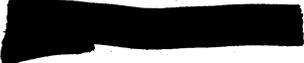




"Norm Peterson"



To: yose_planning@nps.gov

cc:

Subject: Comments on Merced River Plan

06/08/2007 02:14 PM

PST

Please respond to norm

RECEIVED

MRP-SEIS-51

JUN 09 2007

P.10/2

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Please find my attached letter with comments on the Merced River Plan

Norm Peterson - Executive Director

Camp Wawona

A YEAR ROUND EXPERIENCE

Voice: 209-375-6231 x205

Fax: 209-375-1527 The following section of this message contains a file attachment

prepared for transmission using the Internet MIME message format.

If you are using Pegasus Mail, or any other MIME-compliant system,

you should be able to save it or view it from within your mailer.

If you cannot, please ask your system administrator for assistance.

----- File information -----

File: CampWawona-MRP.pdf

Date: 8 Jun 2007, 13:36

Size: 97840 bytes.

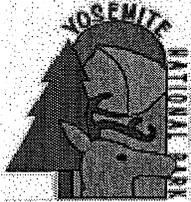
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MRP-SEIS-51
p. 2 of 2



CAMP WAWONA
A YEAR ROUND EXPERIENCE

"Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord...
And he will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths."
Isaiah 2:3

June 8, 2007

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

RE: Merced River Plan Scoping Comments

Superintendent:

Camp Wawona has been conducting Summer Camps for Children and Spiritual Retreats for members of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for more than 75 years. We are very blessed to have a quiet area in Yosemite National Park to conduct our programs. Our children's camps include camps for kids with life threatening diseases. These include Diabetes, Asthma, Epilepsy, and HIV/Aids.

I understand that you are considering using the land adjacent to our camp for public campgrounds or high-density employee housing. I'm concerned about the impact this will have on our programs. When we have our children's camps it is very helpful to be in a secluded area. I'm concerned that either of your proposed uses would create an environment that would be potentially unsafe for the children that attend our camps.

I'm also concerned about the Spiritual Retreats that we conduct year round. Our church members come to Camp Wawona for quiet reflective time in nature. Once again either of your proposed uses would create an environment that would be contrary to how we have used our camp over the last few decades.

I appreciate you considering these concerns as you make your plans.

Sincerely,

Norman Peterson
Executive Director



CHRIS MODIN
 [REDACTED]
 06/08/2007 04:02 PM
 MST

To: yosemite <yose_planning@nps.gov>
 CC:
 Subject:

RECEIVED
 MRP-SEIS-52
 JUN 09 2007
 P. 1083
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Public Scoping Comment
 New Merced River Plan

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
 P.O. Box 577
 Yosemite, CA 95389

June 8, 2007

Current visitation in Yosemite has declined in recent years and is presently far below the intolerable levels that prevailed during the 1960's. Lower visitation levels observed in recent years does not diminish the need to address "excess capacity" that occurs on a few spring and summer holiday weekends now or how to manage the inevitable increased day use that will certainly occur as future population pressures increase. We have an opportunity with this new Merced River planning process to explore the many alternatives that will be required to regulate access when demand becomes excessive and overwhelms present NPS policy to regulate use.

There will be increasingly frequent periods when the methods preferred by the NPS for a conditions based adaptive management user capacity approach supported by the scientific community will not be sufficient to protect the Merced Rivers Outstandingly Remarkably Values (ORV's) from excessive use. The NPS plan to regulate use may be an acceptable and even perhaps a preferred method to minimize visitor impacts under normal conditions but it will fail when visitation becomes overwhelming, resulting in unacceptable gridlock and human congestion as many long time Yosemite visitors can attest. During these events Park resources are damaged and the visitor experience is reduced to near zero. In order to avoid these unfortunate events a reservation system needs to be in place to back up the NPS's preferred methods to address user capacity that will be implemented when excessive day use visitation is anticipated. It is our opinion that this safety valve approach to limiting user capacity on federal lands should not be used to invalidate management plans across the NPS, USFS, and other federal agencies but that it be used to support those efforts when conditions become extreme. A properly designed back-up reservation system with a first come first serve component should emphasize guaranteed entry during heavy use periods

