

**Yosemite National Park**

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



**2009-2010 Public Scoping Comments**



**Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan**

**Correspondence ID:** 1      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Underwood, David

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Visitor limits and transportation in Yosemite Valley. Several issues are all connected her. A. Visitor capacity B. How to limit visitors. C. How to limit vehicles. D. Vehicle parking. E. Pedestrian safety. F. Visitor accommodations. G. Obsolete and decaying infrastructure. The major problem has been in how to limit day use visitors. On certain days there are more visitors than the valley can accommodate, these are the 100 days between the Memorial Day weekend and the labor Day weekend, and in particular on the days preceding the tow holidays and the Fourth of July holiday. This applies to the east end of the valley from the El Capitan crossover which is the point at which vehicle traffic will have to be limited on some kind of fair basis. There are today systems in place to manage such. A system of reservations needs to be put in place, that will allow potential visitors to call in by phone, or internet, or even at one of the gateway communities to get a reservation. Electronic signs need to be placed at Lee Vining, on Rt 120, 140, and 41 advising people if the park is full, or if reservations can still be had. These reservations should be made on a 30 second basis, that is, any car entering the east end of the valley should be at least 10 seconds apart. An electronic entrance system be set up at the El Cap crossover point. Tour busses must be scheduled at no less than 20 minute intervals. Counts can be kept of vehicles entering and leaving the valley. Parking could be expanded by removing many of the old and decaying structures such as the "maintenance fort." The corporate headquarters of the concessionaire needs to be moved ot of the valley and the buildings removed. The storage of old materials, lumber, piping, wrecked vehicles needs tp be removed, and the old corral needs to be removed. Since the NPS will not be allowed to move the northside road, the road needs to be elevated as several places to allow pedestrians to cross safely. There has been talk of only allowing day use visitors in the valley by bus. This is simply impractical. It would require building visitor parking areas on the perimeter of the park and aU but one of them would be 60 miles distance, requiring a ride of 1.5 hours or more each direction. Facilities would have to be provided such as toilets, waiting areas, and people would have to be able to load such items as baby strollers, coolers, and other necessities for a daytime stay. The roads to the park are two lane and winding and at time are already subject to heavy traffic. More needs to be done with Yosemite Lodge and the older buildings that are not up to modem standards without putting the price of accommodations beyond the regular traveler. There have been some complains that the costs of a visit would be too high if the lodge were upgraded. However, there is no reason the cost of a nights stay can not be in the same range as any other motel in the region. Transportation Issues in the final Yosemite Valley Plan This section of the final VIP includes: Out of valley parking at: Hazel Green EI Portal DEC 0 S '2.009 Badger Pass To accommodate those who park in these areas the proposal is to have a shuttle bus at: Hazel Green: every six minutes. EI Portal: every 13 minutes. Badger pass: every 12 minutes. Pg.2-79-81 YOSEMITE In valley shuttles will be 10 shuttles every five to ten minutes at the transit center. Pg. 3-121 These shuttles will operate on three routes: West Valley: Bridalveil Falls and west ofEI Capitan crossover every 7.5minutes during peak season. East valley shuttle: Yosemite Lodge, Sunnyside, and Happy Isles every four minutes. Ahwahnee shuttle: Visitor transit center and the Ahwahnee every 15 minutes. Tour Buses NPS figures show a peak of 1,948 tour buses entering the valley in August. The EIS shows a figure of "about 77 buses per day on a typically busy day", Pg. 3-130. Added to this are: Regional transit, 15 to 17 trips per day, mid May through mid September. Valley shuttle buses, 10 per hour. Valley tours 2-3 trips per hour. At Sentinel Bridge it is projected that up to 25 buses per hour travel through that intersection. That is a bus every 2.4 minutes. Pg. 3-134, paragraph 2. The report does not show the time frame for these figures. The lack of such data suggests an incomplete study, or conversely a deliberate avoidance of such to avoid showing how dense such traffic is at peak times. Assuming these bus trips are spread out over an eight-hour period the data would show a bus passing Bridalveil Falls every 2.7 minutes. Closing Northside drive means that the number of tour buses would double to 154 past tne faais In an eight hour peilod, and regtonai transit bUSEs to tour per hour. That iTeans a bus passing this area every 1.8 minutes during the peak hours. NPS data shows peak traffic inbound at 14:00 hours and outbound at 17 :30 hours. Add to these figures the number of cars allowed to enter during the peak hours and you have a formula for grirlock, not unlike present conditions. It is disingenuous for the NPS to call this part of the plan an improvement. The figures given for bus noise levels are on Pg. 3-134. This shows a noise level of 50-56 dBA at 400 feet and an average level of 64 dBA at 100 feet. The sound level of a diesel at 50 feet is judged to be twice as loud as that of a car at 25 feet. Pg. 3-132. This puts the sound level of a bus at 16 times the ambient (natural) sound level. Notice that the EIS gives an average ambient noise level for Yosemite Falls at 60dBA @ 275 feet. A bus is four times as louder at 50 feet, or twice as loud at 100 feet, or as loud at 200 feet, as the ambient noise level. That means you have to be about 50 feet from the falls before the noise from a bus is drowned out by the sound of the waterfall. The EIS notes that, "The noise data indicate that the instantaneous noise due to buses would be noticeable." Pg. 3-134 paragraph four. Air Pollution DEC 2009 Recent studies by the South Coast Air Quality management Board show serious problems with diesel VO iHTE NATIONAL PARK Diesel fuel is essentially low-grade petroleum that is refined just enough to burn in engines. The new stads for diesel engines do not apply to buses that operate in federal territory. California mandates 20 ppm sulfur by 2002 for gasoline. However" diesel fuel contains on average about 150 PPM and can not use catalytic converters to reduce emissions due to the high sulfur content. Diesel engines produce less carbon monoxide that gasoline engines but more particulates and nitrous oxides (Nox). Sulfates and NOx are precursors of ozone. Studies by the SCAQMD have shown a high level of respiratory disease along the 710 corridor between Long Beach and East Los Angeles. This corridor is rated as having the most diesel traffic of any corridor in California. It is traversed by thousands of trucks daily and also has railroad traffic. Diesel exhaust particulates are known carcinogens. The EIS does not address the problem of diesel particulates and as far as can be determined has no power to regulate the emissions from private diesel buses. Furthermore, the valley plan has no provisions for regulating the number of tour buses entering the valley. As such, it is possible that tour bus traffic could double even if automobile traffic decreased by 50%. The EIS also proposes a diesel refueling station in the valley for the shuttle fleet. Not only does that add to the air quality problem but it also means more diesel trucks coming into the valley to replenish the refueling station. One positive aspect of the 1997 flood was the removal of the gas station. However, the proposed diesel refueling station negates that gain and essentially reinstates the status quo. The EIS does not address these concerns and only states that the reduced traffic will reduce the particulates from road dust. However, there is no data to substantiate this claim. There is no data to show how much dust is generated by a bus vs. a car for instance. The NPS has made several claims and proposals in the document but has not produced any data to substantiate their claims. This is a difficult section to interpret due to use of terms not familiar to normal usage. It appears that two different standards are used for presenting the data. In the Federal standards the use of a 24 hour averaging is used to compare the peak: hourly predicted particulate matter. Since the assumptions regarding the production of carbon monoxide and particulate matter are based on some weighted average based on some estimate we can not know the actual relationship of the computer modeling to the real world figures. Interpretation of the figures given in this section requires the assistance of an air quality

engineer. One glaring deficiency is the failure to identify particulate matter smaller than 2 microns in diameter. It is the 2 micron matter that is most damaging to respiratory systems. The particulate emissions are only given as those less than 10 microns. Out Of Valley Parking Of all the items in the EIS this is the subject most lacking in any sort of data. The VIP defers this to a later date along with the proposed heavy maintenance facility. It does not show how big (how many cars) the parking lots are projected to be. It does not discuss the support facilities that will be needed for these parking lots. Will travelers with children, baggage, pets, picnic items, babies, etc be expected to wait in a bare asphalt parking area? Will there be bathrooms, snack bars, and gift shops adjacent to these parking lots? Where will the lots actually be built, on private property, national forest land or park property? Also, the EIS states that the heavy maintenance station is to be built in El Portal. Where, we do not know. How big, how many acres, or other data is not given. The EIS also proposes to use Badger Pass as the southern parking area. Recent information on that area is that the sewer system is inadequate, consisting of septic tanks and a leach line system that can not handle the traffic that would be generated by the amount of traffic that is projected. Visitor Experience Pg.3-130: DEC 0 8 2009 "In summer, passenger loads frequently exceed the normal; capacity of the buses, crowding is a common occurrence, sometimes making travel conditions uncomfortable. Delays in service can be caused by the loading and overloading of overcrowded buses or by traffic congestion." Again we are confronted with statements that do not have any data to support them. What constitutes "uncomfortable?" Are the passengers crammed into the buses shoulder to shoulder? Do the passengers feel that the tour was worth the effort? Are there any studies to assess the visitor experience? How do we know what the visitors experience? The VIP does not provide any references, studies, or any other supporting documents.

\*\*\*\*\* This information from Greg Adair. Hazel Green Issues Hazel Green is a private parcel on the northwestern park border (80 acres). It contains a system of seeps forming an extensive, high wet meadow, and though it has been subject to some logging and a recent burn, it supports rare plants and one endangered plant, as well as a remarkable avian diversity which includes foraging, and stopover habitat for the Great Gray and the Spotted Owls. I have been trying to convince people that it should be added to the park and be protected. What the current owner proposes is the construction of about 500 hotel rooms, a commercial core area, and about 1100 parking spaces. NOTE: that in order to do this, NPS would need to build 1/4 mile of road through an old-growth Yosemite conifer forest to connect the 120 Road with the private land. Sadly, NPS sees this currently as "parking gain", not more construction and "forest loss". It should also be said that the construction will almost certainly never happen without the federal approval of that access road. The land - though small beyond the actual edges of the meadow is supposed to support about 400 parking spaces for the "parking catchment" idea (i.e., non-hotel-guest) use. There would obviously be the need for restroom facilities. The plumbing, electrical, and sewage are big question marks. The Hazel Green development generally has to face the lack of sewage anyway. We can and should assume that the site would be simultaneously developed as a hotel, and park "catchment", and share new infrastructure (or that neither would happen, also simultaneously). Foresta Issues On the apparent assumption that the satellite parking areas must be built, the Foresta site is currently referred to as an "alternative to" the Hazel Green sites on the highway 120 corridor. Should Hazel Green not work out, the site in question adjoins the upper reaches of a seasonal creek/wetland, and drains into Big Meadow. This is a big problem, in my opinion, since Big Meadow is in good shape, relatively free of the type of hydrocarbon runoff we've been concerned about in Yosemite Valley. In any case, there is currently no plumbing, electrical, or sewage for the site. Nearby Foresta runs from individual wells, septic tanks, and an electric cable strung up the back access road from El Portal. As far as the land, it is possible that the existing wood lot is what is being shown as part of the Foresta Parking area as drawn, but it is unclear. The entire site is on federal land (NPS).

\*\*\*\*\* Summary Much needed data seems to be absent regarding the out of valley parking, and quality of the visitor experience. The noise generated by the use of large diesel engines and the need to upgrade roadways to accommodate large fleets of buses is inadequately presented. The issue of carcinogenic emissions from diesel engines is not mentioned. For several years, until the out of valley parking problem can be solved, cars will not be limited. Even after the limit is placed on cars, there will be almost as many cars allowed in the valley as at present. Furthermore, the planned bus / shuttle system, along with tour buses, will not reduce the traffic jams that now exist. No mention is made of the fact that cars in California are far cleaner than when this plan was first formulated, and that they are mandated to become cleaner in the near future. On the other hand, the only requirements for diesels are that they use a lower sulfur fuel in the future and this is not a federal requirement as of now. The 1980 General Management Plan guidelines seem to be ignored here also. 4 The 1980 GMP shows a visitor limit for the park and this is being ignored by placing a limit on cars but not on visitors. The tour bus issue is a particularly egregious one. There is no limit being placed on these buses or on how many can be in the park at one time. The NPS plans on providing 20 spaces for tour bus parking. It does not assume the possibility of lodges outside the valley providing tours using small buses or vans. There is nothing to prevent others from obtaining commercial permits and furnishing tours for motel guests for instance. Tour buses need to be limited to a schedule to keep them from flooding visitor services. They should be separated by 15-20 minutes at minimum to reduce the noise, diesel exhaust pollution, and number of people trying to use visitor services at any one time.

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**Correspondence ID:** 2    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** National Park Service Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec.03,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Test comment; do not analyze.

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**Correspondence ID:** 3    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Collamer, Catherine  
**Outside Organization:** NPS Employee  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Recreating on river in El Portal, swimming, rafting. The community of El Portal-social-aspect-I don't use the Valley section of river due to too many people. In summer time other than work I avoid Valley. 2. What do you want to see protected? Drinking water,

riverbanks-when park send the protection staff out of park on assignments we have no protection - Maybe Resources need their own law enforcement emps. to protect river areas- 3. What needs to be fixed? The follow up after projects! as with any project that is/has been done within Yose - the upkeep and protection needs to be worked on - It seems as if "we" lack on that sort of thing! Fencing and signage doesn't work - people/visitors trample newly planted willows - In summer Yose needs a couple full time life guards to keep that areas protected, otherwise all that fincing and plants don't survive - The split rail fending all around the Valley is always in need of upkeep and there are forgotten spit rail fences such as by the old Lower River bikepathe near the river - Talk to staff who work in the Valley c.g.'s - they are the ones that end up dealing with river issues an N.P & L.P. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? No more campsites - too many folks in Valley as is - No more hotel rooms! If anything remove and space out campsites un Upper Pines.

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**Correspondence ID:** 4      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Kupers, Ron

**Outside Organization:** Recreational Groups

**Received:** Jul,07,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:**

I have sent emails with respect to places I have visited. For my recent visit to Yosemite park, I would like to make an exception. I stayed there for a couple of days last week. The beauty of the park needs no further comments. It is simply terrific, probably one f the most beautiful I have ever seen. Unfortunately, this comes to a great price. The amount of people and in particular the endless convoys of cars and camper vans largely annuls the beauty of the park. At no moment, I felt the connectedness to nature I was looking for. I had this feeling was I visited the Rocky Mountains several years ago. There were not many cars and you could hike for several hours before meeting somebody.

In my humble opinion, to save the park from becoming a kind of theme park, access to the park (and in particular car access) should be limited.

