

Public Scoping Meeting Comments

11/4/09

1-4 pm

Wawona Community Center, Wawona, CA

Comments/Questions

- Plan needs to have the flexibility to adjust to future technologies, etc. for the benefit of future generations
- New people managing the park, planning for the park. Who's going to be here to see it through?
- "Most plans are obsolete the day they're signed." Important to stick to the schedule. Hope the emphasis is on the best ideas for now
- Yosemite Valley Plan was rescinded. Back on the table: all transportation strategies, campgrounds, lodging, etc.
- NPS Director is advocating to not return campgrounds in Yose Valley. How can this be if the plan is moving forward with a clean slate?
- What do we count? buildings, horses, cars, etc. Look at history from late 1800s regarding user capacity
- Upper/Lower River Campground closure: Was it a knee-jerk reaction? Were there public meetings? What safeguards are in place (where decisions are made behind the public's back) that it won't happen again?
- There are lots of different ideas and opinions. What may be good for one group or gateway may not be good for another
- Need a true range of alternatives, broad and includes the spectrum of opportunities. That was part of the success of the GMP
- Today, there's no reason why everybody can't be kept in the loop. Best way for groups to stay tuned and provide input or a reaction as the plan develops
- Wawona property condemnation. Will that be the case now?
- Involving everyone, even those who aren't coming, who think that Yose is closed
- Gateways are discussing early warnings to provide real-time info, avoid congestion
- Congestion is a parkwide problem. Plenty of room if managed properly. Lots of things can be done. Lots of groups with historical ties, (campers, tribes, etc) need to bring them along too
- User capacity; how will workshops work? Concerned that three guys will come up with ideas, set in concrete decrease in use. What is the process?
- Carrying capacity has been an issue for 100 years. Cars were limited, Tremendous adjustment will be made in future
- GMP was a 20 yr old plan that never was completed. Is there a way to build in a five year review to revisit ideas and not be locked in?
- Open up the thinking
- Can build into plan an adaptive management cycle to incorporate new ideas when uncertainties exist

- Work with an established group to provide oversight, accountability
- Grow NPS constituency to promote parks. If you have no students, you flop. Reduce, diminish capacity
- What are the strategies for addressing user limits?
- Public safety in a box canyon – evacuation; how do you get folks out, flooding, wildfires?

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

- Wawona golf course should remain here [part of evacuation plan staging area] – part of the community, historic nature, part of the waste water treatment regime
- Broad range of water distribution systems [28] should be consolidated – except private wells
- Social benefits – barn dances, interp/edu programs
- Lack of crowds, peace and quiet
- Maintenance yard is a good candidate for restoration
- Can some or all of the maintenance functions be moved away from Wawona to Fish Camp?
- Guiding principle: does it really have to be located in Yosemite? Use this question to analyze land use decisions and actions
- Natural functions of rivers and meadows, interaction of wetlands, loss of upper and lower River Campgrounds is a good thing
- You always need 2 x the number of campgrounds than you have in Yosemite Valley – think carefully about where they belong – even if it's outside the park
- Transportation – existing shuttle bus system is good, but sort of a token. Further development of a bus system is essential to resolving issues throughout the park
- Sequencing of development projects is important (ie bus parking at Yose Falls)
- Explore other (non-diesel) forms of mass transit, such as CNG and propane
- Consider regular bus service between Fresno and Yosemite – no diesel, use smaller buses that are full vs huge diesel buses that are often half empty
- Restoration of clean air and natural quiet should be ORVs of new river plan
- YNP trees create oxygen and sequester carbon – let clean air produced by park be unaffected by diesel bus operations
- People need options to camp in the Valley – it should be increased and expanded. Existing limited # of campsites is not reasonable, given demand. Lodging options are too expensive and not available (beyond reach) of regular park visitors, families, etc
- NPS is obligated to provide camping for the visitor experience, education and development of a constituency for conservation

What should stay the same/be protected?

- South entrance and store parking lot and Mariposa Grove – all 3 are used for M Grove parking. Most used is the store, it is in the river corridor. It gets overcrowded. Build out south entrance lot to offset needs at store lot
- Improve intra-park transportation system, for visitors and employees. If there was a bus from Wawona to the Valley, I'd use it. Once people get to park encourage them to use a free shuttle system
- River plan maintains Wawona as a community, protects the integrity of the community. Respect adjacencies in the planning of NPS land uses
- Protect private land – keep it the same
- Won't get people to leave their car behind, so ask them to park it once they are here
- Teach people that we have transportation options before people get to the park
- Make sure river planning process involves the community
- Protect community, preserve mountain residential character, ie avoid placing dormitory – high density housing within residences, campgrounds, etc. And road widths, traffic
- NPS planning should respect county and state planning for community of Wawona
- Ongoing planning for Wawona should be set up to include Wawona Town Planning Advisory Committee
- Don't force use to private property e.g. if contain use in some area but users still access river via private land. Create public access routes to river
- South entrance could be a major transportation point for people wanting to go to Valley, Grove, Wawona,. Major area that could support projects
- Wawona shouldn't become a bus depot. Storage of empty buses. Maintenance yard is too big
- Could be an alternative for people that do not want to park their car
- Give people choices to stop here, or go other places
- Campgrounds impact large number of visitors. Are fewer campgrounds now that before, would like to increase the number of sites
- could campgrounds be more river-corridor sensitive/compatible eg so they could survive a flood, had no permanent structures, could be washed with flood, used again?
- Bring back upper and lower river campgrounds
- Campground impacts the river but does not abuse it – need to make that distinction in this plan
- Have a map that shows clearly what structures are within the plan and which ones are outside the plan
- Native plants are a high-value resource, particularly along the roadway for invalid or others who wouldn't/couldn't get off the road so they can enjoy them for painting, photographs, viewing, aesthetics, etc
- More pullouts on road

