especially day trippers. Limit vehicles rather than people, especially on summer weekends.” Correspondence # 90

Impacts of high visitor use:

The multitude of park visitors and vehicles entering Yosemite reduces enjoyment of park resources.

“...the endless convoys of cars and camper vans largely annuls the beauty of the park. At no moment, I felt the connectedness to nature I was looking for.” Correspondence # 4

“Yosemite should not become a small town. It does not need to be developed. Remember it is a National Park. Limit the number of people entering.” Correspondence # 27

“[In]ability to get a campsite. Ban Craigslist and Ebay sales!!” Correspondence # 25

“Having had the opportunity to do extensive world travel I feel Yosemite is one of the most beautiful places on earth. That being said, my family and I were extremely disappointed on our last visit. The village was like a big dirty city, and the campgrounds were like a housing project. There were so many cars, buses and people that we couldn't wait to get out. Long lines in the stores, and everywhere else made this feel like a place we wanted to leave, not like Yosemite Park.” Correspondence # 396

“I fully support limiting either the number of swimmers, or the number of access points to the river as a means of reducing human impacts.” Correspondence # 132

“Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions.” Correspondence # 168

Partnerships and Collaboration

The National Park Service should make a better effort of increasing the voices heard among the Native Americans.

“Let the elders speak and all to listen with what they're saying.” Correspondence # 412

“You have stated that you consult with a 7 tribal consortium/however you have neglected the lineal descendants of those who were in Yosemite at first discovery. I would insist that you include those lineal descendants in matters of consultation and not rely on the 7 tribal consortiums for all decision making and planning in Yosemite Valley.” Correspondence # 60

The National Park Service should evaluate the benefits of partnering with outside organizations.

“It is reasonable for YI students to visit Yosemite Valley as part of a weekly environmental education program but it is not appropriate or fair to other park visitors for YI students and staff to advocate for increased vehicle traffic with this project.” Correspondence # 53

“The park needs to lead partners, interest groups, and outlying communities in understanding what a national park and a wild and scenic river are. Park partners – including the park concession and the newly merged Yosemite Association/Yosemite Fund – offer many benefits to the park and the river, including providing services to visitors, paying for projects that would not otherwise be funded, and educating the public.” Correspondence # 181

“Many park employees transient, moving from one park to the next, but El Portal has a community that attracts people to stay and invest their love and skills in the park. During the effort to designate the Merced River as a Wild and Scenic River, the El Portal Community plays a major role. Community members raised funds, talked to thousand of park visitor, and coordinated much of the efforts that led to the protection of the Merced. Without that community this plan never would have been required. The El Portal community is has outstanding values.” Correspondence # 166

National Environmental Policy Act

The NEPA process needs to be open regarding the MRP process.

“The park also needs to work to be inclusive of all citizens who have concerns for Yosemite's future. An example of the work that NPS needs to do towards inclusiveness is the need for the park to sincerely reach out to Native Americans for this planning process, this is especially true of the Paiute people who are lineal descents of the first people of Yosemite; unfortunately they have previously been ignored by park staff, and have even been written out of the parks history-it is past time for this to change.” Correspondence # 53

“How will you take into account the 10,000s of Correspondences submitted for YVP and MRP I?” Correspondence # 70

“In reading the settlement agreement, 10 months was allowed for scoping; however, in your Park Newsletter you have a schedule that is only from October 26Th till Dec 6Th or about six weeks. This is inconsistent with not only the settlement agreement but grossly poor planning as it is not enough time to do a scoping process considering all that the project entails and as the process, the oncoming holidays, and considering a thorough outreach to all interested public arenas.” Correspondence # 41

“NPS must reveal an accurate count of the total number of individuals who submitted Correspondences and the total number of Correspondences received during public scoping.” Correspondence # 127

“Transparency is key in these planning meetings and accommodation of the public at large would be key to successful planning.” Correspondence # 60

What additional planning activities related to this plan are subject to NEPA?

“Is concession services plan subject to NEPA?” Correspondence # 70

“Will transportation plan be part of this process or is it a separate plan? Explain relationship between transportation issues and river plan.” Correspondence # 70

Public involvement for the planning process should be improved.

“We remain concerned about the poor showing at all the public outreach meetings as approximately 80-100 were in attendance for all meetings. This should be cause enough to have more meetings with a broader outreach. Correspondence # 61

“How will the rebuilding of the S.D.A. camp in Wawona be included in scoping/impact?” Correspondence # 12

“The NPS needs to accommodate the public in much better ways and encourage the public to become actively involved when it comes to planning.” Correspondence # 60

“The NPS would be prudent to consider that scoping as it has been traditionally conducted in the world of planning has served to both focus and narrow policies, goals, actions, and discussion of the topic being addressed.” Correspondence # 417

Environmental Consequences

Visitor activities in the park are causing environmental degradation to the river and valley.