Sincerely,

ron kupers Copenhagen, Denmark

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**Correspondence ID:** 5      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Squire, Ralph

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Jul,09,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:**

Comments on a proposed Merced River Plan:

Important factors in limiting visitation and impact to segments of the Merced River are both Traffic Circulation and Initial Orientation of visitors.

The Yosemite Valley Plan called for Out of Valley Parking and bringing visitors into the Valley via shuttles. Because of the uniqueness of Yosemite, this method would be doomed before it could start. Experience at Bryce Canyon was a disaster. Experience at Zion leaves something less than desired. Yosemite has the opportunity to be a leader.

The present method is to direct all day use visitors to Camps Six Day Use Parking, and suggest that they use the shuttle bus system. When the parking area fills, Rangers stop visitors at the El Capitan Cross Over and suggest stalling tactics temporarily. This is working relatively well as the present time, but has some deficiencies:

First, there are no restrooms at Camp Six Day Use Parking.

Second, there are no orientation facilities at Camp Six Day Use Parking.

Third, this brings all day use visitor's vehicles into the East Valley, where congestion is the worst, and causes the greatest impact on the Merced Rier in the East Valley.

In order to minimize congestion on the Valley Loop Road (South Side Drive and North Side Drive), all day use vehicles could be stopped at the El Capitan Cross Over Area and directed into a new parking ara at Taft Toe. This was one of the other alternatives in the Draft Yosemite Valley Plan.

This would have several advantages:

First, as stated above, it would remove a lot of traffic from the Valley Loop Road, and therefore lessen the impact on the Merced River in the East Valley.

Second, restrooms would immediately be available to visitors and avoid the necessity of riding a shuttle bus to get to the restrooms at the Visitors Center.

Third, an Orientation Center could be available adjacent to Tat Toe Parking, to let visitors know what to expect BEFORE they board a shuttle bus.

Fourth, shuttle busses could operate from Taft Toe Parking to take day use visitors to the Visitors Center, which could be a transfer hub to the East Valley shuttles.

Fifth, it would allow the Visitors Center to concentrate on interpretation of resources, rather than try to also act as an orientation center (after the fact that they had already arrived and boarded a shuttle bus.)

Sixth, the shuttles could travel the Valley Loop Road and allow day use visitors to get on and off, at a number of stops of scenic interest, where vehicles now try to stop (and cause congestion.) This would lessen the impact on the Merced River in the East Valley and add to the visitor experience (a win-win situation.)

Seventh, the shuttles could traverse the West Valley Loop also, and provide the same enhanced visitor's experience as mentioned above, and reduce the impact on the Merced River in the West Valley.

Eighth, many day use visitors, on a tight time schedule, might opt to say that they had "seen the Valley", after viewing Bridal Veil Falls, Ribbon Falls, El Capitan, the Cathedral Rocks, and viewed Half Dome from afar. It would offer them the option of riding the shuttle on the Loop Road, in addition, and take pressure off of the East Valley.

Ninth, Delaware North (DNC) could offer their interpretive tours from the Orientation Center, as well as the Visitors Center. This could enhance the visitor experience for many visitors, and add additional "business" for the concessionaire. It would also lessen the impact on the Merced River in both the East Valley and West Valley.

Tenth, additional picnic facilities could be developed near Taft Toe Parking, to enhance the visitor experience and lessen impact on the Merced River.

Eleventh, eventually the present system will "break down" when day use visitors exceed present visitation levels. Taft Toe Parking offers options for expansion that can exceed that of Camp Six Day Use Parking, with much less impact on the Merced River.

Lastly, all traffic now entering, existing or transiting through Yosemite Valley is required to drive the West Valley Loop Road, which might be viewed as a gigantic "round-about". This takes all vehicles right past the potential Taft Toe Parking, Orientation Center, picnic area, shuttle bus start and DNC tour terminal. It would be easy to spin them on and off of the round-about at this point.

Thank you for allowing me to make these comments.

Ralph Squire, Owner, Marble Quarry RV Park, Columbia, CA Founder of the Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau, and long time visitor to Yosemite - 80 years.

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**Correspondence ID:** 6      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Abel, Andrew  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,09,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** Attn: Merced River Plan I am writing to urge you to please restore and reopen Upper and Lower River campgrounds, and the closed portion of Lower Pines campground as well. These campgrounds are greatly needed by the general public, and had existed in Yosemite for many years prior to their removal. The options discussed of installing more campgrounds outside of Yosemite Valley is not an acceptable substitute! In addition, there was no public input at the time of their rather arbitrary removal by the NPS. Thank you. Sincerely, Andrew Abel

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**Correspondence ID:** 7      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ouzounian, Brian  
**Outside Organization:** Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition Recreational Groups  
**Received:** Jul,10,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To Whom It May Concern:

This is to ask you to confirm that the petition and comments that is ongoing on our website ( www.yosemitevalleycampers.org) will be included in the scoping of the New MRP study. This was requested by me in person ("Planner For A Day" seminars) and in writing previously, however, more signatures and comments continue to pour in. I will assume that you will pull / capture the full petition on the closing date (August 29,2009) for inclusion in the plan unless noted otherwise. It is imperative that those who have provided comments on this petition be recognized in the process as most feel disenfranchised. To mitigate the disenfranchised campers, we ask that you, the YNPS Planners, provide all visitors at the main gate via separate postcard or written literature, not just a write up in the YNPS newspaper, to ask or direct their comments for the scoping session, in particular to camping issues along the Merced River. We are very aware of the YNPS aversion to reaching out to campers directly in the past processes, as evidenced by the poor attendance of respondents at open houses and hearings in past plans. Please do not assume that the YVCC captures all interested campers or comments on camping because that is not the case. Also, please confirm that the book, Yosemite by authors Rob and Vicki Deutschman, will be included as requested/provided at the Planner For A Day session in the spring of 2008. The book was handed to Linda Dahl, Planning Project Manager and Jen Nersesian. Your comments to our requests are welcomed. Brian Ouzounian Co-Founder Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition

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**Correspondence ID:** 8     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,07,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Email submitted from: sydb@csufresno.eduat/yose/parkmgmtfcontact.htm

In order to alleviate the congestion at the pedestrian and bicycle crossing from Yosemite Falls Trail to the Yosemite Lodge area, which I have observed to be rather extensive at times, I suggest building an under the road pedestrian and bicycle tunnel. I believe that this suggestion will be less of a financial burden than other road work, lessen the congestion and is environmentally doable.

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**Correspondence ID:** 9     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Deutsch, Rick  
**Outside Organization:** Business  
**Received:** Jul,22,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Email submitted from: ricky.deutsch@gmail.comat/yose/parknews/mrpscoopingextended.htm Mailing Address Rick Deutsch 4035 Ashbrook Circle San Jose, CA 95124-3333 United States I see you are postponing the public meetings on the Merced River Plan. Please email me the link to the plan. Also, please schedule MORE sessions in the SF Bay area - 4 million residents and a primary source of Yosemite visitors. And please set up conf call-in / listen capability. If you truly want to reach out to the community, provide a modern method of communication. A WEbEX, Go-to-Meeting or other computer technology would allow more to participate. The cost is minimal considering travel. Rick Deutsch ("Mr. Half Dome") Speaker, Adventurer, Author "One Best Hike: Yosemite's Half Dome" <http://www.HikeHalfDome.com> Cell 408-888-4752 .... getting you to the top of YOUR mountain.

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**Correspondence ID:** 10     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Gustafson, Norm  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,20,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, EI Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Low-cost overnight accommodations. Public access to river to enjoy the views. 2. What do you want to see protected? Day use entry 3. What needs to be fixed? No foreign tours (to limit numbers and impact) No commercial rafting. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Public access for citizens of ALL financial means.

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**Correspondence ID:** 11     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,20,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 3. What needs to be fixed? Put back the firefall!

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**Correspondence ID:** 12      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Glendenning, Karen  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,20,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. Return parking spaces to Valley Floor. 2. How will YI or YA "school/facility" at Yosemite West impact overall count - persons, usage, vehicle. 3. How will the rebuilding of the S.D.A. camp in Wawona be included in scoping/impact? 4. Will access points into the Park be improved? 5. Will entrance annual permits be sold at/in Gateway communities? 6. How will the UC Merced study site in Wawona affect the impact? If we are limiting impact why are programs increasing? 7. Would limits be imposed on tour buses? International visitors? More access for Americans! 8. Would Day Use "visitors" be diverted to allow paying customers (Yosemite Lodge, Ahwahnee) to more heavily impact the river corridor? 9. Restore 2 way traffic on Valley floor! Safety access. 10. How will you remove traffic counts for residents of Wawona and Yosemite West? 11. Do not consider the use of Badger Pass parking as overflow or staged parking! The increased wear and tear on the Glacier Point Road would degrade the roadway. Many people are NOT comfortable driving on curvy mountain roads with a steep drop off adjacent to road shoulder. 12. How will the "count" be adjusted for the folk who drive in and then purchase the bus tour (DNC) and drive around the Park from Tuolumne to Big Trees and back?

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**Correspondence ID:** 13      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mathewson, Sue  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,22,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I've looked at some of the proposals, and my biggest concern is that you consider the handicapped. Some of the proposals outlined are attempts to make the shoreline of the river pristine and untouched.

As a senior citizen who has been coming to Tuolumne since the thirties, I worry that I will not be able to access the shoreline with a walker or wheelchair .... Closing off Soda Springs is an example of that mode of thinking and makes it impossible for only those able to walk a half mile to visit even that landmark though it used to be accessible by car.

Bicycles aren't even allowed! Please consider all who do not have the ability to manage meadow tufts or long paths to enjoy the river at every opportunity.

Chicago

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**Correspondence ID:** 14      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Tomlinson, Susie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,24,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** It doesn't take much to understand that one of the most beautiful national parks in our country, has been torn up physically, had no consolidated plan that has been adhered to, and is at the jaws of over zealous would be "environmentalists". I know it first hand, having lived near this beautiful park, taking in its grandeur and majesty, hiking it, camping in it, rafting in it, and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in it frequently every year. I also know that for the 12 years that I have lived next door to it, it has always been torn up physically with detour signs and re-routed lanes nearly every time I visit it. The original plan ( or has it been changed so many times, that one is counting anymore ) for this park apparently put together 9 years ago, has not set out to accomplish what it was supposed to. I think it is catastrophe that it has taken this long, only to come to a new conclusion that another plan is needed and that this next one will not be implemented until sometime after 2012. It is an abomination that our government can't get it's act together and stand up to some of the environmentalists. Why does there have to be a three year public scoping period? Why hasn't the mistakes of the NPS or errors been published, admitted to and let's get on with the changes to the park. The NPS I think wants to do what's best for the park, but it hasn't managed it well, and sometimes has beckoned to the wishes of developers wanting to expand lodging that is pricey and restrictive to most people. This is a national park, that should be available to all. This doesn't mean that we have to go overboard making all areas of it wheelchair accessible to the few people who belong to this category. Some of the park should be available to them, PLEASE DO NOT PUT WHEELCHAIR ACCESS UP THE TRAILS OF HALF DOME, NEVADA

FALLS, AND BEYOND. THIS IS TAKING THINGS WAY TO FAR! This is where I think the government becomes stupid. So I am going to put my two cents in and state from my perspective what the park needs, doesn't need and should look like: 1. peak traffic use is only a few months of the year, therefore limit cars during these peak times. Provide mass transit to and from the park for day use visitors. The average person who visits, usually only stays on day seeing the sites. This way you can take out some of the parking sites .... more asphalt is not natural. Make these buses electric or some other non polluting type. Staging areas, near Oakhurst and Mariposa for the buses will bring money into these areas. 2. Provide outside the park entrances (closeby) , suitable housing for park employees with subsidized transportation and housing, and use the one's in the park for rentals to generate income. 3. Do not build any more lodges or increase lodging in Yosemite valley, this is the only way to protect the fragile nature of this park. 4. Limit in high visitation periods the people hiking to Half Dome. 5. All structures closest to the Merced River that have been flooded and destroyed, do not replace these, let the river run wild. Keep people safe by providing naturally made walks over protected meadows, fragile areas and wetlands. 6. Look at like Grand Canyon national park, and others as to how they have dealt with all the concerns/problems Yosemite is having. For instance, in Grand Canyon on the South Rim, you have to take public transit to travel the length of that side . There perhaps is no ideal plan, and change is often difficult to accept and adjust to. But Yosemite without consideration for the natural beauty and the affects humans have on it, will not be a Yosemite as we have known it for future generations. The goal will be to protect and allow visitation within limits to the beforehand mentioned. Sincerely, Susie Tomlinson

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**Correspondence ID:** 15      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Talbot, Anne  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,27,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Planning Department To yose\_planning@nps.gov Subject YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK Possible Closure of North Pines Campground I was most distressed to hear of the possible closure of yet another campground in Yosemite Valley. I find it difficult to express in words the extent of my sadness if this is true. I have been coming to Yosemite since I was a little girl. I am now 46 years old and have brought my kids to Yosemite every year since my son was one year old and my daughter was yet to be born. It is our family's gathering which now includes my Aunt and Uncle, cousins and their children. I firmly believe it has been these experiences with my children that have taught them to respect their environment, the creatures who live within in and the joy of observing a sunset on Half Dome and a Moon Rise over Glacier Point. It is our time to totally disconnect from the cell phones, television, computers, etc. etc. that are becoming more and more of our modern world and just spend time together hiking, talking, taking pictures, sitting around a campfire. I have observed my children teaching their cousins, less experienced in the outdoor world, of the importance of not littering, killing insects, respecting plant life, the pride of completing a difficult hike. I know many want the campers driven from the Valley and not allowed this experience. I believe that conservation is essential but not so radical that only those in top physical condition, that would be able to hike into the Valley be allowed to stay in the Valley. It has been my observation that the majority of the campers abide by the rules and I for one would be glad to pay a little extra to provide more Park Rangers to enforce rules vs. shutting down yet another campground. I remember when the River Campgrounds were shut down and half of Lower Pines. At that time the promise was given to rebuild the campgrounds at a location that was less at risk. That has been a long time and the promises of rebuilding have been forgotten. Now another campground to go? Soon will the Sierra Club be the only people allowed? My mother suffers from Rheumatoid Arthritis and has had the benefit of utilizing your handicapped sites for the past two years. We are so grateful for that because it allows her to be able to come and enjoy the experience to some degree. In her younger days she was hiking with the rest of us, those days are gone but she is able to see the lower portion of Yosemite Falls thanks to the renovation and stay on a site that she can negotiate without as much risk of falling thanks to your beautifully level and well maintained handicapped sites. Please consider us, the family campers, the older individuals, people with disabilities, people who absolutely love this park with all their hearts and spirits before you further eliminate campsites that allow us this joy, this connection with nature, this family time to connect with each other. As it is now almost impossible to get a reservation with the current sites available, eliminating even more sites is just unacceptable. Why can't we create mobile restrooms that could be moved in the case of flooding, solar powered lighting, recycled rubber paving, and more earth friendly campground that could be mobilized in case of flooding and restored after the flooding has passed? If individuals want a pristine environment without all the "campers" then why not fight for Hetch Hetchy. It is a mystery to me as to how San Francisco was able to create a reservoir on Federal Park Land and have the tax payers support their reservoir. We have been to Hetch Hetchy and felt this was such an injustice that this land, which is suppose to be for public use was so strictly monitored that it really was not of any real public use, you could look at it and hike next to it, but you couldn't even put your feet in the water. Why are the people not fighting this battle? There would be a whole valley that only would accommodate the hikers and backpackers. No campgrounds or memories have ever been established therefore I'm sure that they could have this land without argument. Anyway I have taken more than my share of your time. I would like to have all the contact numbers of anyone in authority that I can plead my case to. I think the greatest pollution is created by the "day trippers" and if you could somehow create a way for shuttling people coming only for the day in and out of the Valley you would eliminate a great deal of pollution. If you created a rule that campers once settled needed to use the shuttles vs. cars? There has to be options other than just slowly eliminating all the campgrounds available. I know I am not alone in my feelings. Thank you for your time and the information Sincerely Anne Talbot

