

TEN-S-5

Page 1 of 5

RECEIVED

SEP 23 2008

Dear Yosemite National Park Planners,

September 18, 2008

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Please accept this as Part Two (2) of my prior correspondence of September 15, 2008, as it relates to your scoping study and requests for comments regarding so-called improvements at Tenaya Lake. I'm sorry, but I need to add a few lines of comment about some of your other projects, in order to put this one into perspective.

Take a long look at Fern Springs and tell me you don't see similarities of the Lower Falls project, but on the smallest of scales. You have taken what wasn't a big attraction, and made it into one, by putting added pavement, city like curbs, and Cedar fences to make the area look as unnatural as a city park. Plus, you created a look that detracts from the natural scene by ruining the natural setting of the place. You took a place that in history was a tiny little stage stop along the side of the road where people could cool off after the long dusty carriage ride behind a team of horses, and turned it into a man made side show, complete with a bus stop. Do you expect tourist buses to stop here too? This location was once a place without any unnatural amenities. It was popular to those who knew of it, while most people drove on by, as it should be. You have made it into a fenced off, curb lined touristy eyesore along the side of the road. That is exactly what you did at the Lower Falls area, but on much more massive scale. This cannot be what you are allowed to do at Tenaya Lake. Tenaya Lake needs fewer improvements, not more.

From my observations, it seems that the Yosemite Fund's donation money is burning a hole in the pocket of park planners. There are many good projects the Yosemite Fund has contributed to, but these infrastructure rebuilds, designed to make it so that the park can accommodate more and more people as the worlds population continues to increase, are not right.

Why is it that you feel a need to improve Tenaya Lake? Tenaya Lake does not need to become a new and improved tour bus destination complete with curbs, parking lots, Cedar fences, paved trails and all the rest. Instead, you should be finding ways to discourage traffic (i.e. "overcrowding") at some of these otherwise pristine and special places that Yosemite offers. You should be dealing with congestion at the gate with a restrictive user carrying capacity that limits the amount of people allowed to come into the park on any given day, when too many people push the park's limits of carrying that capacity.

A park wide User Carrying Capacity study should take place first, before you do anymore so-called "improvements", with all of the public comments and debates that normally go along with such a study, well before you pave the way for more and more people that are

I	1	2	2	C				
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS

surely going to come. This needs to be addressed now, so that the park won't one day have to potentially accommodate ten times the amount of people it does currently. Show some guts and address the tough decisions of a park wide User Carrying Capacity before you accept Yosemite Fund money to rebuild things that will obviously lead to more overcrowding.

The following are words which were emailed to me yesterday from a good friend who also just happens to be a very well known Yosemite Park historian, whose name is inside many of your books in the Yosemite Park Library, dating all the way back into the 1950s. For now, his name will remain anonymous. He commented, because I asked him to review the Tenaya Creek project. I sent him a link and he wrote back. Some of his words are as follows:

Begin quote:

"My opinion, the NPS is now in the construction business not preservation. They have too much money to spend, they ought to put the campgrounds back and leave the rest the hell alone. I hate to go to the floor of the valley any more just to see another fake rock bus stop."

End quote.

I also share his views. I could not have said it better.

While making use of what seems to be a never-ending stream of cash from an organization that is becoming infamous for funding unnecessary projects, the Yosemite Fund continues to destroy Yosemite National Park for future generations by paving the way to overcrowding. By over spending on projects and adding unnecessary man made embellishments on an otherwise pristine park, you are ruining it for those very same people for whom you have been entrusted to preserve it. Unfortunately, because of the Yosemite Fund there is too much money given to you, and you can't seem to find ways not to build things. Someone in your organization needs to stand up and either say "no", or to simply find ways to use the money that won't encourage more visitors to individual places throughout the park, with man made accompaniments like tour bus parking lots, cedar fences, paved trails and concrete or granite curbs.

Is it your view that since President Lincoln set Yosemite Valley aside as a park that it was meant to be redeveloped to meet the ever increasing demands of each and every subsequent generation, to accommodate however many people can potentially travel there on any given day?

As you widen and straighten roads in the park, building them with an improved substructure that will accommodate ever larger and heavier vehicles, notably "tour buses", and you design city like infrastructures, such as the new sewer system that is clearly being built for the future, don't you ever wonder where this is going to end? Or, are you building these infrastructures for the mid 21<sup>st</sup> century when visitation may well quadruple from today's numbers? Will you always find an excuse to expand this park to accommodate any amount of tourism, only because you have Yosemite Fund money to spend?

In the mid 1950s Yosemite saw its first million visitors in one calendar year. If John Muir were alive at that time, I submit to you that he would have begged for a restrictive User Carrying Capacity that would have protected Yosemite at the expense of lost revenue, and at the cost of turning people away.

