



Ramiro Cano

06/07/2007 09:46 AM
MST

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc: [redacted]
Subject: Scoping Comments-Merced River Plan

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MRP-SEIS-42
JUN 07 2007
P. 1072
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent,

Attached please find my scoping comments for the Merced River Plan...Thank you.



Ramiro Cano merced-river-plan-letter-signed.pdf

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MKP-SEIS-42
P. 2072

SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

Central California
Conference

June 6, 2007

2820 Willow Ave.
Clovis, CA 93612-4646
PO Box 770
Clovis, CA 93613-0770
Telephone: (559) 347-3000
Fax: (559) 347-3120
<http://ccc.adventist.org>

Superintendent
Yosemite National Park
Attn: Merced River Plan
PO Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

RE: Merced River Plan Scoping Comments

As a church member and administrator of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, owners of Camp Wawona, a 32-acre parcel located in Section 35, I would like to share a few thoughts regarding the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan.

It is my understanding that the plan would allow for public campgrounds and/or high density housing to be placed within Section 35.

Camp Wawona has offered a consistent year-round camp experience for more than 78 years to families and children alike. We have long been a part of the Wawona community and any impact to the tranquil environs of Wawona directly affects the long-standing ministries of our church at the Camp.

Our constituency, over 32,000-members strong, are committed to maintaining our nature-based ministries for many, many years to come. Although this is a Seventh-day Adventist owned and operated camp, those benefiting from its facilities and ministries have been individuals of all faiths and walks of life. The quiet, serene, peaceful, natural environment has been the center of our ministries and programs.

In addition, the location of our property has been ideal for maintaining a "safe haven" for our children while maintaining the alcohol-smoking-drug free environment expected by parents who send their children to camp.

Adjacent high intensity uses, as permitted by the proposed Merced River Plan in Section 35, would greatly impact, if not, alter the existing character of Wawona and significantly affect our church's ability to maintain the tranquil, worshipful, safe characteristic of our spiritual retreats and camps.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you locate the high-density uses to areas outside of Section 35 that could more easily accommodate the demands of the planned uses.

Sincerely,

Ramiro A Cano
Executive Secretary



"PAT SISCHO"
 [Redacted]
 06/07/2007 10:07 AM
 MST

To: <Yose_Planning@nps.gov>
 cc: <Elexis_Mayer@nps.gov>
 Subject: Comments by Pat and Dave Sischo

RECEIVED
 MRP-5815-43
 JUN 07 2007
 p. 186
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

2007 Scoping Comments from:

Pat and Dave Sischo

[Redacted]
 Wawona, CA 95389
 [Redacted]
 [Redacted]

Merced River Scoping Comments

This letter is in regard to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Scoping process . We are concerned about how the proposed management plan will affect the area we live in. Specifically, we are concerned about the zoning and planned use of federally owned areas in Wawona and especially within Section 35.

The NPS recognized the value of Wawona years ago and joined with Mariposa County to co-sign a Specific Town Plan that prevented high-density housing.

Even Yosemite National Park Superintendent David Mihalic, in letter to the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors recognized the uniqueness of Wawona :

"Based on the congressionally mandated mission, the NPS cannot agree to any amendments to the town plan which change the small mountain community atmosphere of Wawona or which allow for more intensive development of the area." - David Mihalic, 17 February 2000

It appears the fate of Wawona is now in your hands . Will you decide to keep the charm of the last century or make Wawona just another busy "company" town?

Wawona is a vital part of Yosemite National Park for the benefit of all visitors and should not be considered as an alternative site for possible development . The proposed re-zoning of Wawona for NPS or concessionaire employee housing should not be approved. We trust that after consideration of all the issues surrounding this difficult decision you will have the foresight to preserve the

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beauty, integrity and "small mountain community atmosphere of Wawona."

OUR CONCERNS:

1. **There should have been an OFFICIAL scoping meeting in Wawona.** After all, the South Fork of the Merced runs through Wawona.
2. The Merced River plan should be complete before any further projects in the Valley Plan are carried forward.
3. The Swinging Bridge area in Wawona should have a user capacity established.
4. The Wawona Swinging Bridge area should have portable restrooms and garbage containers furnished by the NPS. Currently the Wawona Area Property Association funds potable restrooms there.
5. The expansion of Camp Wawona and the camp's adverse impact on the use of the Wawona Swinging Bridge area should be examined.
6. The Camp Wawona EIR fails to adequately address the project's adverse impacts on Park Service lands and resources, including the South Fork of the Merced River, water quality, fish and wildlife, noise and air pollution, and hydrologic resources. Will this be addressed in the new river plan before the Camp Wawona expansion is approved in its entirety?
7. The Camp Wawona EIR fails to address the project's adverse impacts on human health and safety, including air pollution, impacts on traffic congestion and safety, and fire hazards. Will these issues be addressed before final approval of the Camp Wawona expansion?
8. We also have a concern about what is done with the 'reclaimed' water from Wawona at the Wawona Wastewater Treatment Plant. If the river flow is adequate during the months of December or January to the month of June, this reclaimed water can be dumped into the South Fork of the Merced. When the river flow is low during those months, the reclaimed water cannot be sprayed on the golf course

if it is covered with snow, and must be stored in on-site storage tanks. In the past, occupancy in Wawona during those months has been low, but with the increase in the occupancy of Camp Wawona of a potential of up to in excess of 200 guests, will the storage tanks be able to accommodate the additional amounts needed to be stored in a dry year?

9. The sewer line on the south side of Wawona is operated by lift stations along the line. When the power goes out, the pumps do not operate. A technician from the plant must come to the lift stations and manually turn on the generators. As times, heavy snow prevents that happening in a timely manner creating the possibility of a sewage spill. Is there a plan to prevent sewage spills in the South Fork of the Merced?