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**Correspondence ID:** 16      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,27,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Clean



water to swim/cool off in. Access - keep it free to the general public (UNLIKE the beaches in Washington State). 2. What do you want to see protected? Clean water. Access Rustic features Campgrounds w/o hookups or showers 3. What needs to be fixed? Not let large complexes like Yosemite View Lodge be built - what an eyesore. Avoid falling into the "society wants bigger and better" trap - i.e., don't put showers and hookups in the campgrounds in Yosemite Valley. Camping is NOT supposed to be just like home - that's why you LEAVE home. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Keep the High Sierra camps - they bring a part of society that has \$ and if they have a positive experience they are more likely to work/vote/support National Parks and Wilderness. Keep the "rustic-ness" @ go slightly more rustic @ the High Sierra Camps.

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**Correspondence ID:** 17      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,27,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? It's fun [kinda] 2. What do you want to see protected? The animals, people, food, and beautiful old sights. 3. What needs to be fixed? Nothing 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Everything.

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**Correspondence ID:** 18      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Baly, Chloe  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,27,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I LOVE the waterfalls in Yosemite Valley. It catches my attention. 2. What do you want to see protected? Wildlife because sometimes people go off the trail and kill the flowers and plants. 3. What needs to be fixed? Nothing. Everything is beautiful the way it is. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The Wawona Hotel.

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**Correspondence ID:** 19      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** McLeod, Nisan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jul,27,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** Here are my comments for the planning process:

1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love the pristine nature of the Tuolumne Meadows area and would like to see some ranger-led hikes in the back country - not just those sponsored by the Yosemite Association. I believe the experience should be shared by those of all means. I love the Yosemite View Lodge in El Portal- it is well-run, affordable and close. I love the view from the tunnel overlook as you enter the valley. I think they have done a nice job there - but please put in some toilets on that side of the road. I am also impressed with the redo of the Yosemite Falls area - thanks for getting rid of the idling tour buses! 2. What do you want to see protected? I would like to see Hetch Hetchy returned to its natural state as a canyon. It is unthinkable that they could be so concerned with every little thing that happens in Yosemite Valley and the impact of people there and yet an entire valley is submerged at Hetch Hetchy! (P.S. I know that is an unwinnable fight - God knows it was the death of John Muir- just wanted to weigh in). I would also like to see a few more of the campgrounds returned to the Yosemite Valley. Isn't that the point of the place? I would not be the nature-loving person I am without the many summers spent camping along the Merced River. We didn't have a lot of money but we felt like we were the luckiest kids in the world in that old canvas tent! My father became a renowned botanist I am sure in part because of our early days spent camping. 3. What needs to be fixed? They need a larger parking lot and a frequent shuttle from the South entrance to the valley for day visitors. I am sure that many of them would welcome the gas savings and the relief from the "afternoon parking lot" that the road becomes when everyone is trying to leave at once. Ditto for Glacier Point - it would be nice to have more frequent shuttles up there - the parking situation and impact is intolerable. I was sure that parking lots and shuttles were part of the original "Five Year Plan" over 20 years ago. I have yet to see one going from El Portal as was originally promised. They need a much better selection of dining choices in the Valley - what ever happened to the Four Seasons Restaurant? Can't we have a nice, affordable sit-down restaurant for breakfast, lunch and dinner? I can't tell you how many times I have heard that same refrain from other visitors. The food, prices and hours for the cafeteria at Camp Curry are terrible. Fix it up or shut it down! No wonder there are always lines at the snack stands outside! Make Camp Curry more family friendly and return some of the Cabins. I also noted that there are many people that come up for the day and want to have a picnic lunch. Could we have a day camp with picnic tables to accommodate them? Right now they pull out on the side of the road wherever they can and block traffic and take up space intended for pulling out for quick stops to see the view - just remember - they are raising future nature lovers! 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The Ahwahnee Hotel should always be kept as a living, breathing organism. It was built to house people - Presidents, Kings, celebrities and regular folk alike - it would be very sad if it just became a ghost of itself as a museum. Like many others I have a very great interest in what

happens to Yosemite. My first visit was when my mother was pregnant with me - I am old enough to remember the fire fall and young enough to still hike the Yosemite Falls trail. I am a long time member of the Yosemite Association and the Yosemite Fund as were my parents and I lived and worked in Yosemite (the long-gone L Dorm). I appreciate the tireless work of those working to save our national parks against a constant onslaught Keep up the good work! Thank you, Sign me: Yosemite-loving tree-hugger.

<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	20	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Baly, Emma				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Jul,27,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Park Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? What I like about those places are that you get to see how cool they are. 2. What do you want to see protects? I want to see the animals protected. 3. What needs to be fixed? I don't know. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? I don't know.				
<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	21	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Marks, Diane				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Aug,03,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Letter				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Superintendent: I attended your scoping meeting in Oakhurst. Overall, I thought the propess was good and the staff was nicely able to get people's ideas down on paper. However, there appears to be a flaw in your process. Some of the people at the Oakhurst meeting told others that there had been a previous court case on this matter and that there were settlement conditions that have not been made public. How could the public, then, make relevant comments on a plan, some of which is unknown to them? Obviously you are going to have to go through the whole scoping process again after these conditions are made available to the public. My comment for the moment is to cancel all the currently scheduled scoping meetings until the conditions ofthe settlement are available for public knowledge, and then publicize this information so that people will have an actual and legal foundation for their input. At that later date, proceed with the scoping meetings. Please ensure that this concept/remark gets into your comments and draft documents. Thank you. Sincerely yours, Diane Marks				
<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	22	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	-				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Aug,03,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Park Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Sights, smells, climates, views, in general the whole experience. Your Rangers do a very good job here of educating and helping folks understand the environment. 2. What do you want to see protected? The natural eco systems and their proper evolutionary processes. The raw, untouched view of the wilderness, glaciation, natural erosions, and the whole experience. We must protect this for future generations and it seems to me people are the problem. Must limit their impact on this place. 3. What needs to be fixed? More checks and fines for late hours violations. People staying up all night drinking suck. More checks and fines for people leaving garbage on trails. More checks and fines for people defacing things. We observed a family writing their names on a fallen tree at Lower Yosemite falls. We told them there could be a big fine, but they kept on. People who do things like that should be fined to the maximum. The Wong family. Write em' up. Book em' Dano. Also, it's time to limit the amount of people who come here. Implement a lottery system similar to deer tags. Give bonus points away to people who bring down bags of garbage to stimulate people to clean up after those who leave behind garbage. We did the Half Dome hike, and I was very disappointed to see so much garbage on the trail. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The limited number of campgrounds that have basic necessities. No showers, no RV hookups, etc. Keeps the numbers limited.				
<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	23	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Paciano, Ida				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Aug,03,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Park Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? The natural beauty and wilderness. Amazing! Loved the night amphatheater lectures. Very educational for all. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Showers at each campsite would be great! The bathroom near campsite 25 was always dirty so I went to the bathroom near the entrance (a lot cleaner). 3. What				

about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same? Less cars! Cars=pollution. How about allowing 8-10 campers per site yet only allowing 2 cars only. Encourage van-pooling.

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**Correspondence ID:** 24     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Paciano, Katie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug.03,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? The beauty. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Less people! Higher entrance fee? 3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same? Nature. 4. What about your camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? Wildlife, plants, trees, rivers.

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**Correspondence ID:** 25     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug.03,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? The calm peaceful environment. Welcoming friendly people. Beauty and amazement of the Valley. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Less people driving cars around. Ability to get a campsite. Ban Craigslist and Ebay sales!!

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**Correspondence ID:** 26     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Warnock, Tim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug.04,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** With shock and disgust I discovered that my National Park Trustees are engaged in gill netting and extinguishing a living species in the Park. The level of disgust and shame I feel as a frequent Yosemite traveler cannot be explained. The joy of fishing first with my father, and with my son throughout the High Sierra has been replaced with the sorrow of losing something dear. We recently hiked into Virginia Lake, a High Sierra pristine lake we have been visiting for 20 years. There have been no fish since 1998 or so, with the halting of planting, but to our horror there were 18 gill nets in the lake. The only purpose of these is to .murder. a wonderful species. brook trout that someone has determined is a threat to the yellow legged frog. Who gave you the right to play God and choose who and what will live? The inmates are truly in charge of the asylum' To take a wilderness experience and place gill net technology to catch, hold, and drown a species should be against the law. It is certainly immoral. My research showed that 6 lakes have been targeted by the Park Services. While talking to Heather McKenna at the High Elevation Aquatic Resources Management Plan, I discovered you are now planning for the destruction of :30 more High Sierra fisheries. I now say my goodbyes to: Virginia Lake, Cold Mountain Area Lakes, Hutching Lake, Bartlett Creek Lakelets, McCabe Lakes, Harriet Lake, and the others on your hit list. Hopefully the public will put a stop to the madness. Let the High Sierra be. Please let me know if there are any public meetings discussing the expansion of this program of the elimination of a species. Achingly, Tim Warnock

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**Correspondence ID:** 27     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug.25,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? We love the magnificent, natural beauty of Yosemite rather than the buildings and commercialism. No new shopping centers. A huge hotel is not required, like Chukchansi. The integrity of the Park needs to be maintained. 2. What do you want to see protected? Hiking dirt paths - No wood platforms. Freedom to enjoy the park responsibly without the bureaucracy. Yosemite should not become a small town. It does not need to be developed. Remember it is a National Park. Limit the number of people entering. Trams are fine. 3. What needs to be fixed? Restore the bridge at Happy Isles. Rebuild the campsites as they once were (Camp 16 - Housekeeping). Wood floor with tent covering, wood burning stove, table. Same number of campsites as before and along the river. Electricity at some sites. After the flood all campsites should have been restored. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Outdoor evening entertainment at Camp Curry (free). Dances at Camp Curry with ballroom dancing - charge for admission. \*Firefall brought back with the ceremony that went with it. Indian Love Call accompanied by vocalist-violin or piano. The Firefall "approached the sublime in the way it touched those who witnessed it."

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**Correspondence ID:** 28      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Davis, Eugene B  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug.25,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The river is undammed. It seems very scenic to me. I love Yosemite Valley the way it is and wawona also. I have no experience with Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, so I cannot comment about it. 2. What do you want to see protected? A. The ability to drive into Yosemite Valley and to stay at a hotel or motel type accomodation there. B. The ability to hike (if one is able to do so) from Happy Isles to the tope of Nevada Falls and beyond. C. The historic Wawona and Ahwahnee Hotels. 3. What needs to be fixed? A. Limit or eliminate rafting or boating in the river above el portal. B. Allow more rooms to be built at Yosemite Lodge so that the number of mid-priced rooms in the Valley is a more reasonable number. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Most everything in Yosemite Valley and Wawona. I do NOT believe that the Merced River has to be free from human development for 1/4 mile on each side to be wild and scenic.

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**Correspondence ID:** 29      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ranieri, Nancy J  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug,31,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. Commercial rafts are left blocking the entire exit to the parking, so private rafters have to tramp through the woods to get to their cars. Move rafts to the bus burn around area. People in line for the bus are not "lined up" out of the way (maybe on the south side of the bus area?) and stand in the only river exit-to-parking-lot area. 2. Often at check-in times there is a long line (back to the street!) of cars at the gate. While one checks in, camp "residents" wait (we waited 20 min. once, 17 min. another time). Build a bypass lane!

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**Correspondence ID:** 30      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Sep,17,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love the Merced river because you can swim in it. 2. What do you want to see protected? Animals, forests, and land. 3. What needs to be fixed? There has to be more trees. 4. What would you liike to see kept the same? Everything and animals, forests, land and more trees.