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and not be presented as a restriction of access as many now fear. This check on unregulated day use will protect the Merced Rivers many ORV's, and provide for a quality visitor experience as well. This effort must be developed with and supported by commercial interests in the gateway communities where stakeholders can provide to their advantage increased levels of food, lodging and other visitor services during these periods when visitation is projected to exceed capacity. Focus on this issue should be the primary objective in the new planning process for the Merced, and it should proceed regardless of the outcome of future court actions. Finding a solution to the user capacity problem will be a long and complicated process but with all concerned working together it can and must be done.

Some other thoughts to consider:

1. Efforts to significantly expand visitor use in West Valley should not be considered. West Valley remains a relatively pristine area where Valley admirers who abhor East Valley crowds can enjoy the relative solitude of the Merced River. Any plans to develop West Valley to accommodate increased visitation should be quashed.
2. Reduce visitor impacts along sensitive river shoreline by allowing access to non-sensitive sand and gravel bars, and restricting access to resource sensitive river sites and to high level view-sheds like Woski Pond. Roadside parking along El Cap straight significantly impacts the scenic value of the Merced in this high quality view-shed. Alternatives should be considered to resolve the parking problem and the resulting human impacts to El Cap meadow.
3. Visual and physical impacts of rafting on the Merced's ORV's are excessive. The numbers of rafts permitted on the river should be significantly reduced.
4. Ensure current NPS objectives to restore the Upper and Lower River campgrounds to natural conditions do not yield to pressures to restore camping in these resource sensitive areas. The juxtaposition of the river and these former campgrounds should confirm restoration objectives.
5. Encourage interpretive activities (natural and cultural) over recreational activities that would be appropriate outside a National Park. Bird watching, floral identification, photography, and hiking have little impacts and should be encouraged.
6. The size and numbers of tour busses and unregulated emission standards for those vehicles greatly impacts the ORV's of the Merced. Public transportation is an important objective to relieve congestion along the Merced, but the impacts of the number and size of these vehicles needs to be evaluated and reduced.

Emission standards should be set and made a mandatory requirement for entry. Belching clouds of black gas and soot emanating from unregulated numbers of many of these commercial vehicles is simply unacceptable in a National Park.

We would like to comment on the co-operative and responsive way the planning team has worked to resolve public concerns on the many issues that affect the future of Yosemite. As a result of public input there have been several modifications by the planning team to preliminary plans on several projects currently underway or scheduled to begin in the near future. Those changes in response to public concerns have not gone unnoticed and serve as an exemplary example of the planning teams willingness to modify plans in response to public input. We look forward to continuing this cooperative and positive approach to solving the many issues facing Yosemite's future.

Thanks for listening,

John and Chris Modin




"Brian @ Ouzounian
Constructors, Inc."

06/08/2007 04:35 PM
MST

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc: Elexis_Mayer@nps.gov, Kristina_Rylands@nps.gov
Subject: Comments for New MercedRiverPlan

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MRP-SEIS-53

JUN 09 2007

P. 10/3
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

June 8, 2007

Dear YNPS Planning Staff:

This is to submit comments for the latest Merced River Plan (MRP). I ask that you incorporate all past comments regarding the previous MRP's, Yosemite Valley Plan, General Management Plan and other relevant comments that I have submitted to you in the past. Specifically, all comments related to camping in Yosemite Valley and its recognition as an ORV. All comments can be combined to be from myself personally and the Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition.