People can always make a reservation if they really want to come. You can't get in to see the Sistine Chapel without a ticket bought in advance. Why should Yosemite suffer the burdens of an ever-growing world? The number of Yosemite's visitors doubled again from the mid 1970s, only twenty years later, to over two-million people who visited Yosemite during that era. At that time there was already an effort underway to look for ways to reduce what was then described as "overcrowding" even before two-million visitors was reached by 1976, which was a movement which started in the late 1960s. Not surprisingly, that number of four-million visitors predictably occurred by the mid 1990s, having doubled in only twenty years. Yosemite's visitation is expected to double again in about ten more years from now if history repeats itself.

Due to your removal of over half of all Yosemite Valley's campsites in 1997, when you refused to use money given to you by Congress to replace the flooded campgrounds, many average Americans can no longer appreciate Yosemite's wonders, as the costs of hotel accommodations have outstripped their budgets. There are also those of us that prefer camping for the benefits of a closer connection to nature than can be found in a hotel room.

Hotel construction outside the park has increased, and the escalating tour bus industry has creating a need for more and more accommodations near park gates, while you try to conceive of ways to accommodate all who want to come at all costs. Why is that? It's because you know the Yosemite Fund will be there to help you pay for it. By not increasing your gate fees for tour buses, you encouraged the tour bus industry to cash in on Yosemite as a profit center, while at the same time you have increased gate fees for everyone else.

You removed Tenaya Lake campground years ago, and now you want to replace those campers with three hour day-trippers. You are manipulating the parks new demographics. You are making Yosemite National Park into the park system's version of a fast food experience. There was nothing wrong with the old Tenaya Lake campground, other than perhaps it should have been redesigned with less and more separated campsites for lower impacts.

When you last negotiated DNC's contract, you arranged it so that you are now beneficiaries of some of their profits, sharing in economic growth which is relative to numbers of tourists that come to the park of course, putting you in direct conflict of interest when it comes to protecting this park for future generations. You are now in direct competition with those who want less human impacts to the park. You may be good business people, but you are not good at preserving Yosemite unchanged for future generations, which is clearly your higher calling. You now profit when DNC profits, and your vision of what is right for this National Park has become obscured by your income driven focus.

Many no longer trust the Yosemite Fund or your judgment. The Yosemite Fund dictated to you what they wanted to do at the Yosemite Falls area project, when the you, (the Y.N.P.S.) stepped back and let them do whatever they wanted to do. There was not a word of opposition from you to the Yosemite Fund bringing in their own famous and expensive architect, Larry Halprin, known for building city buildings, to design a city like park system of paths and buildings on the Lower Falls site, without a word of objection from anyone in park management. History is repeating itself if you take this money and use it as I suspect you might, by expanding tourist accommodations.

Day tripping visitation is on the increase, and it's becoming very clear that Yosemite park managers are eager to accommodate them at all levels. Because the Yosemite Fund has more park visitors to solicit from these days, with visitation up, and because they have several large corporate donors looking for tax shelters, the Yosemite Fund seems to have a lot of cash at their disposal; cash which has no real purpose unless you find ways to spend it. Park management continues to create ways to spend that money while facilitating visitation to an ever-growing number of visitors without any thought to slowing down. At this rate, if the visitation continues to double every twenty years, Yosemite will need to accommodate in excess of sixteen-million people by 2046 and thirty-two-million by 2066. It is an understatement to say that there is something wrong with this. What is worse, I have never heard the park service discuss this probability, or entertain any solutions to it. On the contrary, at the User Capacity Symposium that you sponsored last year, you even came out to say you opposed turning people away and were seeking other solutions to address the User Carrying Capacity court mandate.

Turning people away at some point is the right thing to do, and it can and will have to be done with some form of a reservation system. You need to consider a restrictive User Carrying Capacity that will enable future generations to see Yosemite as it once was, and/or could still be, and not as an overcrowded three-hour tour to this emerging fast food mentality world. The three-hour Yosemite experience is not giving the public who want a Yosemite nature experience a better understanding of its depth and magnificence. Because this is true, by promoting the park as a three-hour tour destination, I feel that you are missing the point of your mission as park stewards.

If I am wrong, perhaps you should just create a conveyor belt up Lyell Canyon with an escalator to the top of Mount Lyell? There are those who feel that more people should be able to experience this summit experience, and see that view. Is it possible that you can eventually accommodate every tourist in the world? On a clear day up there you can see Mount Diablo. There are already those who say a duplicate set of cables should be installed on Half Dome, due to overcrowding that has been in the news of late. Can't someone within your organization step up and say "no" to the concept of "accommodating all who want to come" for a change?

As the famous former Sierra Club leader, David Brower, once said, "Yosemite should be a nature center, not a profit center". Why not start now to make the hard decision to set up a reservation system?

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my thoughts on your ideas to improve Tenaya Lake. I hope that they are also read by someone who cares. If I have any more thoughts on this matter, I will be sure to send them along.

Very Sincerely,



Truckee, CA 96161

