

Public Scoping Meeting Comments

11/9/2009

4-8 p.m.

Doubletree Berkeley Marina Conference Center, Berkeley, CA

Comments/Questions

- Consider using the camping database to reach out to long-time campers. Needs to be some kind of balance to maintain camping facilities for families in Yosemite. They would be some of the NPS's biggest advocates. Campers, at times, feel like victims as much as a part of Yosemite. The fences keeping people away from the river – need to define what is a “natural state”
- What vision do we go with? NPS legislation? Gifford-Pinchot? John Muir? if it means limiting use to conserve a place for future generations, that is part of the price
- What will you base your decisions on?
- When you say you are going to “look at” campgrounds, etc, what do you mean?
- Are all of these different aspects the plan weighted equally?
- Too often seen that areas covered as part of cumulative impacts are not followed through or are mitigated in ways that are not
- Concession Services Plan should not be a driver of the new Merced River Plan. Any new CSP should answer to the new river plan to be protective of the river. Need to put any new CSP through the protect/enhance mandate of WSRA
- Glad to see the NPS is considering webinars and other means of connecting/conducting outreach
- In YVP there was a tremendous amount of input. Suggest considering these comments as valid for this new process
- A lot of those previous comments capture what is experientially important – all info that is still valid
- Who makes the final decision? Who decides and what is the process for making decisions and factoring what goes into the plan (behind closed doors?)
- In past, USFS team engaged in a process to analyze comments. Feel that this was not an effective way to capture comments that are meaningful. It's too easy to give over comments to a consulting firm. Want to know that the NPS is reading and taking into account the full comments (not just selected quotes) Nuances may seem small, but because it is Yosemite, they are not small. At minimum, planning team and decision makers all need to read and be familiar with the depth of comments
- Is there a document that lays out the requirements for defining what goes into a plan or what can and cannot take place with the river corridor? [WSRA, Secretarial Guidelines, WSR Reference Guide)
- Draft ORVs on website: feel this is inappropriate when things are supposed to be open

- Website still shows 2000 and 2005 Merced River Plans in a category as “completed plans”. Since they are “dead plans” this may confuse people
- High Sierra Camp at Merced Lake – suggest a permanent presence that is not on par with Yose Valley, El Portal, Wawona
- Like the idea of getting on REI’s schedule of monthly meetings

What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)

- High Sierra Camps
- History of people and what they went through to protect Yosemite
- Rare geology (i.e. glaciation, amount of waterfalls, etc)
- Ability to work there
- Devil’s Elbow swimming hole
- Ranger-led programs
- Used to enjoy large masses of people enjoying Yose Falls viewpoint (changed with Lower Yose Falls Loop Trail)
- Fern Spring (except it is now “protected” but the experience has changed)
- Some informal trails – there is something about the quality of a near-wilderness experience
- NPS destroyed river gauge at Happy Isles. This is example of some historical item that was lost. Do not take away historical pieces

What should stay the same?

- Merced River watershed should be kept to Wild and Scenic
- Watershed should remain available for use by people
- Car camping

What do you want to see fixed? changed? improved?

- Provide handicapped access to places along the river so that folks with mobility impairments can access and enjoy the river (e.g. for fishing, watching the water, etc)
- Would like to see virtual representation of river on web (like YA’s web cam; focus one on the water)
- “MRP” title does not represent comprehensive nature of plan
- Crowds at public meetings are too small (more meetings at places like REI)
- Do podcasts so people can take info on their own time
- Backcountry permit system: commercial packing has bigger impact than individuals. Do they have same weight as far as access? Goal is to minimize impact along corridor. Differentiate between commercial packing and individuals
- Crowds in Yose Valley. People don’t come because of crowds. Can we address access to trails without turning them off due to overcrowding

- Parking situation needs to be fixed
- Education on safe use of park (i.e. don't know all dangers of Half Dome)
- Hooks in all bathrooms
- Only necessary concession – less concessions, a lot less
- Advise campers at reservation to bring own stuff in car (be prepared). Change campers expectations
- Recruit more US citizens to be employed in Yose
- Visitor experience should be based on natural values. Redefine cultural ORVs
- Don't let development define planning. Less development, less pavement
- More sustainable design to campgrounds
- CSP – greatly reduce concessions
- Yosemite is a national treasure, not a resort – remove city/suburb amenities
- Put in a shelf in men's restroom at Camp 4
- Is YI's planning for Henness Ridge possibly in scope for MRP? Worth looking at some of that plan as impacts?
- Campground reservation system should conform with other NPS systems...5 month in advance window, open day at a time instead of just one day a month
- Set aside % of unreservable for drop-ins
- Should be more equitable
- Provide more handicapped accessibility (ensure feel) where possible
- Work fixes to transportation from perspective with foundation of ORVs including types of existing experiences and working up
- Easy access to park rangers 24 hrs/day
- Bike access to destinations away from crowded areas
- Keep entrance stations open for longer hours (people know to come late and not pay)
- Protect the bears instead of killing them. No overflowing garbage cans. Take a look at different campground configurations
- Public outreach to schools about feeding animals in national parks
- Concession Services Plan: MRP needs to be reconfigured around current plan. Within scope of MRP things within CSP need to be revisited, as needed
- Look at appropriate vs inappropriate as defined by court, regardless of hierarchy of values

What do you want to see protected?

- The ability of “average” visitors to reach their goals in life. Protect abilities and rights of people to do what they want. It allows people to build self-confidence
- Scenery
- Quiet places like west end of Yose Valley and trails along edge of Valley
- Be careful not to change experience in the name of protection
- Protect area at Swan Slab (i.e. trees, habitat, etc)
- Quiet experience near/at Fen

- Scenic ORV is Yosemite Valley
- Viewsheds