Protection of the Mariposa Grove

“An Act Authorizing a Grant to the State of California of the “Yo-Semite Valley,” and of the Land embracing the “Mariposa Big Tree Grove”

--- signed by President Lincoln, June 30, 1864.

The first legislation passed by Congress to specifically set aside public lands for their scenic values and “be held for public uses, resort and recreation.”

Wawona Tunnel Tree  ca.1928

US Army soldiers in the Mariposa Grove, 1899
Project Need

Today, the Mariposa Grove is a popular all-season destination for visitors to Yosemite. Existing visitor use and site infrastructure severely impact the health of the ancient trees as well as the quality of the visitor experience.
Yosemite National Park
Mariposa Grove Restoration

Project Purpose

- Restore Degraded Grove Habitat
- Enhance the Visitor Experience
- Sustain Long-Term Health of the Giant Sequoias
General Management Plan Goals (NPS, 1980)

**Mariposa Grove**
- Remove parking from the lower grove
- Provide off-season parking at the Grove
- Provide only visitor facilities consistent with preservation of the unique ecosystem

**South Entrance Station**
- Provide park orientation/information
- Provide staging facilities for the Mariposa Grove
- Redesign the South Entrance Station
- Provide adequate road to the Grove for bus access
Issues:

Natural Resources

Giant sequoias have shallow surface roots. Healthy root structure is essential to ensure the longevity of these ancient giant trees.

High visitation affects the health of the giant sequoias:

- Pedestrians and vehicles compact the soil
- Erosion exposes the shallow roots of the sequoias to potential damage

Past development has greatly impacted hydrological flows within the Grove.
Issues:

Sense of Arrival

The arrival experience can be confusing:

- Better trailhead and directional signs are needed on-site to improve visitor orientation
- Information is lacking about the variety of options for getting to and enjoying the Grove
- Mixed messages about where and how the visitors should park at satellite parking areas
- The shuttle bus unloads visitors where there are no signs directing visitors to the trailhead
Issues:

Congestion
The site has outgrown its ability to address current visitation needs:

- Existing parking areas do not meet need or demand
- Parking lots fill to capacity by 10:00 a.m. on a typical summer day
- Coordination of parking for the Grove at remote locations like the South Entrance and at Wawona is problematic
- Shuttles arrive at South Entrance already filled to capacity
Issues:

**Infrastructure**

Existing infrastructure affects both the health and visitor appreciation of the Grove:

- The main asphalt parking lot is sited directly within the lower grove of giant sequoias
- Facilities need to be better integrated with the site
- The tram fueling station is on-site, within the Grove
- Utilities are outdated or lacking and need improvement
External Site Issues

- Traffic congestion
- Parking
- Shuttle stops
- Visitor Safety
- Protection of cultural/historic resources
### Resource Data Collection (2010-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photo Documentation</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS Data, Maps &amp; Site Analysis</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rare Plant Survey</td>
<td>June 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Site Survey</td>
<td>August 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Condition Assessment</td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife Survey</td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wetland Delineation</td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hydrological Assessment</td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archaeological Site Analysis &amp; Surveys</td>
<td>Winter 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research and Consultation about American Indian Connections</td>
<td>Fall 2011-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Pedestrian Surveys</td>
<td>Winter 2011</td>
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Project Milestones

- **Public Scoping Summer/Fall 2011**
- **Alternatives Development Winter/Spring 2012**
- **Yosemite Grant Sesquicentennial June 2014**
- **National Park Service Centennial August 2016**

**Project Timeline**
- **2010**
  - Data Collection
  - Pre-Design
- **2011**
  - Planning & Compliance
  - Draft EIS for Public Review Summer 2012
- **2012**
  - Final EIS for Public Review December 2012
  - Ground Breaking
- **2013**
  - Design Development
- **2014**
  - Yosemite Grant Sesquicentennial June 2014
- **2015**
  - National Park Service Centennial August 2016
- **2016**
  - Ribbon Cutting

**Restoration Timeline**
- 0 ± Grizzly Giant was a young tree
- 1864 Yosemite Grant
- 2016 Yosemite Grant Bicentennial
- 2064
Public Scoping is going on now: Get Involved!

What should the Grove look like in 150 years?
Yosemite National Park
Mariposa Grove Restoration

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Questions and Comments