“In delicate areas the trails should be boardwalks (such as across meadows), have railings to protect the environment, be "paved" with DG or granite that is permeable to water and not asphalt or concrete.” Correspondence # 54

“It doesn't take much to understand that one of the most beautiful national parks in our country, has been torn up physically, had no consolidated plan that has been adhered to, and is at the jaws of over zealous would be “environmentalists”.” Correspondence # 14

“Keeping cars out of the Valley has always been a hard choice but as we know gridlock at peak times of the year is inevitable. Pollution from these vehicles lay in the valley and damages wildlife, trees and fauna. Noise pollution also disturbs animals, wildlife and human visitors.” Correspondence # 60

“I do feel that any human activity allowed in the valley at levels near enough the river to alter, erode, change, impact the river system in significantly measurable ways needs to be curbed.” Correspondence # 454

Environmental Consequences – Wildlife and Biology

Yosemite National Park needs to manage wildlife and non-native species in the park.

“Raptor nesting closures should be based on objective measures, not wholesale areas for limiting either cross country hiking or climbing.” Correspondence # 413

“Put rangers on alert to make sure no one litters or feeds the animals by the river and erect signs that say don't feed the animals.” Correspondence # 427

“In response to you want to see protected? “Wildlife because sometimes people go off the trail and kill the flowers and plants.” Correspondence # 18.

“I'd like to see all non-native species, such as bullfrogs and blackberry, be eradicated.” Correspondence # 454

Environmental Consequences – Water Quality

Camping and stock use in the valley contribute to water quality problems in the Merced River.

“The Park Service should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. These aged and ugly commercial enterprises have many significant adverse impacts on the Merced River and its corridor.” Correspondence # 55

“As you are revising this plan I would urge you to include in it prohibition of stock animals from the Wild and scenic river corridor . Most importantly this ban is necessary because of the pollution caused by manure to the watershed.” Correspondence # 48

“I can certainly appreciate the positive effort of protecting the natural beauty of the river. I believe that spending money to keep it clean is a worthwhile cause, however, I do not believe that we over protect it so that we the people that own it cannot even walk up and touch the water.” Correspondence # 368

“I would like to see the Housekeeping camp be removed and that area be returned to its natural state. There's a lot of cooking and eating close to the river, and I think it may lead to pollution entering the water.” Correspondence 432

Environmental Consequences – Air Quality

Air quality in Yosemite National Park is greatly reduced from visitor’s camp fires and needs regulation.

“-- Limiting campfires "all year long". Just was camping October 2009. Very hazy - very polluted.... The air is too hazy - due to current campfire policy!! This must change! Clear and clean air enhance the Yosemite experience!” Correspondence # 51

“The air pollution and water pollution from these vehicles has significant negative impact on this wonderful river.” Correspondence # 445

“The air quality for the plant and animal life, not to mention employees and guests, is horrible. People don't know how to use them properly. They run smoky campfires from morning until night when they're allowed. And they use any and all natural plant life within their reach to start or supplement their fires. Please, just ban the campfires.” Correspondence # 332

Environmental Consequences – Global Climate Change

The large workforce at Yosemite National Park should be leaders in fighting climate change issues.

“The NPS, the US Government, and world leaders all issue strong warnings concerning pollution and climate change. A large commuter workforce contributes to both of these problems. In the long run, our commuter workforce is contributing to Yosemite's air quality problems and climate change. Shouldn't the National Park Service be leading the way in combating these issues instead of contributing to them?” Correspondence # 38

Outstanding Remarkable Values

The characterization and intentions of ORVs in Yosemite National Park need to be evaluated.

“Provide baseline resource conditions for the ORVs to be protected, along with a monitoring plan to assess changes to the baseline conditions resulting from the implementation of the plan. Describe how the baseline conditions differ from desired conditions.”

Correspondence # 79

“The overriding goal for Yosemite National Park should be the preservation of nature for future generations. This means the protection and preservation of natural processes, natural environments, and natural ecosystems. Recreation should not be considered an ORV.”

Correspondence # 54

“It is fruitless to assess "protection and enhancement of the Outstanding Remarkable Value conditions in the Merced River and South Fork Merced River corridors" unless ways are available for it to be enjoyed "up close and personal.".” Correspondence # 149

Features of the park that should classified as an ORV.