I plead with you to recognize that the long standing tradition of camping along the Merced River is generic to the tenants and purpose of visitation to the Park. Certainly in the river's long length of meandering through the Park, the section from Happy Isle to Sentinel Bridge can be zoned for camping use. It is without question that when President Lincoln commissioned the Park in 1864 to the State of California (Ref: Frederick Law Olmstead's book "*Mariposa Grove and Yosemite: A Preliminary Report* " camping was the main form of visitation, although for the elite class. Since and before this date, campers have been the major visitors of the Park and continue today. The YNPS has not given weight to this long standing tradition and passion as they illegally removed Upper and Lower River Campgrounds and refused to repair flood damaged campgrounds in Group Camping, North Pines and Lower Pines Campgrounds after the 1997 Flood and even when Congress appropriated monies for such repairs. Since the 1980 basically left out campers as respondents when the survey was taken, the YNPS has made it a habit of leaving out this major visitation group in their planning projects since 1979. Further, they have limited their open houses, scoping meetings, comment hearings to very local communities and have confused the public on when and where they take their public outreach. Although 70% of the visitors are from California, never has San Diego, Orange County, The Inland Empire, The Central Coast, and Northern California been included in the process. The public is confused and this writer believes it is by design of the YNPS.

Camping in the Valley should be returned to pre-flood conditions or better with restrooms returned and tied into the new sewer system. North Pines should be retained and improved to include cold showers with waste water control to the new sewer system. Disabled standards need be applied to all campground restrooms as the YNPS has failed to meet minimum federal standards of their own Rehab Act. Universal designed sites need be incorporated into each campground. Camping needs to be encouraged and promoted as a favorable and preferred method of visitation. Rafting/floating on the Merced river should be allowed via personal watercraft/floatation devices only, not via concession, spreading out the use along the river from Happy isles to Sentinel Bridge in a low impact fashion. Hazards such as fallen trees should be removed for safe travel (like where the Merced and Tenaya Rivers meet), which are small sections of the river. **CAMPING IN YOSEMITE VALLEY IS AN ORV.**

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p. 2 of 3

At a previous MRP hearing, I asked the 30 some YNPS officials if any of them had floated down the Merced River. Not one hand was raised. I explained that no one can appreciate the awesome experience of seeing Yosemite from such a grand perspective, yet they are doing the planning. FLOATING DOWN THE MERCED RIVER IS AN ORV!!!!

By sheer number of years and numbers of visitors, the campgrounds and sites belong on the National Registry for Historical Places. Surely, if the YNPS can grant Camp 4 for such status, the other Campgrounds qualify since they precede the climbers camp in years and numbers of visitors. Is the only way to get this point across to sue the YNPS? That is how the climbers got Camp 4 to remain till perpetuity, isn't it? Must campers sue the YNPS to keep the campgrounds, bridges, access road, etc?

The idea of cutting more trees and damaging more riverbanks to make way for new sites is absurd! Virgin undisturbed land being graded for new sites when established and repairable sites are already established and available. Walk-in sites and RV sites do not equate to replacing North Pines and should be excluded from the new plan. The YNPS states it will meet the Rehab Act requirements in these two projects is absurd as there are no standards for the disabled for "walk-in and RV sites." Simply upgrade the campgrounds established in the existing footprint.

The disruption of natural scenes along the Merced River have become an everyday project via the YNPS. The blasting and rough grading that occurred to renovate the concession on glacier point may have affected the rockfall contours along the southern wall near Glacier Point. The huge radius turns needed and flat land needed to park the buses took huge equipment sending shock waves through the granite strata, which could only be relieved to the open area to the north toward the Valley. This in itself may have caused the rock slide near Happy Isles that disrupted the Merced River at that time.