- Restore parking in Valley
- Controlled burns should be monitored so high value or rare species are not wiped out
- Scientists should be hired by NPS and working on the river plan. Include biologists and botanists
- Non-necessary staff (NPS and concession) should be moved out of the Valley and park
- Certain services should be moved out of the park; let the gateway communities do it (liquor sales, grocery, etc)
- Other transportation needs to take over where YARTS stops
- No diesel bus system
- check what is happening with visitation – especially from local areas. Campground use free on fee-free weekends
- Fee collection process and spending of fee money should be both transparent and made public
- Density housing, concessioner housing next to SDA would cause problems, danger to children. Child safety is an issue
- South Fork is quite different in hydrology, river flows lessen, gets pretty low during the season
- Shuttle used to go to campground, once a day, now people have to drive cars to the shuttle
- Is small dam OK regarding free flowing? Is there a process looking to alternate water sources that the little dam provides?
- Several water systems have increased costs and entire system may have to be studied
- Golf course is part of evacuation plan, identified as place of significance
- Multiple water systems allow way for private residences to still get water
- don't expand road width to accommodate bigger buses, bigger RVs or semis
- Limit size of vehicles coming into park
- No semi/18 wheeler come into park
- Add restrooms at Wawona Village store
- Maintain all ORVs
- NPS should not cherry-pick ORVs to fit their development plans
- Include clean air and natural quiet

What needs to be fixed?

- Stud Horse Rd (old logging road in wilderness). In order to protect the river corridor from increased traffic on Forest Dr, consider formalizing as an access point to Camp Wawona. This would provide an emergency exit for South Wawona (this may have congressional support)
- Sewer, water, most phone service is all provided in road corridor. Power should go under road vs installing new power poles
- Port-a-potties at Swinging Bridge. Need permanent restroom facility, perhaps tied into existing sewer line

- Planning should be logical (NPS removed gas stations and parking spaces, but cars are still coming absent public transit)
- Need to correct GIS maps (not accurate +/- 30 yards) change wilderness boundary near Camp Wawona
- Consider the congestion at Wawona Hotel and store/Mariposa Grove shuttle parking in planning – residents have a tough time getting mail, can't find parking
- In looking at carrying capacity, be sure to consider the congestion around Wawona Store in July and August. Linkages to the Mariposa Grove and congestion there. Consider adding some parking near the entrance station to handle Mariposa Grove overflow, shuttle bus could pick up there. Improve communication between parking areas and entrance station to better direct visitors and reduce congestion
- Visitors come up Chinualna Falls Rd confused that they will see a waterfall, or they are looking for a sequoia grove.
- Would like to see a shuttle from Wawona to Yose Valley. Needs to be frequent enough (every couple of hours, 2-3 times in morning/afternoon). People also ask about a shuttle to Glacier Pt/Badger Pass (estimate getting this question at the store 10-15 times per week)
- Where do all the cars park? Don't want Wawona to turn into a bus depot, esp at NPS maintenance yard. Don't want Wawona to be a way station to the rest of the park
- Is there a milestone chart for the public to see specific activities and timeframes so public can see what's happening [see Appendix A of Settlement Agreement]
- ACOE or judgment of a prudent professional; 2.33 yr floodplain = Ordinary High Water Mark
- What can we do on our own property?
- What is the boundary of the Wild and Scenic River?
- What happens if a natural occurrence dams the river? What will NPS do?
- Yosemite is going to be a special case in terms of planning and the Wild and Scenic Rivers. Is the NPS looking to other wild and scenic river plans? Is there a template for planning?
- Wawona visitors (overnight) should be encouraged to leave vehicles at lodging/cabin and follow a better designated access point to river (now they tend to drive to access points in fear of not wanting to trespass on another property owner's land)
- Visitors often ask "where is the Ranger Station?" Not sure exactly how to respond because NPS ranger operations are all over (eg info station vs law enforcement vs wilderness permits)
- Reconfigure the South entrance to achieve project objectives. It's a major driver to addressing issues in Wawona
- Approve Wawona specific plan
- Wawona as it is currently configured supports the avoidance of environmental abuse. NPS and private land; as the NPS considers uses on its land within

Section 35, would like to see uses compatible with single-family homes, character of community (dorms or campgrounds would be incompatible with the family community character that exists today). Private property serves as a buffer to protect the river

- Create better public access and facilities to river. Avoid forcing public access through private property. Respect the adjacencies
- To ensure an ongoing integrated planning, would like to see reciprocal input: WTPAC to NPS planning as two-way street. Recognize the role of WTPAC in the plan, especially as actions pertain to Section 35
- PG&E Wawona Pt issue needs to be resolved