

Page 1063

TEN-S-15

INDEXED



10/09/2008 11:20 AM

To <yose\_planning@nps.gov>

OCT 10 2008

cc

bcc

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Subject Tenaya Lake Scoping Study Comment

Below are two (2) historical newspaper articles, one from 1920 and another from 1921, being provided to show how historically the view is that overcrowding in Yosemite is not a new concept. One article is from Los Angeles and the other is from Oakland, CA. That view that the park was getting overcrowded has been perpetuated by the public for a very long time. But, rather than address a park wide carrying capacity for areas accessible by car or bus, the park simply mitigates the problem by creating ways to continue the promotion of tourism, without finding out what the actual carrying capacity is. How can you manage the park if you don't know it's limits?

Newspaper Article One:

LA Times (1920)

CAMP CURRY, July 1.--During the week ending June 26 a total of 4307 people visited the park, of which 3196 came in 382 private automobiles. This compares with 3726 visitors for the same period last year of which 2822 came in 759 private cars.

End quote.

Newspaper Article Two:

Temporary Ban On Travel by Automobile Lifted by Park Officials.

Oakland Tribune (July 5, 1921)

There is ample room In Yosemite National Park, including Yosemite Valley, to take care of all who want to spend their vacation in the Sierras. Wild reports, probably arising from the temporary embargo on automobile travel, now lifted, have caused much amusement among visitors here.

"Why, we were told you couldn't even buy groceries," remarked one member of a camping party, who had packed foodstuffs all the way from Los Angeles. The embargo, applied only to automobile travel, did not affect anybody coming in by train,

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

was in effect only a few days and was lifted more than a week ago, but **many persons still think that Yosemite is crowded to such an extent that they ought to go elsewhere for their outing.**

There is no need for anybody to stay away from Yosemite, according to 10 authoritative statements, for all the hotels have ample room to take care of any demand and there are fewer persons camping in Yosemite Valley now than is usual at this time of the year. The high Sierra country is just opening up, affording access to the most beautiful sections of the Park, where mountain climbing, fishing and hiking, are at their best in midsummer and autumn. Many persons now in Yosemite Valley will move up to Lake Tenaya, Tuolumne Meadows, Merced Lake and other beauty spots, still further decreasing the valley's population.

Yosemite started out this year to beat Yellowstone's attendance record and to take first place among the nation's scenic parks. The few days embargo made that impossible, unless there is good travel to Yosemite in August and September. Local officials are hoping that nobody will forego a trip to Yosemite because of a single week of congestion in June, which has long since been remedied.

End quote.

In this 1921 article, right after the notion put forth that "...many people still think that Yosemite is crowded to such an extent that they ought to go elsewhere for their outing", the newspaper takes the liberty to promote the view that "there is no need to stay away from the park, according to ten authoritative statements".

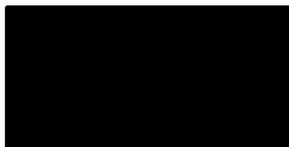
It's my guess that perhaps at least one of those stated "authoritative" statements that the park could accommodate more people were perhaps from the park service's then public relations specialist, just as is done to promote tourism in the park today. The use of the word "still" suggests that the park was then viewed as overcrowded by some in the public even before 1921.

This is relevant because, had someone in authority then done a park-wide carrying capacity study, presuming they would have known how at that time, which could have then limited visitation to a level deemed tolerable in 1921, the park could have been preserved unchanged for our generations way back then. I can't even imagine how wonderful it could have been to see the park with so few of tourists, back when the public would have viewed a few thousand people a year in the valley as being overcrowded. If you don't act now, there will come a time when the park will have to deal with ten million visitors a year without any idea what the park-wide carrying capacity should be.

Fredrick Law Olmstead was perhaps the first to want to protect the park from crowding and to leave it unchanged for future generations. This argument is not new, but it is far more relevant today when millions, not thousands come to the park annually, in a time when it is foreseeable that visitation will potentially exceed ten million people per year sometime in our lifetimes. As I have mentioned before, the park's first million visitors per year was reached in 1954, it doubled in 1976, and doubled again in 1996, showing a trend to potentially double every twenty to thirty years.

The V.E.R.P. method based the "user carrying capacity" on input from tourists and their experiences. Here we find that there were some, even as early as 1921, that viewed the experience as negative due to overcrowding. But, without scientific evidence to back them up, the park's ecosystem was and still is negatively impacted while we await such a study. In 1921 the park service did nothing to address overcrowding. Instead, they found ways to accommodate more people, which seems to continue to be the park service's outlook today as it relates to even this Tenaya Lake Scoping Study Plan.

The hope is that the park service will relent, and find ways to protect Yosemite unchanged for future generations, while also a place to provide it's original intent to offer "resort and recreation" to the public; a compromise that everyone understands is difficult to manage. Perhaps this is the time when the park service draws the line in the proverbial sand, as it relates to how many people can come to the park in any give year, and Tenaya Lake will be where the line is finally drawn. Tenaya Lake should not be misconstrued as "front country", simply because people and tourist buses find their way there. You are the park stewards, entrusted by the people of the United States to protect the park. We hope that your decisions at Tenaya Lake will not further contribute to park congestion. But, more importantly, I hope that this study will further the notion that a park-wide user carrying capacity should be what first prefaces any further planning.



Truckee, CA 96161