The emphasis on fixed roof housing has disproportionately given priority to "visitation for fee" in our park. Other than day visitors, currently paying 20 dollars for a day, camping is the next most accessible and enjoyable and economical way to experience the Park. 20 to get in, 140 for 7 nights = \$160 plus ice and milk. There is no other economical way to access a visitation in Yosemite. For a family to stay at the most modest concession, the numbers climb to \$600 per night for housekeeping. Campers bring their dry firewood, their bikes, much of their food, recycle their trash, stow their trash in bear proof containers, abide by camping laws and respect the natural scene of the park. We hike the trails, we climb the rock, we take pictures and we make new friends. There is a code of happiness in the Park among campers. There is a sense of "legacy" that we wish to preserve for our children.

My family started camping in Yosemite Valley back in the 1920's when my two grandfathers, who were just friends at the time, made it an annual trek. They spoke of how far down river they could see w/o trees insight. Today, the meadows are lush and restored, the trees are grown, the River has taken its natural course (despite our camping presence), the animals are more frequent, the bats still hunt moths at dusk, the coyotes still howl at the moon, and children still enjoy floating on the river with their brothers, sisters, moms, dads, cousins and friends. They enjoy the campfire with the same passion.

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p. 3 of 3

Camping has now become an "endangered activity" due to actions of the YNPS. The rules are stiff, the supervision is over the line intrusive, yet we still want to preserve it as an ORV to pre-flood conditions. We request that the flood damaged sites be restored and camping and floating along the Merced River in the areas mentioned above be allowed in the new plan. To do this, you must recognize the tradition, the benefits and assets established by President Lincoln in 1864 and understand the relief camping brings to the family in today's modern and ever changing culture.

Brian H. Ouzounian
Co-Founder
Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition



"Ralph/Isolde Harder"

[Redacted]

06/08/2007 10:08 PM
MST

To: <yose_planning@nps.gov>
cc: "Susan Baker" <fulmoon@earthlink.net>
Subject: Merced River Plan III

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MRP-5215-54
JUN 09 2007
P. 1 81
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

As a property owner in Wawona (on the south fork of the Merced River) since 1968, I am concerned about maintaining the quality of life we have enjoyed there. With the exception of the SDA Camp which operates under a pending Conditional Use Permit, most of Section 35 (Wawona) is zoned for low-to-mid density residential housing. As part of Yosemite National Park's (YNP) effort to decrease the NPS presence in Yosemite Valley Floor, Wawona has been considered for providing housing and offices for the NPS. El Portal has been the preferred site, keeping all Government offices in the same location. High density office or dwelling units in Wawona would change the character of the area drastically. This would be strongly opposed by WAPOA, the property owners' association. Further problems would be apparent in the winter, when the Wawona Rd. is commonly closed by snow at the 6,000 ft. Chinquapin intersection. The bulk of NPS land is on the south side of the Merced River, served by Forest Dr. This is a two-way, one-lane road, that YNP is not willing/able to improve, that makes it difficult to move around heavy construction equipment. Increased travel on the road by YNP vehicles would be impeded by the lack of turn-outs to allow passing. There also has been consideration given to moving the campground to the south side of the Merced in Wawona. Another bad idea. The present campground is beautifully-situated on the river at the historic site of the Woods Army Camp. Problems with collection and dispersal of sewage could be mitigated by pumping up to the treatment plant, as is done in other areas. A public campground in the middle of a residential area in Wawona would be incompatible and, again, strongly opposed by WAPOA.

Thank you,

Ralph H. Harder, M.D.

[Redacted]

Jackson, CA 95642

[Redacted]

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P. 1035
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JUN 09 2007



George Whitmore

[Redacted]

To: yose_planning@nps.gov

cc:

Subject: Merced River Plan scoping

06/09/2007 12:07 AM
MST

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

9 June 2007

Sierra Club
c/o P.O. Box 5572
Fresno, CA 93755

Superintendent
Attn: Merced River
Plan

Yosemite National Park
PO Box 577
Yosemite National Park
California 95389

fax: (209) 379-1294

This is being emailed to <yose_planning@nps.gov>.

Sir:

These scoping comments for the Merced River planning process are being submitted on behalf of the Sierra Club.