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**Correspondence ID:** 31      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Sanches, Debora  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Aug,18,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love Merced River's clean water and green color. I love the way it runs down through its gorge in the high country. I love the way it meanders in Yosemite Valley. I love its waterfalls. I like to hike and camp nearby the river, especially in the high country. Yosemite Valley is wonderful and I love the Valley loop trail, it would be great if there was more biking opportunities along the loop. Wawona is an interesting place that doesn't get much attention from the public. I really like the big meadow close to the golf course and the trail to Chinualna falls. I don't spend much time in El Portal, although, occasionally I ride my bike down the road. I absolutely love Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, its location is wonderful. It is a great place to start long backcountry trips, to introduce children and young adults to the wilderness, to have family reunions. 2. What do you want to see protected? I would like to see the whole river corridor and its forks protected. However, this protection should be done in a way that invites people to know more about the river, to feel responsible for its health in order to preserve it. Simply limit access to the river without continuous public involvement will not be beneficial to the Park as a whole. 3. What needs to be fixed? Swinging bridge is an example of a place along Merced River that needs to be fixed. Its day use nature is destructive to the surrounding environment and it is an eye sore. Limit the amount of picnic opportunities in that area would be beneficial both for the river and for the park's wildlife. Let visitors know that there are other day use areas long the river would be very positive and perhaps could enhance visitors' experiences. Establish a quota/permit system for personal and commercial rafting in the river would be a wise thing to do. The same quota/permit system should be established for

parking in Yosemite Valley for day use trips. Day use visitors should be encouraged to use public transportation to visit the Valley, meaning that public transportation options from gateway communities must increase. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Upper Pines and Yellow Pines Campgrounds and Housekeeping Camp should be kept in place, despite the local impact their use generate in the river shores. Promote overnight trips, in my opinion, is better to the environment than to promote the day use of the park. I would like to see Merced River High Sierra Camp open for generations to come and Little Yosemite Valley and Moraine Campground open as well.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	32	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Clarke, Annie				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Aug,14,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Please do not close the North Pines Campground in Yosemite Valley. If additional campsites are to be built near the Upper Pines campground, please do this in addition to keeping North Pines open since we need MORE campgrounds, not fewer. North Pines Campground is the best campground in Yosemite Valley with incomparable views. Closing it would be a huge loss and disappointment. Thank you! Annie Clarke				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	33	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Holton, Dave				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Oct,02,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Please address the issue of providing for improved and increased visitor housing, since the settlement eliminated the redevelopment of Yosemite Lodge and the creation of 89 campsites. There continues to be a need for modern, good quality visitor housing, and the Lodge is the best location for reasonable cost accommodations. There is an even greater need for campsites and tent cabins since the 1997 flood and the recent closing of part of Curry Village. The mandate for limits to park visitors in certain areas should not ignore these pressing visitor housing needs.				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	34	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Willis, James				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Oct,09,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Park Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Having spent the last 5 months in US and Canadian NP's, Yosemite has the most difficult to locate Visitor Center of any park. The Visitor Center should be EASY to locate, have convenient in and out parking, and be a quick, efficient first stop for anyone needing info! Yours is exactly opposite!				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	35	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Gallino, Ron and Jeanne				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Oct,04,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Yosemite National Park is very special to us. We have been sharing the beauty and wonder of the park for over 60 years. We are now having grand adventures there with our grandchildren. We hope to attend the public meetings in our area so we can help share our feelings about the use of Yosemite in the future.				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	36	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Aguilar, Mathew E				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Oct,05,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	As a citizen and a tax payer, my concern for this plan is the limiting the access to the river. I am an avid fisherman and do not want				

my access restricted, because the park service encourages and invites foreigners to visit the park. This is not what Teddy Roosevelt wanted or Congress when they made our (U.S. citizens) national parks! If limiting access is approved, I suggest a permit be issued to fisherman that they can display like their fishing licenses. Don't punish the U.S. citizen. Hey how about charging a higher fee to foreigners.

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**Correspondence ID:** 37      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Gardner, Tom and Cathy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct.05,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Merced River Plan. In the 1970' s we completed a very detailed survey of our thoughts on a long-range plan for Yosemite. On,ce again, we will make our thoughts known. When the New Year's Flood occurred, nature reclaimed the land that need to be returned to nature. We may think we control the river. However, in reality, the river will eventually do what it needs to do. We need to respect that. This is nature's way of saying, "enough is enough." It seems to us that the campsites and lodge buildings that were lost due to the flood should not be rebuilt or moved to another location. There are enough campsites and lodge rooms in the valley right now. Do not increase the amount to the level prior to the flood. It is also our opinion that the same should be true of rockslides. When a rock-slide does occur, do not remove the rocks and do not repair the damaged buildings or rebuild new buildings in another location. Again, this is nature's way of saying, "enough is enough." We have been visiting Yosemite since the 1940' s. My first visit was in 1949 when I was three years old. My husband also visited with his family in the mid-1940's. While attending college in the 1950's, on summer breaks, he worked for the Park Service in the back country doing "blister rust control." For over 60 years we have stayed in various lodgings in Yosemite, including Curry wooden cabins, Curry tent cabins, Yosemite Lodge, The Ahwahnee, and Wawona Hotel. In 1970, we spent our wedding trip in Yosemite, staying at both the Ahwahnee and Wawona Hotel. Over the past 40 years, we have visited Yosemite virtually every year, often visiting twice a year. We have a deep love and respect for Yosemite. We are members of the Yosemite Fund and proudly have Yosemite License Plates on our automobile. We do not belong to any of the various factions involved in the controversy regarding the Merced River Plan. We are just Senior Citizens who love Yosemite and want done what is in Yosemite's best interest. We wish you good luck as you develop a Merced River Plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 38      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bercot, Haley  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct.06,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:**

I am deeply concerned about the limited in park and near park employee housing. I think the current commuter workforce situation is unsafe, contributes to crowding problems, pollution problems, and global climate change. I hope that the new Merced River Planning Team will consider these paramount issues of human safety and long term park health when deciding how many NPS employees can live within or near their duty station. My concerns in greater detail: 1) Public safety. Driving is arguably the most dangerous part of any National Park experience. More accidents occur on roads than on trails, rivers, and even rock walls. Yosemite's roads are windy, narrow, and often icy/snowy from October through March. Many employees find themselves in the unfortunate -situation of having to work a long day (9 hours, 10 hours, or more) and late hours (interpretation alone keeps three employees on until 1 0 pm at night for campground roves/programs and several more employees on until 10, 11, or midnight for full moon trams) only to then have to drive themselves to EI Portal, Oakhurst, Midpines, or Mariposa. This situation is clearly unsafe for the employee driver and any other drivers on the road. 2) Traffic congestion is one of Yosemite's biggest problems (especially on Yosemite's busiest weekends). I have to wonder if there's been a study on what percentage of vehicles on roads belong to commuting employees? These employees may take 2 or more hours to make it from their homes in gateway communities to work on crowded holiday weekends. Our work force and our roads would be much more efficient without such a huge population of employee commuters. 3) The NPS, the US Government, and world leaders all issue strong warnings concerning pollution and climate change. A large commuter workforce contributes to both of these problems. True, the YARTS bus is available, but that bus doesn't help those whose shifts start early or end late (such as Maintenance employees, rangers opening information centers, rangers closing information centers, and those presenting late night programs). In the long run, our commuter workforce is contributing to Yosemite's air quality problems and climate change. Shouldn't the National Park Service be leading the way in combatting these issues instead of contributing to them? I propose that the park consider increasing employee housing both within the Valley and in EI Portal. There are previously developed areas within the Valley that are already impacted. Perhaps several apartment buildings could be built inobtrusively in one of those? How about Taft Toe? The housing could be set way back in the forest, far away from the roads, to preserve the primeval views from the roads. Employees could then walk or bike to work, improving our fitness while keeping the roads and the air clean. The NPS has consistently listed human safety and energy efficiency as priorities. Our housing policies should support these priorities or else they are just empty words.

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**Correspondence ID:** 39      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Swehla, Karen

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,14,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am writing in hopes of encouraging plans that leave Yosemite park more readily accessible to the public. I am in favor of replacing the campground that were flooded out. I have camped in Yosemite Valley for many years and want to see this more available to more visitors.

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**Correspondence ID:** 40    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Moon, Sophie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,18,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am deeply concerned by the traffic issue in Yosemite Valley. Gridlock is frustrating to all involved, driving around the one ways is terribly confusing, and the pollution generated by vehicles can't be good for the environment. I would like to see Yosemite roads re-designed like Zion. 1 road in, 1 road out.

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**Correspondence ID:** 41    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ouzounian, Brian  
**Outside Organization:** Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,20,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To Whom It May Concern: This is to comment, with more to come, on the current scoping process for the MRP/YVP. In reading the settlement agreement, 10 months was allowed for scoping; however, in your Park Newsletter you have a schedule that is only from October 26Th till Dec 6Th or about six weeks. This is inconsistent with not only the settlement agreement but grossly poor planning as it is not enough time to do a scoping process considering all that the project entails and as the process, the oncoming holidays, and considering a thorough outreach to all interested public arenas. Surely you are not considering defining scoping in backdating the process before the settlement agreement was signed this past September! If the NPS is truly sincere about a good open and transparent and legitimate process to develop a true MRP and YVP, you must reconsider your time table and give it the 10 months specified in the settlement agreement. (See Appendix A#5). Of great concern is the number of respondents that attend to make this a fair and widespread effort. What is the level of participation for a good plan? Based upon the numbers at recent events, the respondents have been on the decline to dismal numbers; I myself was the only attendee at the MRP hearing in Burbank in February of 2008 (7?). Certainly, more than the 1980 GMP of what, 6000, is a bare minimum. But, that number left out campers as the NPS only did 'outreach' to fixed roof visitors and not campers. In a separate memo to the superintendent, Dave Ueberuaga , Kristina Rylands, and Ms. Bunnell, this concern has been expressed and it was requested that you do an outreach using the huge campers database that you hold. This would prompt more respondents and recoup the lost effort from the 1980 GMP. I trust that memo will be read in conjunction with this memo. You have just as big a project in soliciting respondents as you do studying the Project effectively. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation. Brian H. Ouzounian Co-Founder Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition

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**Correspondence ID:** 42    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Correll, Vincent  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,20,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** I am hopeful that as you "replan" for Yosemite that you will take these comments as important concepts: 1. We need a balance of Park protection as well as encouraged use. Many years ago the camping locations were established with an eye to not cluttering up the place and at the same time making visiting the park easy for the middle class of our country. When we were a young family, and relatively impoverished, we camped in the Valley and had the same wonderful views as did the "swells" in the Ahwahnee Hotel. Now we can afford to stay in the Ahwahnee from time to time. We are concerned for our kids, and all the other families who must camp if they are to enjoy the Valley. It is my understanding that in the previous "redesign" many of the campgrounds that were flooded out were to be eliminated. That was a very bad decision in my opinion. The camps were reasonably well designed and were handy for users. Some of them may be in the hundred year flood zone. Even if it were a 25 year flood zone I still feel that the camp grounds should be left where they were. No one is camping there at flood time. No one is in danger. the relatively small cost of refurbishing camp grounds after a flood, makes keeping them where they were very sensible. Refurbishing would be part of a reasonable "operation cost." Closing or moving convenient camping out of the Valley is not serving the average American user very well... Don't inadvertently foster elitism. 2. Cars are a pain and a nuisance and an unsightly clutter in the Valley. However, the idea of parking cars at Badger Pass or in El Portal or somewhere along Route 120 is not the best option. Yes, it gets most of the cars away from the Valley visitors but it creates a major transportation management nightmare. The park management would be in a major transportation business running three major. long distance, bus lines. Public support of the Park will not be helped by a citizenry who are mad at the National Park system! It would be much better to have parking at Taft Toe, among the trees. [Or some other place near

by.] Any pollution could be captured and removed so as not to damage the trees. With this valley location, for most of the year, all "day use" cars would be fairly near the destination of most visitors. The busses needed to transport folks farther into the valley would have relatively short runs. Wait times would be short. If busses get off schedule the gaps would be relatively short so no big deal. The long runs from the remote locations would require many more busses, drivers and management staff to give anything approaching "good service." Policing the passage of cars destined to be "passing through" would be far easier with Taft Toe parking because "pass through" roads would be at hand and visitors could easily be directed to them. The three long distance parking spots could be used on the few days that are super crowded. Contract busses could be used. Visitors could be told at the Park Entrance, and perhaps by radio, that the over flow parking is in use. Visitors could decide if entry was worth the inconvenience. Yosemite Valley can handle many more visitors without making it look like a traffic snarled city when most of the cars are removed. We will not have to restrict folks from coming into the Park. We must direct our planning not to restrict folks from coming to their Park. Our new plan must facilitate their enjoyment of our great Yosemite!

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**Correspondence ID:** 43      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Xavier, Marjorie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct.28,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? Yosemite's beauty is just a few steps away from our campsite. We love to hike and bike the road/paths from Upper Pines to Happy Isles and Mirror Lake. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Perhaps have a section for large RVs. It is a good camping experience - we just witnessed a huge rig arrive after dark, hit the # pole and barely miss neighbor vehicles on both sides (10/18 - site 172). Limit size. 3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same? The efficient reservation system - the clean sites so close to so much beauty, the trails, emphasize quiet. 4. What about our camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? Protect the animals and the trees - educate people about their responsibility for keeping this special place for future generations.

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**Correspondence ID:** 44      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Modin, John and Chris  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct.30,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Preliminary statement and scoping comment on the new Merced River Plan Following years of litigation Friends of Yosemite Valley the NPS and Dept. of Interior have entered into a Settlement Agreement that will grant protection to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV'S) of the Merced River. This agreement will require the defendants to comply with their obligations under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and other applicable federal environmental statutes to protect these resources from continued degradation and over use. Under the Settlement Agreement the NPS will develop a User Capacity Program to protect the Merced River and other Park resources from the excessive visitation that has seriously impacted these values for decades.