“All cultural areas should be preserved and protected and not traded off as losses and gains. Archaeological areas are unique, significant and important and never be considered as a net gain or loss. These areas are remarkable outstanding values and if you lose one you have lost a history of those who came before. Burial areas need to be preserved and treated with respect, just as you respect those who and interned in your cemetery, you must treat discovered areas with that same respect.” Correspondence # 60

“Yosemite National Park should be a national and international leader in ecologically-sensitive tourism, and the preferred Merced River Plan alternative should be one that incorporates best practices in transportation, site design, energy efficiency, etc. that have demonstrated quantifiable benefits in other national parks and public lands. Therefore, the Merced River Plan EIS should: 1. Clearly define the "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" of the Merced River corridor and its tributaries, with corresponding objectives to protect those values within each plan alternative. 2. Provide an assessment of the how proposed projects within each plan alternative will protect/enhance or degrade the defined ORVs.”

Correspondence # 79

“I respectfully submit that Yosemite National Park employees and community in and around the Merced River are Outstandingly Remarkable Values that are both significant in a national context, and river-related because they would not have been doing their precedent-setting work here without the existence of the Merced River. I would be surprised if this viewpoint has previously been considered as the employees and community have usually come second to the natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience. However, the employees and community responsible for stewardship of the natural and cultural ORVs essentially underlie the maintenance and care of said ORVs; without due consideration of the employees and community administering the Merced River Plan.” Correspondence # 74

Climbing in Yosemite National Park should be considered as an ORV.

“Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such.”

Correspondence # 168

“Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping Correspondences to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Most importantly, I want to ask that climbing be identified as one of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values.” Correspondence # 146

Management Zoning

The National Park Service should stop visitor activities and evaluate park operations in the river corridor that violate the purpose and intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

“Reduce visitor impacts along sensitive river shoreline and direct river access to non-sensitive sand and gravel bars.” Comment # 124

“To date, the Merced River Plan has been nothing less than a Trojan horse. Presented to the public as a benign plan with potential solutions to complex issues, the Merced River Plan was embedded with a proliferation of zoning and land use sanctions that violated the purpose and intent of a comprehensive river management plan as required by the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and betrayed the public's trust. Though offered as a plan to protect the river, the National Park Service used the MRP as a vehicle to vest itself with newly created power and authority to implement broad and far-reaching development goals that would not have gained public acceptance or approval on a national scale had this plan been factually and accurately presented. It was neither. NPS usurped its duty and overstepped its authority.” Comment # 127

“The Merced Wild and Scenic River should be wild and scenic! That may be best accomplished by eliminating camping, reducing lodging and restricting recreational activities to walking, hiking and backpacking. Park operations and lodging should be outside the Valley and away from the river and the excellent shuttle system expanded to serve them.” Comment # 395

“Wilderness Watch is particularly concerned with those aspects of the plan that involve the wild segments of the Merced River and the Yosemite Wilderness. We recognize, however, that activities originating within the more developed areas of the Park can and do affect these areas. The plan needs to address the impacts on the Wilderness from these other activities.” Comment 173

Miscellaneous Correspondences

Many comments received included requests for the mailing list, requesting the return of the fire fall, bathrooms in need of cleaning, and criticisms of un-fit visitors to Yosemite National Park that are not related to the MRP.

Table 1. Number of correspondences in a category from PEPC, letters, faxes, emails and public meetings.

Category	Subcategory	Number of Correspondences
Management Planning		
	General	46
	River boundary	21
Transportation		
	General	57
	Shuttles	35
	Parking	25
	Locations	6
Commercial operations		
	General	15
	Hotels/lodging	16
	Retail/food Service	10
	Recreation	12
Park Management		
	General	48
	Safety	9
	Infrastructure	58
	Housing	15
	Administration	31
User capacity		62
Partnerships/Collaborations		11
NEPA		27

Category	Subcategory	Number of Correspondences
Resources (What you love?)		
	General	25
	Natural resources	22
	Wildlife/ vegetation	19
	River as a resource	12
	Ecology	3
	Cultural resources	8
	Historic resources	9
	Scenic resources	22
	Visitor use	21
	Wilderness	1
Recreation		
	General	12
	Access	66
	Hiking	9
	Biking	15
	Climbing	31
	Rafting	39
	Swimming	2
	Camping	148
	Horseback riding	42
	Fishing	6
Environmental Consequences		
	General	20
	Wildlife/Biology	3
	Water Quality	15
	Air Quality	7
Category	Subcategory	Number of

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		Correspondences
	Global Climate Change	1
ORVs		14
Miscellaneous Correspondences		70
Management Zoning and Global Climate Change		7
Management Zoning		7

Figure 1: Distribution of Correspondences by Major Topic