Please ignore the fact that the computer chose to bold some of what I have written. I do not know how to unbold it.

NPS should communicate respectfully and productively with interested stakeholders in all park planning efforts. This includes local grassroots and national environmental groups, all concerned Native American groups, even those not previously consulted in park planning efforts, and well-informed recreation groups. This actually is a planning issue, as the lack of respectful and productive communication will render any adopted plan useless, no matter how well written it may have been.

The Merced River is the life artery for much of Yosemite National Park . A protective and legally valid Merced River Plan should be the programmatic foundation for a large scale implementation plan like the YVP. Numerous major problems are being caused by the fact that the YVP is still driving park projects, even while it has been openly acknowledged by park staff that there are serious problems with major foundational portions of the current YVP. Issue: The foundational basis (satellite parking lots and out-of-Valley shuttle) of the YVP has been acknowledged to be flawed, so how can any project legitimately proceed if is based on the assumption of satellite lots and out-of-Valley shuttle?

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p. 20/5

NPS should not be implementing Yosemite Valley Plan projects until a legally valid and protective Merced River Plan is in place; NPS should re-visit the YVP before implementing its projects.

Given the inextricable linkage between the MRP and the YVP, this planning process should address YVP issues as well as MRP issues.

It is sometimes difficult to decide whether it would be more proper to discuss an issue under the MRP or the YVP. In the following comments, we have not attempted to segregate the issues according to whether they are more nearly MRP or YVP related.

NPS should, at the very least, have some type of baseline data so that they can adequately address user capacity-- an accurate count of people and vehicles through the entrance gates, accurate population statistics for El Portal, etc.

Consideration should be given to declaring Yosemite Valley in its entirety to be an ORV. We proposed this during the 2000 planning process. We still believe it to be a valid idea.

A number of issues are listed below, with no attempt made to present them as complete sentences.

Limits on tour buses arriving in the Valley. They are not limited by the number of parking spaces allotted to them any more than cars are limited by the number of available parking spaces. Some mechanism needs to be in place to avoid tour buses driving around looking for parking which may or may not be available. Just as with cars.

The impact of commercial rafting. The river bank at Stoneman Bridge has been transformed into a wasteland by what is apparently excessive commercial activity.

Some type of real limit (below whatever it is now) on how many concession rafts can be floating down the Merced on a given afternoon.

The impact of having interpretive rangers providing a service to the for-profit Green Dragon tours. To what extent have legitimate interpretive services been degraded by diverting NPS rangers to the for-profit commercial tours?

Address that element of the YVP which calls for extending the free in-Valley shuttle to the west end of the Valley. Is it going to happen or not? The fact that this comment immediately follows the comment on the Green Dragon operations is not coincidental. Has implementation of the in-Valley shuttle expansion been placed on hold because the concessionaire does not want the Green Dragon operation to have competition? We have been told by NPS staff that this is the reason expansion of the shuttle system is not being considered, even though it is in the YVP.

NPS should clearly define "ecological restoration" in the draft and final EIS. The term

"restoration " is being used to mean everything from unleashing the river to go wherever natural forces take it on the one hand, to laying fresh asphalt on the other hand. The same term should not be used to describe both types of activity.

NPS should clearly define "development" in the draft and final EIS. It sometimes seems as though any human activity is viewed as being a form of "development". This results in projects such as re-vegetation or control of invasive exotics being treated no differently than construction of 27 buildings where there was formerly a mixed conifer/oak woodland. (Or projects such as the former being scrutinized more closely than the latter!) The issue is how some level of reason can be introduced into the process to avoid these anomalous situations.

NPS should make all public comments related to this planning process easily available for citizens to view on the NPS website.

NPS should make proposed Draft Alternatives available for public comment prior to publication of the DEIS. Much of the problem with planning processes is the result of poorly constructed Alternatives during the environmental review process. More public involvement in the creation of the Draft Alternatives could head off a lot of the problems.