Following Court directives and the Settlement Agreement a User Capacity Program will be developed to determine a user capacity limit that will meet these objectives and will be the fundamental component in developing a new Merced River Plan (MRP). Previous methods of regulating use included one preferred by the NPS called for a conditions based adaptive management strategy that was hopelessly insufficient to protect the Merced Rivers ORV'S when unregulated day use became excessive. This excessive visitation frequently resulted in unacceptable traffic gridlock, human congestion and near chaos as many long time Yosemite visitors can attest. During these events Park resources are seriously compromised and the visitor experience is reduced to zero. Following Court directives and the Settlement Agreement a User Capacity Program will be developed to determine a user capacity limit that will meet these objectives and will be the fundamental component in developing a new Merced River Plan (MRP). Previous methods of regulating use included one preferred by the NPS called for a conditions based adaptive management strategy that was hopelessly insufficient to protect the Merced Rivers ORV'S when unregulated day use became excessive. This excessive visitation frequently resulted in unacceptable traffic gridlock, human congestion and near chaos as many long time Yosemite visitors can attest. During these events Park resources are seriously compromised and the visitor experience is reduced to zero. In order to avoid these recurring episodes of gridlock and congestion a number of alternative actions must be taken to resolve this decades old problem. The first and most important action will be to initiate a system to limit currently unregulated day use. Using current technologies not available only a very few years ago a day use reservation system based on limiting numbers of vehicles and designated day use parking could be developed. With the completion of the park wide computerized communication system providing real time visitor information at Park entrance stations, entrance station employees could advise visitors of the availability of designated parking in Yosemite Valley. If space is available a parking permit would be issued that would allow that vehicle day use access to Yosemite Valley. Visitors planning future day use could apply for advanced parking reservations using off the shelf technology similar to and widely used in the airline industry to select date and seat assignments months in advance of a flight. The reservation could be confirmed with a computer supplied bar code guaranteeing a date for future day use to access Yosemite Valley. Such a system emulating many of the features developed by the airline and other industries combined with a first come first serve component should emphasize guaranteed entry opportunity during heavy use periods and not be construed as a restriction of entry as many now fear. A check on unregulated day use is fundamental to the NPS effort to comply with Court mandates and the Settlement Agreement and will be a fundamental component in the Park's effort to protect the Merced River and other Park resources and to provide for a quality visitor experience not realized during current periods of gridlock. Any system restricting day use must be developed with and supported by commercial interests and stakeholders in the gateway communities where they can provide, to their advantage! Wrr 3 0 2009 I increased levels of food, lodging and other visitor services during these periods wh-ll' day ~ use visitation pressure exceeds capacity. The adaptive



management strategies preferred by many in the NPS to regulate use can then tier off the user capacity mandates are to be used to complement the many additional alternative actions needed to further enhance and protect the ORVS of the Merced River. Reducing day use visitation will be only a first step in the multiple actions required to reduce the human impacts on Yosemite Valley resources. Other issues of concern in developing a new MRP. 1. We should strongly support return of as much of the Valley to natural conditions as possible. The Upper and Lower River campgrounds should be restored to natural conditions (a NPS objective) and identify where some replacement walk-in campsites can be located. The area juxtaposed and east of Upper Pines campground and the area used as a storage/junk site by the NPS east of the Ahwahnee Hotel would be suitable for additional walk-in sites. The committee is on record of opposing any additional traditional drive up car camping in the Valley. Are RV hookup sites as formerly proposed in the Upper Pines campground a good idea? I think encouraging RV's by providing them with hook up's is a bad idea. 2. We should support the NPS proposal to close the one-way road between former Upper and Lower River campgrounds that runs west from Stoneman Bridge to Yosemite Village, and restore this former campground and flood plain to natural conditions. 3. We should strongly oppose any expansion or widening of any Valley loop roads including Segment D, the section 900 feet east of the 120/140 intersection to Pohono Bridge. Maintain one way traffic pattern currently in use except for the section between Sentinel Bridge and Curry which would then require two-way traffic if the road west of Stoneman bridge is closed. Widening Valley roads only encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles, RV's and tour busses. 4. Completely reconfiguring Yosemite Village should be given a high priority in developing a new MRP. There is an incredible inventory of obsolete "stuff", unnecessary buildings, warehouses, a vehicle repair facility, junked equipment, unserviceable helicopters, stables, etc. no longer necessary for current operations that could be or should be reduced or eliminated from Yosemite Village and Valley. Removing obsolete, inappropriate and unnecessary infrastructure extant in the Village for decades including the DNC corporate offices would allow relocating much of the day use parking in camp six to more appropriate locations away from the river to areas in the Village presently occupied by corporate offices, warehouses and other "stuff" to numerous to mention. The temporary employee housing hovels in the Village and other east Valley locations must be replaced with architecturally appropriate units or removed. The current day use parking condition in camp six is in violation of everything and is completely unacceptable. A significant portion of this parking area especially near the river must be reduced and relocated and the area restored to natural conditions. Similar actions must be taken at Curry as well with reduced parking and tent lodging and removal of "historic" exotic tree species and replacing them with appropriate native flora. Are mountaineering and apparel shops necessary at Curry? Eliminating these services and shopping opportunities would help mitigate the chronic human congestion that occurs during heavy use periods in the Curry area. 5. The previous Yosemite Lodge Redevelopment Plan proposed under the now invalid former MRP contained a feature that was completely unacceptable from most environmental perspectives. It proposed a realignment of approximately 0.7 miles of North side Drive through recently re vegetated sensitive areas around and south of the Lodge near the river that has become significantly re naturalized since the flood of 1997. If constructed the new alignment would pass through the prime resource/visitor interface between the Lodge and Valley and river wetlands. In place of a restored resource and a quality visitor experience would be the confounding interminable presence of passing busses and cars spewing out noise and air pollution on an otherwise incomparable scene. The present NSD alignment passes through significantly less sensitive Valley resources near the talus of north side cliffs and does not divide the visitor from the high quality Valley features and scenic vistas that present south of the Lodge complex. This previous NSD realignment proposal is one we should strongly oppose! The reason for this realignment was to eliminate serious traffic congestion caused by pedestrians crossing NSD at the Yosemite Falls intersection that often backed up traffic to Curry Village. Addressing user capacity by reducing excessive day use visitation and vehicle traffic may in itself alleviate the need for such an undesirable solution. Should traffic problems and congestion persist at this crossing following reduced day use visitation, an appropriate pedestrian crossing, similar to and no more objectionable than the slightly elevated roadbed over Yosemite Creek a few hundred yards east could be developed on site to avoid a new NSD realignment around and south of the Lodge complex. 6. Remove visitor activity and infrastructure not consistent with NP purposes or resource protection mandates. This includes and may not be limited to a golf course, tennis courts, an artificial ice rink, a large screen TV pavilion, and excessive numbers and size of T shirt and hat shops currently located at Curry and Yosemite Village. The number of rafts currently allowed on the Merced River must be significantly reduced to mitigate view shed impacts and protect riverbank resources and benthic biota. 7. Roadside parking at El Cap meadow must be eliminated. The Cathedral Rocks/Spire view shed is one of the most iconic in the Park and it is permanently debased with a solid line of vehicles and visitors trampling El Cap meadow to dust trying to get a look at rock climbers on near by cliffs. There is a suitable non sensitive area north of NSD on an old road alignment that could accommodate vehicles and observers where they would be out of sight of the meadows and view shed and not impact sensitive meadow wetlands. Additional restrooms and increased shuttle service should be included in this restoration effort. 8. Increase shuttle service throughout the Valley including to west Valley destinations to reduce private vehicle use and restrict short term roadside parking to only designated turnouts. 9. Reduce NPS stock use to minimum essential levels and eliminate concession stock and stables to reduce stock waste and pollution and to minimize other stock related impacts to Valley resources. 10. Other----- I'm sure there's more. Send your thoughts or disagree if you like.

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**Correspondence ID:** 45      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Oct,30,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Suggested items to consider when developing the Merced River Plan Having been a volunteer in the park for the past ten years (YA, Interpretive Services, and currently Campground Host) several items could, I think, mitigate the impact on the river through the valley. First, we need more picnic areas. Guests come to the North Pines Kiosk on a regular basis asking for a place to picnic. These new picnic areas could be located farther down river past the Cathedral picnic area. A new handout showing these areas could spread visitors (usually the day visitor) out along the river bank thus taking pressure off the current picnic spots. Second, we need to designate beach areas for visitors' use that will not impact on the river. For example the large sandy beach opposite Housekeeping could be used by many more guests if they knew its location. "Devils Elbow" area access could be improved. Again these areas are sand and do not have the vegetation that is endangered on other areas of the river. Third, the Valley Loop trail could be made into a bicycle path which, again, would disburse visitors throughout the valley rather than having them only in the campgrounds, Curry Village, etc. And finally, the free shuttle system could be expanded to allow access to the old and new picnic areas, the designated beaches, and Bridalveil Falls/Tunnel View areas. Creating shuttle stops at areas least likely to impact the river's banks would allow

the current level of day population in the valley and perhaps allow for additional visitors with little or no impact on the river, its banks, and its quality.

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**Correspondence ID:** 46      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Van Dusen, Alison  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,31,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** In the Wawona area, there needs to be a trail from the campground to wawona store. The road is too narrow and windy to safely walk along the roadway. Parking is in short supply at the wawona store, but folks staying at the campground are forced to drive. It could be a good idea to have a the shuttle go to this location as well. A trail would allow for Ranger doing horse patrol to reach the campground without trailering the animals. Another location which could use a trail, is from the wawona store to the C -falls trailhead. I have frequently seen lost visitors, claiming they heard there was a trail. A trail would also provide a safer and more enjoyable experience for those riding from the stables. Now the concession operates on the road way, which this year was considerable because the meadow loop was closed to their stock use. I am a seasonal LE ranger for the past 4 years. I feel strongly this would increase safety, provide a positive service to visitors and residence alike, and increase visitation with in the area because of improved access.

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**Correspondence ID:** 47      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Noonan, Christopher  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,31,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am delighted to relay that I have just finished viewing the extraordinary Ken Burns' documentary "The National Parks, America's Best Idea . " I was enthralled to learn more about the history and richness of the land which America has so rightly protected. Having visited the Grand Canyon many years ago, I know first-hand of the majesty of these protected areas, their ability to transform mind, body and spirit. This essence was captured well in the PBS documentary and I am also aware that it is the hard-work and day in and day out dedication of the National Park Service staff that ensures this land remains pristine for all who travel the trails. As a graduate student of Environmental Science and Policy at Clark University, our class recently did introductory research on the effects of the number of vehicles from visitors on the air quality and innate tranquility of these areas. I am writing today to ask you to please consider having the NPS conduct a feasibility study on creating a park and shuttle service to and from some of the more frequented parks. This feasibility study could explore the benefits of constructing massive multi-story parking garages in the distant outskirts of the parks, or in neighboring cities or amenable towns and providing an electric bus shuttle service (either at cost or free) to and from the designated parking garage to the entry destinations within the park . Perhaps, once inside the park boundaries secondary shuttles or rented bicycles could transport individuals to off-shoot locations. This idea would significantly decrease the impact from some of the near three-hundred million annual visitors to the National Parks. Aside from improving the air quality and complimenting the naturalness of the Parks, it would be a showcase project for the NPS commitment to environmental protection. Reducing the number of vehicles traveling these distances and idling in summer traffic congestion by offering electric shuttles would also significantly reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from park visitors. This is a win-win situation. I am proposing that a park and shuttle service would be most effective at the top five or ten most visited parks, perhaps starting with a feasibility study or one demonstration project. I hope that you will give this park management tool serious consideration and if you would like to discuss it further please contact me at any time. Once again, I thank you for your dedication and service to protecting such wondrous and majestic land, so that all may see and enjoy the natural splendor of Planet Earth.

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**Correspondence ID:** 48      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Stevens, Mark  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,01,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** As you are revising this plan I would urge you to include in it prohibition of stock animals from the Wild and scenic river corridor . Most importantly this ban is necessary because of the pollution caused by manure to the watershed. Also, manure and dust caused by stock animal use causes a significant degradation of the scenic and natural beauty of the area.

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**Correspondence ID:** 49      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Small, Steve  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,01,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I am writing to provide scoping comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows: The Park Service should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. These aged and ugly commercial enterprises have many significant adverse impacts on the Merced River and its corridor. Park Service staff must stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage -- but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps. Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically: 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor; 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group); 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See, for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

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**Correspondence ID:** 50      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Lindsey, I.

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Nov.01,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Out of respect for the kids of our kids I am writing to provide scoping comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. As a long time classroom teacher of physics and chemistry and a field trip / High Sierra backpack leader I and my students are very concerned about the harmful effects of the tradition of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. It is impossible to justify to students of any age how what is going on is okay. Some of my students get angry and/or actually cry when they even begin to see the effects of stock animal damage. My specific comments are as follows: The Park Service should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. These aged and ugly commercial enterprises have many significant adverse impacts on the Merced River and its corridor. Park Service staff must stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage -- but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps. Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically: 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor; 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group); 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See, for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed. As their experienced backcountry teacher, every year our students discuss how High Sierra camps treat us as second class compared to people who rent cabins. High Sierra Camps should be a dependable and famous example of pure respect for nature instead of the present and out-of-date tradition of taking profit from nature at the expense of future generations. These are the words of my young students who, compared to today's adults, are arguably among the true owners of Yosemite. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm. For the kids of our kids.

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**Correspondence ID:** 51      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Nov.03,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? Yosemite Valley is beautiful! Being amongst the trees and high granite cliffs!! The shuttle system is GREAT!! 2. What would make a better camping experience? -- Limiting campfires "all year long". Just was camping October 2009. Very hazy - very polluted. -- Bathrooms and showers NOT clean and NOT monitored for cleanliness!! Other National Parks PUT Yosemite to shame!! 3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept

the same? The Shuttle System - although - once your RV is parked in its campsite - it would be "beneficial" to have the Route extended to Glacier Point and The Maraposa Grove!!! Cut down traffic and parking issues! 4. What about your camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? The air is too hazy - due to current campfire policy!! This must change! Clear and clean air enhance the Yosemite experience!

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**Correspondence ID:** 52      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Burroughs, Allan R  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,04,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am now 70+, and may never again see many of America's remote but spectacular wilderness areas that I have passed through on foot. I don't want any of these sites made accessible to me, other aged, rich and lazy, infirm, or otherwise incapacitated. What I do want, are places of rejuvenation for my grandchildren, and their generation. Leave these few remaining Edens on this globe free of any rideable vehicle including horses llamas ATV's, etc. There is never an excuse for taking a bribe (campaign contribution) to destroy another's heritage.

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**Correspondence ID:** 53      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Kerr, Bridget  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** "There is nothing more practical than the preservation of beauty, than of anything that appeals to the emotions of mankind. I believe we are past the stage of national existence when we could look on complacently at the individual who skinned the land and was content for the sake of three year's profit for himself to leave a desert for the children of those who were to inherit the soil." -- Theodore Roosevelt

Yosemite's natural and cultural resources are the very type of beauty Theodore Roosevelt refers to in his timeless quote above. Yosemite's beauty is finite, and it cannot absorb an unlimited number of cars or buses or human beings. And it is important for all of us to keep in mind that Yosemite's stunning beauty is why it was set aside as a park to begin with. Recent and past history shows us that Yosemite's attraction (often manifested by humans as greed, arrogance, and the misuse of power) can prove fatal to preserving its resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. This attraction can result in both physical and figurative ugliness in the park. This ugliness needs to be repelled assiduously by park managers if they are to do their job of preserving Yosemite for future generations.

These scoping comments are not, by any means, a complete list of "do's" and "don'ts" for Yosemite's future. However, I have tried to supply some specific examples in order to illustrate the general concepts I am advocating you to carefully consider at the start of this momentous planning process for Yosemite's future.