10. Will there be a NEPA study done on the widening and creation of turnouts on Forest Drive (as specified in Mariposa Staff Report for conditions for the Camp Wawona expansion), which is adjacent to the South Fork in Wawona, to accommodate the traffic to Camp Wawona if the camp's expansion is allowed?

11. Will the additional construction, bus and automobile traffic created by the Camp Wawona expansion on Forest Drive create adverse impacts on the South Fork?

12. The northern half of the Wawona meadow is a 9-hole golf course, which was opened in 1918, and is the spray field for the reclaimed water from the Wawona Sewer Treatment Plant. The water in the meadow south of the golf course flows through two ditches, which were constructed to irrigate the meadow when it was a pasture. Most of the water in the creek, which flows through the golf course in the summer months, comes from seepage from the Wawona Sewer Treatment Plant spray field. The golf course is watered with treated sewer water.

13. Verify that when the Park Service purchased the Wawona hotel in the 1930's they agreed that the golf course would always remain a golf course.

14. There is a loop road around the south end of the Wawona meadow. This road is used as a bike and hiking trail. The DNC stables offer two-hour rides several times a day around the meadow loop. Park Service volunteers conduct flower, bird and other nature walks on the meadow loop. Clearly, the meadow loop has become one of the central recreation areas of Wawona. A part of the east side of the Wawona meadow has been cleared and is used as landing field and staging

area for helicopters and fire crews for fire suppression and medical emergencies in the south end of the park.

15. A part of the intermittent creek which was classified as a "scenic river area" is within ten yards of Highway 41 (The Wawona Road). The Wawona Hotel, the Wawona Chevron Station, and the Wawona Store and Gift Shop and their parking lots are located across Highway 41 from that creek. Because Wawona has become a parking lot for the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, cars, recreational vehicles, and buses are parked between the highway and the creek. Many of the major Wawona tourist activities, including the Mariposa Big Trees Shuttle Bus stop, are located along that corridor.

16. The Wawona meadow should be excluded from the boundaries of the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. By no stretch of the imagination do the developed areas of the meadow fit the description of a scenic river area as stated in the Act. The Wawona meadow has **not** been wild or scenic since the 1880's. It was the site for a dairy and a cow pasture irrigated by the Washburn Ditch from the South Fork. During the 1920's the meadow was a landing field for airplanes. From 1940 through the 1970's, the Curry Company used the Wawona meadow for company livestock. Until the Park Service purchased the Wawona Hotel in the 1930's, a large part of the Wawona meadow was used for the cultivation of vegetables for the hotel dining room and an apple orchard. **IF** the Wawona meadow must be included under the act, it should be placed in the "recreational river" classification. This section of the act includes areas "readily accessible" by road and has some development along their shoreline. If the Wawona meadow is to be included in the plan under the Wild and Scenic River Act, as the plan is advanced, a detailed map should be provided that illustrates which part of the Wawona meadow is to be classified as "Scenic" and which part is "Recreational"

17. Need for clarification of the use of the Flat Rock swimming area (formerly the Vagim property) and the need for adequate safe parking, restrooms, trash dumpsters, and picnic tables because of high use of river for recreation. The Wawona Area Property Owners Association currently funds portable restrooms at this area.

18. Area at the end of River Road in Wawona needs clarification - the need for restrooms, trash dumpsters, and picnic tables at that location because of the high use of river for recreation.

19. The abandoned government owned homes in the river corridor that need to be demolished or rehabbed for occupancy needs to be addressed. They are an 'attractive nuisance' and a fire hazard.

20. We believe that any designated land use placed in the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan which would permit public campgrounds or high density employee housing within Section 35 would be severely detrimental to our small mountain residential and vacation home community :

A) Wawona is a very small community 9 months of the year. There are approximately 150 residents here during the off-season. Placing 200 entry-level employees in Wawona would more than double our population. The Park planners need to look at the census data for Wawona.

B) Employees living in the Valley do not need transportation. They can walk to work. They can eat in the cafeteria or buy fast food. They can rent a bike, hike, swim in the pools, ride the shuttle to various areas, or if they are injured or need medical help they can use the clinic. Wawona has none of the above. Does your plan include building the necessary facilities for this unwanted population?

C) In the winter, when the road to the Valley is closed because of snow, how will the employee get to work? Have the planners looked at the record of how often Highway 41 is closed between Wawona and the Valley?

D) The record indicates that the entry-level employee hired by YCS has a high incident of alcohol and illicit drug use. Do planners consider providing sufficient law enforcement protection for the local population? When a crime is committed in the Valley, facilities are available to incarcerate the individual. Do you plan to build a jail in Wawona, or provide additional law enforcement staffing?

E) A location selected for the housing in dorm type buildings in

Wawona is adjoining the SDA camp (a religious summer camp before their planned expansion). Are your planners sure they want to expose children in a religious camp to what will go on in these dorms? For a number of years we lived next door to the Spelt House in Wawona, where girls were house that worked at the Wawona Hotel. Our experiences were not positive to say the least.

F) The employees who will be required to live in Wawona, and work in the Valley will not be happy about it. It will be at least a 45 minute ride to work

21. Replace parking spaces that have been eliminated/removed from the floor of the Valley to eliminate road congestion (air pollution) as drivers search for a place to park, or park illegally.

22. Rebuild drive-in campgrounds to pre-flood 1975 numbers (in and out of the Valley).

23. Establish a carrying capacity for the Valley.

24. Do not expand commercial operations at the expense of the campers, seniors, disabled, low income families with children, rafters, hikers, climbers, swimmers, fishermen and more.

Don't turn the park into an elitist experience for only the wealthy!