NPS should develop the draft and final EIS to be no larger than one volume, and intelligible to the general public.

NPS should include all tributaries of the Merced River within the designated river corridor boundaries.

NPS should take a serious look at a fresh approach to zoning/management prescriptions within the Merced River corridor boundaries.

NPS should conduct soundscape studies and include findings for each segment of the Merced River in the EIS.

NPS should conduct rare plant studies for the entire Merced River corridor and include findings in the EIS.

NPS should do a complete biological inventory of the Merced River corridor as part of this planning process and include at least a condensed version of this inventory in the EIS.

NPS should conduct air quality studies for the entire Merced River corridor and include findings in the EIS.

NPS should reconsider appropriateness of the High Sierra Camps in YNP, in general, and their impacts on the Merced River, specifically, in this planning process.

NPS should study High Sierra Camp stock use in relation to water quality, visitor

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P-4075

experience for hikers, and trail maintenance costs and include these findings in the EIS.

NPS should more thoroughly monitor water quality in the Merced River and its tributaries (above and beyond current data gathering under the VERP framework).

NPS should make every effort to allow families to participate in resource-based, low-cost, low-amenity activities in the Merced River corridor (such as picnicking, tent and traditional auto-camping, rafting with their own rafts, sledding with their own snow devices, riding their own bicycles).

NPS should consider more seriously the impacts of concession rafting on the Merced River in Yosemite Valley.

NPS should consider more seriously the impacts of concession bike rentals on the Merced River and its related meadows in Yosemite Valley.

NPS should identify swimming as a recreational ORV for all segments of the Merced River.

NPS should zone community swimming holes in El Portal (such as Patty's Hole) for appropriate recreation and cultural activities (such as swimming, lawful fishing, and Native American gathering) rather than for maximum possible impact/development.

NPS should consider the findings of the SNEP Report in this planning process, especially regarding the El Portal segment.

NPS should develop a "scenic" category for El Portal ORVs.

NPS should have and make available to the public accurate and up-to-date maps of wetlands in El Portal.

NPS should zone all wetlands in El Portal for maximum protection rather than for high visitor use.

NPS should re-consider having a bulk fuel facility such as Odger's Petroleum next to the Merced River in the El Portal segment.

NPS should identify and zone accordingly for Native American cultural ORVs within the entire river corridor; this type of zoning could offer maximum protection from ground disturbing projects while allowing for true ecological restoration AND respectful access/Native American traditional use.

NPS should re-consider the "historical" status and significance of some structures in YNP that may no longer be appropriate to the NPS mission or cost-effective to maintain.

NPS should protect wetlands and other riparian areas along the Merced River in the

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western portion of Yosemite Valley from any increase in impermeable surfaces (additional asphalt and concrete).

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the planning processes for the Merced River.

**George Whitmore, Chair
Sierra Club's Yosemite Committee**



06/07/2007 09:34 PM
AST

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Merced River Plan Scoping Comments

RECEIVED
MRP-SEIS-54
JUN 09 2007
P. 1031
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Dear Superintendent:

I understand that the NPS is now looking for comments regarding the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan.

As a member of the Central California Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, we have long been a part of the Wawona community, specifically Section 35. Our camp has been in existence for over 75 years and my father and brother both attended camp, in the 40's and 60's respectively.

Yosemite and Wawona have been an incredible play to see God's creation and bring respite and healing to many people.

As you prepare the land use plan, which will dictate how Wawona will continue to be used, I would like to personally ask that you consider not locating new public campgrounds or high-density employee housing within Section 35. This would change the character of Wawona. It would also affect our camp's ministry. I would like to urge you to consider locating such high-density uses in an area that canmore easily handle increased noise and traffic. I respectfully request that you look elsewhere for the land to develope this use.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Jackie Bragaw

Clovis, CA 93611

AOL now offers free email to everyone. Find out more about what's free from AOL at AOL.com

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