Some concepts that need to be considered (with some examples): The Merced River should be viewed holistically throughout this planning process rather than discussing its protection segment by segment. The Merced River is Yosemite Valley's lifeblood, and we all need to hold this big picture vision in our minds as we consider the future of Yosemite. The term "visitor experience" needs to be defined objectively; it must also be defined in a way that is understandable to citizens. And this clear definition should be related directly to the unique natural and cultural resources that make Yosemite worthy of national park status. Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs) must be directly connected to natural and cultural resources and related to this objectively defined visitor experience. In other words, under a more objective rubric, recreation alone (or bicycle riding specifically) would not measure up to be an ORV for Yosemite Valley.

Perhaps only certain specific activities that are truly unique to Yosemite ought to be a recreational ORV (one example being rock climbing but, more specifically, big wall climbing) --that is, if there must even be "recreational" ORVs ...A good first step toward addressing user capacity in Yosemite would be to start by looking at ways of reducing the human demand for unlimited access, and this could begin with the avoidance of providing goods and services in Yosemite Valley that have no relationship to the reasons for which the park was established. This could potentially reduce the number of visitors drawn to the park while also reducing the number of employees needed to provide services to visitors. While this potential may not be a way to ensure big profits for the park concessionaire, it would go a long way towards ensuring Yosemite's attraction doesn't result in its destruction. More is not better, especially in a national park. A national park should not be viewed as a corporation.

The NPS and Yosemite's concessionaire must work together to audit and edit the multitude of unnecessary goods currently sold in most of Yosemite's retail shops. If these redundant trinkets and "souvenirs" (often imported from China) were scrutinized ethically, Yosemite could be well on its way towards a new era of NOT feeding or enabling the appetite for unlimited goods, and in turn, this would naturally reduce the number of people requiring access to the park. However, a small well-equipped grocery store and a mountain shop carrying basic camping, backpacking, and rock climbing gear seem to be the types of retail opportunities appropriate

to maintain in Yosemite Valley.

An appropriate service currently offered to park visitors is a mountaineering school and service. Yosemite's sheer granite cliffs make rock climbing, and some types of mountaineering and backpacking unique to YNP. However, some services that are currently provided in Yosemite are clearly not appropriate. The raft rental stand in Yosemite Valley is an excellent example of a service that is not appropriate and even detrimental to the park to provide. These large heavy rafts, and the way visitors use them, degrade the natural and cultural resources of the Merced River; this is quite obvious on a busy summer day in Yosemite Valley. The multiple Bracebridge performances, Vintner's holidays, business conventions, and other high -end special events that have become steadily more commonplace at the Ahwahnee Hotel and Yosemite Lodge over the last several years are some examples of services that are clearly inappropriate for a location such as Yosemite Valley. These sorts of services could just as easily take place anywhere outside a national park where there is a hotel or conference center; these sorts of events require massive amounts of supplies and additional employees, all of which take their toll on Yosemite's environment; the most obvious impact being all the vehicles that transport the goods and staff required to support these unnecessary services; these vehicles contribute to traffic congestion as well as air and noise pollution in the park.

Affordable family-friendly campsites are reasonable and necessary in a national park; they should be retained and possibly even expanded from present numbers in Yosemite Valley. At the very least, camping ought to be promoted to visitors over the goods and services--intensive hard-sided lodgings and luxury hotels, especially in Yosemite Valley.

Yosemite Institute's proposed new "environmental" education campus at Henness Ridge and the current planning process for that project is an example of the NPS supporting/allowing services that are just not appropriate in a national park. As a private non-profit education organization, Yosemite Institute has grown over the years and could continue to provide a high quality learning experience for young people in the natural world at a location other than Crane Flat or Henness Ridge (ideally nearby but outside of the YNP boundary); here the organization and its students would not be impacting Yosemite's water table, stressing known rare species or creating an increase in vehicle traffic in the park. It is reasonable for YI students to visit Yosemite Valley as part of a weekly environmental education program but it is not appropriate or fair to other park visitors for YI students and staff to advocate for increased vehicle traffic with this project. The Henness Ridge campus would greatly increase vehicle traffic in and out of Yosemite Valley on a daily basis. The fact that Yosemite Institute has failed to listen to legitimate concerns expressed by knowledgeable local citizens and environmental organizations over the last few years re: this project is simply arrogant.

The fact that this proposed project appears to violate NEPA is quite foolish.

The High Sierra Camp at Merced Lake (as well as each of the other High Camps throughout the park) is an inappropriate service to offer park visitors. The fact that the park has been forced to address user capacity proves that the High Camps have certainly outlived and outlasted their original purpose of luring reluctant visitors to Yosemite. Among the numerous detrimental impacts on Yosemite's environment from these High Camps, the frequent pack trains used to supply goods and services to the camps greatly decrease the visitor experience of hikers while increasing trail maintenance costs for the park. The High Camps no longer make sense and cannot be justified, especially in an extremely popular and busy park like Yosemite.

As part of the effort to create a more effective constituency for Yosemite, the park needs to be visitor-friendly across a wide spectrum of society. The above examples of inappropriate services offered contribute to a trend towards Yosemite becoming a preserve for the wealthy and / or those numb to the beauty of Yosemite's natural and cultural resources; if this trend is allowed to continue it will ultimately lead to a loss of support for preserving what is left, and perpetuates the degradation of the park.

If Yosemite Valley is to remain accessible or better provide social equity for park visitors it does not need new development. Replacing existing structures with new construction usually drives up the cost to the visitor, shifting the visitor demographic still further toward those who are well to do. It also locks in the presence of the structure, and tends to make it less likely that the structure would be removed if it were decided that it was not appropriate.

There are plenty of buildings already in Yosemite Valley. A way to avoid further unnecessary new development there would be to better utilize current buildings for only the activities and services deemed absolutely necessary for a Yosemite Valley location. For example: it may be appropriate to locate offices for a few concession employees, law enforcement rangers and resource managers (wildlife rangers) in Yosemite Valley, but it is not appropriate to have the large number of executive and administrative offices that currently exist in Yosemite Valley. It would be appropriate, logical, and very prudent from a safety standpoint, to immediately convert existing office buildings on the north side of Yosemite Valley into dorms for concession employees who are currently housed at Curry Village in an active rockfall zone.

Temporary structures must be kept to an absolute minimum, and all current "temporary" structures in the park and in El Portal need to be re-assessed at the early stages of this planning process. An example of an unacceptable "temporary" structure is Highland Court (also known as the Trainwreck) in the vicinity of Yosemite Lodge--for a long time park managers maintained that this would be removed from the park as soon as new employee housing was complete at Curry Village, yet the employees have been moved into the new employee dorms at Curry Village (also known as Granite Landing) and the Trainwreck is still housing employees.

This also brings up the unresolved issue of determining how many employees Yosemite Valley should house during any given season ... It makes sense for El Portal to remain a community that is made up of long-term, year-round park employees and their families. Though daily commutes up and down the Merced Canyon are inevitable, it makes no sense environmentally, or even sociologically, to force even more park employees to live long distances from their work. The NPS must understand that supporting small community of long-term employees in El Portal is an asset to YNP and its visitors, not a thorn in the side. The entire Merced Canyon

is full of natural and cultural resources that are unique, especially in comparison to the rest of the now over-developed western slope of the Sierra. This new planning effort is a great opportunity for the NPS to foster a holistic view of the Merced River west of the park boundary and beyond, to begin to coordinate better with the community of El Portal its homeowners, as well as all the various entities and agencies involved with the Merced River (Caltrans, the Mariposa County Unified School District, the BLM, Mariposa County, and the State of California); this better collaboration would ensure that the Wild and Scenic Merced River is protected adequately throughout the Merced Canyon and not just within the boundaries of YNP. The wetlands and archeological sites within El Portal are highly valued by residents and local Native Americans and should be discussed with the El Portal community so residents have the information they need to participate productively in this planning process. The wetlands maps for El Portal should at least be made readily available to attendees of all upcoming planning meetings in El Portal. Ideally this collaboration between the NPS, would result in better communication for the entire Yosemite community and more consistent use of river protective practices by homeowners and all of these agencies throughout the Merced Canyon. An example of a lack of collaboration and non-communication between these agencies and the local community is the fact that the Mariposa Unified School District historically used herbicides / pesticides as a preferred method of weed control at the El Portal School (virtually on the banks of the Merced River) despite the concern of parents of the students at that school.

Public health and safety: While it is certainly important to understand and map the potential dangers of flood damage in the Merced's dynamic river corridor, rock fall danger is a day-to-day reality and danger in many parts of Yosemite Valley. While major floodwaters usually do not arrive without warning-rock fall usually occurs with no warning and can happen at anytime of year. The NPS needs to take the realities and dangers of rock fall in Yosemite Valley a lot more seriously than they have previously, especially at the start of a new planning effort for Yosemite Valley. In recent years, the natural world has been giving the NPS some very clear messages about the real danger to humans rock fall can be in Yosemite Valley. So far, the NPS does not appear to be listening to these clear messages.

The new employee housing at Curry Village (also known by many concession employees as Granite Landing) should have never been built--for many reasons; the most serious reason these new dorms should not exist is that putting employees in that location creates a serious public health and safety risk. Every time a park employee goes to sleep within that clearly active rock fall zone, an unnecessary risk is being taken. It is commonly accepted that life can be risky in itself, but many of the young seasonal employees housed in these new dorms may not even be aware that their dorm room is actually a dangerous location to live.

This new planning effort must make the existing geologic data on rock fall easily available to the public. Park geologists must also diligently continue to gather the most up-to-date information on Yosemite Valley rock fall locations and frequency, and make this information readily available to citizens. If this data is not made available to the public, as soon as possible, there will be no way for the NPS to logically (or ethically) justify any new planning decisions that will impact the floor of Yosemite Valley.

The public planning process: Over the past five years I have witnessed extreme ugliness in Yosemite. From the prevalent orange construction fencing and continual sound of heavy construction equipment rattling away in Yosemite Valley, to the threats, disrespectful actions and unproductive words of some of Yosemite National Park's high-level planners and managers. During this time, some members of high profile park non-profits made it a habit of steadfastly supporting the NPS (even as the government obstinately avoided the law and wasted millions in taxpayer dollars on appealing reasoned court decisions). Very unfortunately, this sort of ugliness was a regular part of life for many park visitors and employees. We were exposed to the ugliness of ceaseless park construction past several years. Instead of working productively with those who wanted to improve the situation and took the time to read the park documents, submit comments, and show up for meetings or those who dared to ask questions about the most obvious shortcomings of park plans, park management systematically marginalized at meetings or in the press.

Fortunately, a lot of unnecessary construction has now been stopped through successful litigation. It would be wonderful, if, some day, of the people in positions of power who brought all this ugliness on Yosemite would simply admit that they were on the wrong side of the law. Regardless, I am encouraged that the court oversight over this process can help to finally put an end to this dark time for Yosemite.

Hopefully, now, this ugliness in Yosemite will be a thing of the past. In order to keep this new process as transparent and ethical as possible, public comments received by the NPS (at every stage of this CMP planning process) should be posted in a timely manner and in a user-friendly and easily viewable format on the park website. The park also needs to work to be inclusive of all citizens who have concerns for Yosemite's future. An example of the work that NPS needs to do towards inclusiveness is the need for the park to sincerely reach out to Native Americans for this planning process, this is especially true of the Paiute people who are lineal descents of the first people of Yosemite; unfortunately they have previously been ignored by park staff, and have even been written out of the parks history-it is past time for this to change. Another example is this work the NPS needs to do is in greatly improving communication with members of the El Portal community.

I'm looking forward to participating in helping to shape a better Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan. Since I no longer live in California, I have learned from others there has been an improved tone detected at recent public scoping meetings among park staff. I truly hope this may finally be an indication that the NPS is now able to make it a priority to engage in respectful discussion with all citizens about the real problems that face Yosemite. And I remain hopeful that this new planning process for the Merced River will truly be a fresh start. Yosemite cannot be all things to all people. But I am confident that given an ethical, inclusive, and transparent public planning process, the majority of Americans would not choose to erect monuments and plaques to their spouses or choose to pour tons and tons of cement to "restore" the Yosemite Falls area; with any luck, this shameful mistake from Yosemite's recent past can serve us as an illustration of what can happen when ugliness, in all its various forms, is allowed to prevail in Yosemite. Because "what is best for the park" is often subjective, it helps to think in terms of what is best for the bears, the bats, the birds, the insects, the trees, and the rivers (as well as those who come to Yosemite to admire them). El Portal/Yosemite resident for over 20 years

**Correspondence ID:** 54      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Cehrs, David and Anne  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,10,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Yosemite National Park - Merced River Plan The overriding goal for Yosemite National Park should be the preservation of nature for future generations. This means the protection and preservation of natural processes, natural environments, and natural ecosystems. Within these confines of protecting nature, we need to allow mankind to enjoy, marvel at, and use (as in hiking, climbing, photography, sightseeing, etc.) the park without interfering or destroying the park and the natural processes that govern the park. Natural processes prevail - this should govern, and in many cases override , all other Park Service ideas for restoration, construction, housing, parking, and use by visitors. - Floods : flood waters cover a major portion of the Yosemite Valley floor (1997). - Natural stream meandering: the Merced has meandered back and forth across the floor of Yosemite Valley and will continue to do so in the future. -Rock fall: rock fall is a continuing process in Yosemite Valley. Blow down from rock fall can go across the entire Valley floor, one side to the other. Blow down has also killed people in the Valley. The new employee dorms at Camp Curry were hit with rock fall even before they were completed. -The rock fall line and the flood high water line overlap . This means that there is no "safe" place in Yosemite Valley to build safe structures. Restoration - Camps 7 & 15 (Upper & Lower River Campgrounds) were closed after the 1997 flood and were to be restored to native vegetation. To date they have not been revegetated and are storage areas for broken concrete, piles of gravel and sand, and recycled (?) asphalt. Construction - Camp 6, now day use parking across from Yosemite Village, has piles of construction sand, gravel, and asphalt in the parking lot along with much construction equipment. - Camp Curry. The apple orchard parking lot at Camp Curry is now under construction - moving tent cabins up in the boulders (rock fall) down into the flood zone. The apple orchard is a mess, it looks terrible, and what is being done to replace (?) the lost parking? - New employee housing (?) tent cabins are being constructed at the Ahwahnee Hotel. Also there is construction materials, storage containers and other materials (?) stored behind the Ahwahnee Hotel. - There should be no new building within Yosemite Valley . Between rock fall and flooding there is no safe place on the valley floor. New construction should be located outside Yosemite Valley, perhaps in Big Meadow/Foresta, down the Merced at El Portal, although there is little room there, or some other place with little visual or environmental impact on the park outside the valley. Employee Housing - Employee housing needs to be removed from Yosemite Valley (Yosemite Lodge parking lot, Degnan's parking lot, Camp Curry tent cabins, Ahwahnee Hotel tent cabins). A possible location not far removed from the Valley and easily accessible by shuttle bus would be Big Meadow/Foresta . Visitor Use Numbers - It is most critical during 3 day holidays during the summer, but also critical during most summer days. On these days there are too many people in cars in Yosemite Valley; gridlock has occurred between Yosemite Village-Curry Village-Ahwahnee. They need to be in shuttle busses with their cars parked somewhere . - There is a need to get people out of their cars and walking. In delicate areas the trails should be boardwalks (such as across meadows), have railings to protect the environment, be "paved" with DG or granite that is permeable to water and not asphalt or concrete. - Overnight tours. Tour busses should not spend the night within Yosemite Valley. They should drop their customers within the valley and the bus can spend the night some where outside the valley and then come in during the morning to pick them up .

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**Correspondence ID:** 55      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Johnston, William  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,11,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I am writing to provide scoping comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows: The Park Service should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. These aged and ugly commercial enterprises have many significant adverse impacts on the Merced River and its corridor. Park Service staff must stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage -- but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps. Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically: 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor; 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (Le., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group);3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See, for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

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**Correspondence ID:** 56      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Fortner, Jimmie  
**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**  
**Received:** Nov,12,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence** E-mail  
**Type:**  
**Correspondence:**

Mass transit should be the preferred means of access Yosemite Valley along the Merced river. A system based on "Y AR TS" should be implemented featuring: 1. Large, easy access parking for cars, RV's and none "green" buses outside of Yosemite Park "Park and Ride" 2. Green re-fueling station, i.e. compressed natural gas 3. Shops, restaurants, lodging (Park employee & visitor) and other facilities serving travellers and visitors. I propose the Park adopt a system similar to the one servicing the Grand Canyon. Ideal location would be Catheys Valley Township Planning Area within the western portion of Mariposa County.

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**Correspondence ID:** 57      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Urquhart, Andrew W  
**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**  
**Received:** Nov,14,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence** E-mail  
**Type:**  
**Correspondence:**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide scoping comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. In general, I am very concerned about the adverse impacts of commercial activities and the use of stock animals in the vicinity of the Merced River corridor. My specific comments follow: 1. The High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, May Lake, Sunrise, and Vogelsang should be closed. These commercial operations have many important undesirable impacts on the river and its surroundings. These camps should not be rationalized as part of our 'heritage' or as being 'historic'. The fact is that they cause pollution and are an undesirable use of this beautiful area. 2. The plan should adopt strict controls and procedures regarding the use of domestic livestock within the Merced River Corridor. Examples of such controls and limits include: a. Stock parties should be kept as small as possible. b. Commercial use of horses should be eliminated from the Wild & Scenic River corridor. c. Strict procedures must be adopted to eliminate the spread of harmful weeds by livestock. d. Stock animals must be required to wear manure catchers to avoid pollution of waters and trails. e. Open grazing or roaming of livestock must be prohibited. I urge you to construct a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its surroundings.

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**Correspondence ID:** 58      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mowen, Randel  
**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**  
**Received:** Nov,14,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence** E-mail  
**Type:**  
**Correspondence:**

I am writing (a second time) to provide my personal scoping comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I responded to your prior call for comments in July of 2008, right after I returned home from trekking the John Muir Trail. Quite frankly, I am surprised the debate is still lingering. I suspect the powerful "Dude" lobby is drawing this process out in the hope that it will eventually get swept under the rug. I'm still here, and I'm still interested in keeping our wilderness "wild" for the enjoyment of everyone for generations to come. As I indicated before, I am very concerned about the harmful effects of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as the use of stock (pack) animals. I have read and support all the comments and recommendations made on this issue by the High Sierra Hikers Association, so I won't reiterate them here. Instead, I will (again) focus on my personal observations and limit my specific comments to my actual experience on the John Muir Trail: 1) If John Muir were alive today, he would be appalled at the condition of his name-sake wilderness trail. The feces and urine from pack animals on the trail were utterly disgusting. Because it was so bad, I was forced to walk beside the trail many times. I would not normally do this because it creates a double-track, which exacerbates the erosion effects from both pack-animal traffic, and human foot-traffic. If pack-animal usage increases, we may eventually end up with a pack trail (sewer trough) and an adjacent human trail. A double-track is more in keeping with an urban, dirt road experience than a wilderness experience. 2) The stench makes it impossible to enjoy the complete wilderness experience. I felt like I was at a stock-yard, or at a rodeo. One of the pleasures of wilderness hiking is the enjoyment of the subtle fragrances of grasses, trees, herbs, and flowers. This is no longer possible unless one leaves the trail and hikes "cross-country" style, which would be quite counterproductive, especially in sensitive areas. 3) The constant impact of pack-animal hooves creates deep gouges (or troughs) in areas where the earth is not protected by stone cladding. These troughs eventually turn into drainage for runoff, with the resultant erosion transforming trails into rivers. This is not only unsightly, but forces the creation of additional parallel trails, further encouraging erosion on a larger and wider scale. 4) The constant wear and tear of pack-animal hooves requires the continual reconstruction of trails. This unnecessary labor could be put to much better uses. I for one, do not intend to volunteer my time and effort to repair all the damage done by pack-animal traffic which has resulted from commercial "Dude" activities. 5) The feces left behind by pack animals introduces invasive plant species, which can (and do) decimate the native flora in certain areas. 6) The feces and urine from pack animals results in a potent and direct pollution of our pristine alpine water. Pack animals are routinely stopped in the middle of water crossings to drink. They of course take this opportunity to relieve themselves, introducing contaminants directly in to the water. In 1984, the US Geological Survey in cooperation with the California Department of Public Health examined water at 69 Sierra Nevada stream sites that were selected in consultation with Park Service and National Forest managers. It is no coincidence that the higher levels of contamination coincided with the areas where pack animals were most used. In the 25 years since this "most recent" study, I can only imagine how much worse the contamination has become... 7) The feces left behind by pack animals introduces roving packs of non-native flies, which are not only a nuisance, but a health hazard. 8) Grand stone staircases may be impressive in human architecture, but are entirely inappropriate in a wilderness setting. These devices are not necessary (or even comfortable) for human travel. The unusually high "rise" of their steps is obviously tailored to pack-animal travel. They are installed



to facilitate the movement of pack-animal caravans in difficult terrain. Man-made structures this grandiose have absolutely no place in the wilderness. I adhere to the "leave no trace" philosophy, which should also be the primary consideration of the official stewards of our wilderness resources. I can think of no use more in conflict with this philosophy than pack-animal caravans. As humans, we are constantly and continually directed to keep the "zone" of the trail pristine, and to properly bury or pack-out our feces, while pack animals are allowed to directly contaminate the very trail we are instructed to treat with respect and courtesy. This is not only insulting, it is a direct contradiction of the implied mandate to protect and preserve our natural resources through the "leave no trace" philosophy which is the cornerstone of wilderness management. I believe all users and uses should be considered when managing the natural resources of our parks. Access should be made available to as many people as possible, while preserving the wild nature of our wilderness resources to the highest degree possible. I am not in favor of banning pack animals from our parks, but I do think they should be restricted to areas which are appropriate to that kind of activity. High Sierra Camps are very similar to the mining camps of the past and really have no place in the wilderness environment, especially in these higher, more susceptible zones. I believe all existing camps should be relocated to lower, less fragile areas of the park. Backpackers are routinely managed relative to; sensitive zones where they are not allowed to camp, elevations above which fires are prohibited, areas where feces must be packed-out, quotas restricting hiker traffic, etc. I think it is entirely appropriate that pack animals be managed and restricted in a similar manner, perhaps by limiting their use to certain areas below an established elevation ? Another approach might be to limit their penetration into the wilderness to 10 miles or so from established trail-heads. Until the necessary restrictions are in place, I recommend that feces be controlled through an immediate mandate requiring diapers , or "catch bags" for all pack-animals. In summary, I believe it is time to revoke the preference that has been traditionally granted to the lobby that defends and promotes commercial pack-animal activities. Special Interest Lobbies belong in the corrupt halls of congress, not in the management of our National Parks. Sincerely, Randel Mowen

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**Correspondence ID:** 59    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Susnow, Lawrence  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Forgs are fine. If they have some habit that is enough. They seem to be dying out anyway due to that fungus thing. Fishing in the Sierra is very special. Please leave the fish alone.

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**Correspondence ID:** 60    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Rhoan, Vikki L  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,15,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Superintendent Ueberuaga & Yosemite Planning Department: I appreciate the opportunity to voice my comments on the revised Merced River Project. First, I would like to make my statement that the Merced River Project and the protection of it should be viewed as a whole ,rather than being segmented. The visitor experience needs to be defined objectively. The National Park Service defined the "Visitor Experience" as Thinking,Dreaming and relating to Natural Resources. Yosemite is,after all, a National Park with Many Remarkable and outstanding values.To reduce this jewel to a Disney land environment designed to cater to an elitist crowd would degrade the natural ,remarkable values. Yosemite has no place for gift shops or high priced lodging .Yosemite should be enjoyed for exactly what it is ; a wilderness area with its natural beauty and wildlife. I do not believe that Yosemite should cater only to those who have the strip mall mentality .There is no place in this jewel of the national parks for overdevelopment of high priced lodging,Vintner's holidays or Brace bridge performances. Affordable camping areas should be available to those who wish to vacation in Yosemite. The National park Services original goal was to reduce the human footprint in Yosemite Valley. How can you accomplish this when Yosemite is insisting on providing goods and services which have no relationship to why the National Park was established .How can we preserve the natural beauty of Yosemite when the park service insists on dumping more and more blacktop over pristine areas. Funding from The Yosemite Fund is also driving development in Yosemite . I believe that a panel should be established to look into how corporate donations are being funneled from the Yosemite Fund into Yosemite National park for what appears to be projects to benefit corporate partners and not the preservation of this beautiful wilderness Yosemite does not need any more new development .Cost of visiting the park has gone up and up over the last decade making it more unreasonable for family visitation and catering more to the wealthy and elite. Employee housing was built in a known rockfall zone and the new Indian cultural center is also being constructed in a rockfall area . Recently the Awahnee Hotel has had slides as well . The USGS stated in the past data has been inadequate and new and more comprehensive data needs to be done and these slide areas need to be monitored more closely for the health ans welfare of not only employees but also the visitors to Yosemite. I would like to see some funding going toward these studies rather than spending funding on unnecessary building of structures that ruin and clog the natural landscape . As for issues with the American Indian Community You have stated that you consult with a 7 tribal consortium/however you have neglected the lineal descendants of those who were in Yosemite at first discovery. I would insist that you include those lineal descendants in matters of consultation and not rely on the 7 tribal consortium for all decision making and planning in Yosemite valley . Signage has been placed in the park representative of only the Miwuk culture .These signs need to be corrected as the pictures indicate these American Indians are Miwuk when in reality they are Paiute people .Also many books have been written on the Miwuk culture in Yosemite which are in error. We believe that updated and corrected versions need to be placed and archived within the National park so the visitors are educated on Paiute fact and not Miwuk Fiction. rd I also would like to see impartial 3 party monitors used during construction projects going forward.In the past the monitors were employees of the NPS or hired by the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation.There is a definite need for monitors who would be m.ore objective and from an outside source.I also believe that enough discovery has been made in Yosemite concerning Indian remains and areas in the Park.Archeology knows the areas where remains are and insist on impacting these areas over and over again. They use the excuse of these areas being previously

impacted and state that they need more data concerning the past when it comes to the American Indians of the valley. The same care should be given for the burial areas and remains that the NPS gives to the Yosemite Cemetery/Galen Clarks resting place and those who the NPS consider the original settlers of the Valley after first contact. There is enough discovery and information in your archeology department and the past has proven that when archeology is done little or no care has been exhibited in caring for remains of the American Indian remains. This practice must stop immediately I think it is important to have American Indian rangers employed. I also think this would help in education of the public as well as showing sensitivity in areas of American Indian issues in this national Park. A program needs to be implemented by Yosemite for the education of the public in American Indian Issues in the park. Net Gains versus Losses: No one should ever be able to weigh one area against the other. All cultural areas should be preserved and protected and not traded off as losses and gains. Archaeological areas are unique, significant and important and never be considered as a net gain or loss. These areas are remarkable outstanding values and if you lose one you have lost a history of those who came before. Burial areas needed to be preserved and treated with respect, just as you respect those who are interred in your cemetery, you must treat discovered areas with that same respect. They should not be removed, considered a trade or a loss because it has been previously impacted. In the case of the Old Waste water Treatment plant, in 1961 UCLA school of Archeology did a study called the Fitzwater report which was commissioned by Yosemite National Park. This study was done to determine what was in the ground before the waste water treatment plant was constructed. There were 25 burials uncovered and removed from this area and remains were turned over to Yosemite National Park never to be found again. Recently Yosemite wanted to remove this plant area, the building and a cistern. The plan was to bring in earth moving equipment and ramrod construction in an area where known burials were and still are. As not to disturb others buried in this area I would like to see this area left alone. The building in this area could be removed by hand as not to disturb the ground. The cistern or sump needs to be looked at closely because of toxins (including mercury once used in mining) could have the capability of polluting the Merced as well as groundwater and water used by residents in El Portal. Several ground penetrating radar studies have been done in the past and I would like to see funding distributed to a new and more comprehensive ground penetrating radar study done in this area. The American Indian people especially the lineal descendants should be consulted on these plans and not limit consultation to the Southern Miwuk and the 7 tribal consortium. The Rhoan family should be included as well as David Andrews and if families from Walker River ( Captain Sams family, The Toms and many others on the other side and in Nevada ) would be included this would be fair and equitable. Old records state that in early 2000 residents of El Portal found human remains and teeth in and around this area as well as Rancheria Flats area. In fact it is on record that a burial of infant remains was found in Rancheria Flats. I also believe that Amy Rhoan should be allowed to have her grandmothers basket (Leanna Tom) repatriated to her for study. Old Paiute basketry and this particular type that Leanna Tom did is a disappearing art form and should be allowed to be studied by the lineal descendant of the original basket maker and not be held in an area where the lineal descendants have no way of seeing or connecting with it. Natural processes will restore Yosemite. Management of these processes is what the NPS is supposed to do, not construct, lay blacktop, and allow corporate America to overtake its natural beauty and replace it with a park for profit cash cow. Yosemite may need to come to terms with drastically reducing visitors and exchange dollars for preservation. Yosemite was never intended to be Disneyland so why make it so? Footprint reduction should begin with reduction of services and goods available in the valley. Some services obviously need to remain. Mountaineering school have a place in Yosemite, high end events do not. Corporate America does not belong in Yosemite as this place of natural beauty should never have a price tag put on it. Current buildings could be better utilized rather than building new ones. Reuse and recycle what you have. Further construction contributes to noise pollution in the Valley. When we go to Yosemite it is to enjoy nature as well and the peace and quiet. never ending construction as well as huge social functions, thousands of cars takes away from the natural peace and quiet one wants when they visit the national park system. Keeping cars out of the Valley has always been a hard choice but as we know gridlock at peak times of the year is inevitable. Pollution from these vehicles lay in the valley and damages wildlife, trees and fauna. Noise pollution also disturbs animals, wildlife and human visitors. Electric busses could be a way of improving the situation but to run an enormous amount of busses in loops all day long would not help the situation. The NPS needs to accommodate the public in much better ways and encourage the public to become actively involved when it comes to planning. In the past meetings were only scheduled in the valley on workdays and at time when the general public found it impossible to engage the NPS. Also many times meetings were announced last minute and the public felt excluded from planning processes. Transparency is key in these planning meetings and accommodation of the public at large would be key to successful planning. What is best for the park is what is best for the animals, environment they live, the trees, vegetation, and rivers and those who choose to visit and admire them. Somewhere along these many years the National Park Service has forgotten this and their mission statement. If you the national park Service, go back to your roots and avoid the traps of corporate America then Yosemite would be a much better place. I thank you for allowing me to comment on this planning process and look forward to being part of this planning process. Sincerely, Vikki L.Rhoan

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**Correspondence ID:** 61      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Organization:** Ouzounian, Brian H  
**Received:** Nov,17,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Thank you for extending the scoping period to February 2010, mentioned in your November 17Th Newsletter; however, it was the Settlement Agreement that should be referenced as the motivation and the public's cry to comply as 10 months was the schedule in the Settlement Agreement, which should be measured from the signing of the agreement( end of September'09), which would make July 2010 the appropriate month to conclude it. Also, we remain concerned about the poor showing at all the public outreach meetings as approximately 80-100 were in attendance for all meetings. This should be cause enough to have more meetings with a broader outreach. We have requested mailing notices to all campers since 1979, which does not violate any rules and press releases. So far, the public cannot make the distinction as to why this planning effort over the last or the poor showing is a vote of "no confidence" in the YNPS. With only 10 total participants, the Los Angeles meeting was a total embarrassment to your outreach. I understood that the comments were valuable, nonetheless. How will you go about getting more respondents, especially from disenfranchised campers of past plans? Brian H. Ouzounian Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition www.yosemitevalleycampers.org

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**Correspondence ID:** 62      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mathewson, Sue  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,17,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I'm a fly fisher. What steps are you taking to ensure the safety of the indigenous trout, whether planted or wild? ...

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**Correspondence ID:** 63      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Orcholski, Gerald  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,17,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1) What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The Merced River needs to be protected so it can remain wild, natural and unchanged by humans, which means no dams or pooling for human recreational use. The Wawona Hotel is a historical hotel which should be preserved for use by all. The price is pricey and should be reduced. 2) What do you want to see protected? Merced River and Wawona Hotel 3) What needs to be fixed? Have a more affordable price for staying at the Wawona Hotel. 4) What would you like to see kept the same? Wawona Hotel

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**Correspondence ID:** 64      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? It is unique, very close to nature. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Reduce the number of people at one campsite at one time. Not to drive close to the tent-places with the cars. 3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same? Do not improve the paths and trails at the campgrounds.

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**Correspondence ID:** 65      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? I love the nature and the magic of the Valley. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Reduce the infrastructure of the Valley.

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**Correspondence ID:** 66      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? Being so close to the activities like hiking, bouldering. At Camp 4 the atmosphere of all the climbers. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Improve the sanitary facilities especially showers at Camp 4.

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**Correspondence ID:** 67      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Tait, Susan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? The cliffs, the trees, the stars, the streams. Waking up at night to experience these when it finally quiets down (see below). Friendly people. 2. What would make a better camping

experience? NOT having to listen to generators, breathe wood smoke, or have the glare of bright lights from the bathrooms and bright lanterns. A little more space would be good, and a separate campground for us tent campers (not like overcrowded Camp 4), or at least make the outside of the loops for tents only, for a little more seclusion and quiet. 4. What about your camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? I would like my ability to experience Yosemite Valley by sight, sound, and smell to be protected. The factors above and the TRAFFIC interfere, as well as there being too many residences and businesses in the Valley.

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**Correspondence ID:** 68    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Crouch, Rick and Kathy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** We would like to see the old river camp grounds reopened to travel trailers and general camping. Also we would like to know if the digital ? signal is being sent into Valley floor.

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**Correspondence ID:** 69    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? Beautiful scenery, very close access to many climbs and hikes. Also, the campground (Camp 4) creates a community of outdoor enthusiasts that share a knowledge and passion for the park. 2. What would make a better camping experience? Soap in bathroom and/or sanitizer For climbers staying in excess of 10 days maybe a longer term fee that is cheaper. 3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same? Ability for climbers to camp and share the area. Group fire rings Bearbox xyxtem is very easy - Nice. 4. What about your camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? The ability to camp so close to so many good spots and yet protecting those spots from harsh use. Seems like the park does a good job, and campers in turn, to encourage wise use of the rocks, picking up after yourself, and preserving it for others' use. Policies should at their core protect these areas for future use.

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**Correspondence ID:** 70    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Yosemite Valley Auditorium  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Yosemite Valley Public Scoping 12/2//2009 Yosemite Valley Auditorium Comments/Questions

? Is concession services plan subject to NEPA? ? How about extending existing contract until MRP is approved? So there won't be conflict of interest ? Concerns about Scenic Vista Management Plan - how far will it go? Will consideration be given to biology, forest succession, etc? ? Will transportation plan be part of this process or is it a separate plan? Explain relationship between transportation issues and river plan ? How will you take into account the 10,000s of comments submitted for YVP andMRP I? ? Role of the court in planning process? ? Are you having specific meetings with FOYV and MERG - would that not be a good idea? ? User capacity - will it be the same process as before or will it change this time around? ? Protect the upper pines campground area near Happy Isles - archeological significance, other resources that should remain as is ? YVP called for a walk-in campground at that location, so the comment is important, seconded, reinforced ? Day use reservation system should be enacted. Also, construction of by-pass road encouraged at Y ose Lodge ? Look at capacity of campgrounds - sites are too close together, not being allowed to regenerate ? Utilize EPIForesta for intensification of visitor support - parking, staging areas What do you want to see protected? ? Air quality ? The camping and hiking opportunities ? Water quality of the Merced River ? The easy access to the Valley ? Protect Foresta from becoming a parking lot ? The adventure, feeling of being spontaneous, without control ? Restrict campfire What do you Love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? ? Clarify source of financial support for Y ARTS - not funded through subsidies from hotels ? Have some meetings on weekends ? Experience today without any cars in the park! ? Love the shuttle bus (from Wawona) ? Very little exposure to information for visitors who aren't aware of what to expect when they get to Yosemite ? Rely on gateway communities to provide info and provide services ? We need to re-establish some campgrounds. Elimination of parking spaces must also be addressed. Day use parking is key ? Prior planning efforts not quantitative issues ? Scheduling of commercial operators. Tour buses can/should be contained ? Public access to research library ? Open the horse trail at Happy Isles to foot traffic ? Paving at John Muir Trail- improves visitor experience ? The way it is - don't change a thing ? Coffee with the Ranger in campground and Ranger talks - learning opportunities What needs to be Fixed? ? Make clear the pathways around - not thru- to get to water, bathroom, campsite ? Signage reviewed to correct it e.g. Village Store to 4-way intersection, esp walking signs: truth the clarity by walking the route ? Better supervision of # of campers per site ? Restore junkyards "corporation yards" used by NPS, upper and lower river campgrounds, old gas station between Sugar pine Bridge and The Awahnee ? Day users cannot get info about park before they are in the park - what to expect, where to go besides the Valley, etc ? Why not open Badger in summer with shuttle to Glacier Pt to ease congestion at Glacier Pt? ? Consider "no bum" ie no campfire

days in Valley ? Consider no campfires ever ? Restore upper and lower river campgrounds and design restoration with ecological principles as primary factor ? Restore scenic views at scenic view pullouts by cutting down the trees ? Do scenic restoration tree cutting sparingly ? Vehicles stay parked at campsites. Transportation while in Valley by alternate means. Private vehicles for arrival/departure trips only ? Eliminate road corridor parking/pullouts ? Confine human impact where we are impacting eg at Lodge: get same # of rooms but over smaller footprint. Confine not spread out areas of impact ? Any plan should result in less or equal impacted areas ? No tradeoffs of rehab one area so you can impact another RECEIVED rv IY) R --Ob f? DEC 0 8 2009 P9r d.o+/-YOSEMITE ? Traffic jams ? Day use automobile congestion ? Base of cliffs regenerated/restricted where climbers access ? Restrict rock access in same manner (spirit) that backcountry is restricted ? Restore native fauna in the areas climbers frequently access ? Can't see big trees grove without long hike at elevation unless you are handicapped (tram tour \$26 each) ? Add shuttle bus to trees so you don't have to pay tour price or extend free shuttle ? Expand shuttles to more places in park - not just Valley ? Emphasize making park available to all economic classes ? Reduce visitor costs ? Increase web interactivity during planning process ? Find balance to construction projects that makes sense. Help protect resource ? YF trail maintenance has done a lot to reduce impacts ? YF needs to be more transparent, concessioner too ? Yosemite Guide needs more emphasis at entrance stations ? Like 2 lanes at entrance stations ? Next time concession contract comes up there should be public input te prices and providing opportunities for enjoyment ? DNC has done a better job ? Operations excludes lots of people (pricing) ? Valley campgrounds should be run like Tuolumne - half reserved, half firstcome, first-served ? YARTS not answer to get people in and out of Valley (camping, gear). For day use could be okay or overnight with a couple of suitcases ? How will renewal of concession services plan synchronize with this process? What would you like to see kept the same? ? The NPS should be more in the preservation business and less in the construction business; divorce the Yosemite Fund - taints park's focus ? Keep the trail system the same - no more asphalt. Keep education going about impacts of social trails. Provide access guide to climbers

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**Correspondence ID:** 71    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Name:** Curtis, Chris  
**Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love the cool water of Merced River on a hot day. I love driving through the Valley in the winter (but it is just as beautiful on foot). I'm not very familiar with Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake Hight Sierra Camp. 2. What do you want to see protected?

I want to see the Valley protected from smog, moise pollution and littering. i recognixe that a bus system is less convenient than a personal vehicle for many people but I think it is more important to protcct the park than to protect selfish interest. As long as a bus system can adequately move passengers around I think its a great idea. Ia also think its a good idea to reduce car traffic not by restricting it completely but by incentivising the buses. Maybe by charging a \$20-\$50 fee for bringing in a car, and charging much less for a bus ticket. Bikes are also a good alternative to cars. 3. What needs to be fixed? The high traffic in the valley is the most important issue. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? I find that the overnight backpacking system is great in Yosemite. I wouldn't change that. Also the trails are fantastic.

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**Correspondence ID:** 72    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Name:** Public Scoping, El Portal Community Hall  
**Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec.08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/30/09 4-8 p.m. El Portal Community Hall, El Portal, CA

Comments/Questions

? What does collaborative planning mean? ? Town Planning Advisory Committee is already functioning in El Portal. There is an avenue in place to engage with the NPS on El Portal planning ? Yosemite Valley planning meetings are often held during business hours. Would like to see those hours extended for those who are local but work during the day (or eves) ? Will the MRP amend the 5 broad goals of the 1980 GMP?

What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)

? El Portal's diverse community of artists, writers, retirees, YA, YI, NPS, schools, etc ? "Small town feel" of El Portal ? a village, a town, a neighborhood and community ? not a housing complex ? Minimal development on river plain (ie post-1997 flood) ? A variety of trails/pedestrian bridges near river in Yosemite Valley ? The efficiency of clustered housing in EP ? makes for good potential for walking to work or for having bus stops that serve many people ? Being able to live and work w/in a walkable distance ? No streetlights in Old El Portal ? The "hidden village" effect of Old EP (not obvious from Hwy 140) ? The wild south slope of the canyon ? no development ? Clean water ? Swimming ? Clean water ? Thriving wildlife along the river ? Diverse botanical community, including rare species ? I love bike riding ? establish safe bike paths/lanes connecting parkline/Old EP/Rancheria/Cedar Lodge, etc ? Having beautiful places to hike in the area that are beautiful and not crowded ? The lack of commercial venues ? Having

a general store vs a minimart ? Liked having a mechanic at the gas station to fix flat tires ? The community hall and community meeting space ? Would love to improve the town center ? Having a refuge from the tourism hub ? All of the community events and being part of a community that supports each other (family friendly) ? Being in an organic, architecturally diverse community (old EP) with old rock walls and narrow winding streets that people walk on and you can see your neighbors and talk ? Living in a safe community ? The musicians and their opportunity to play ? The heritage trees in the river corridor (valley oaks and other special trees? would like to see them designated and protected like other communities are doing). Check Visalia and Austin, TX ? Being a community of people who love and know the park well, who have a vast well of institutional knowledge ? Elders living side-by-side with young families ? Affordable lodging opportunities in Yosemite Valley (i.e. maintain or increase camping. Do not increase lodges, hotels, buildings ? Quiet in the wilderness; establish and enforce noise limits on vehicles (they do this in cities. we need to protect natural quiet in park ? Our planners

What should be protected/stay the same?

? How do you make decisions to keep or close an area (like Merced Lake) without evaluating the ramifications/impacts on other similar or nearby or related facilities? ? Transportation issues extend beyond park boundaries. There is a circuit that involves only outside communities. Only regional solutions will resolve the park's needs. (consider what works best for the region as well as the park) ? Various designations within WSRA were an issue of concern when Merced River was designated. Existing private development was regarded as exempt from reach of management plans. )court decision settlement agreement may have clarified this point?) ? Keep the planning process open and accessible ? an educational, explanatory approach will be appreciated ? EP should stay ? housing essential services for park employees and park partners. Size should remain as is: Rancheria, Old EP ? Protect archeological resources ? Water quality ? seasonal issues, smell? sometimes in late summer ? ADDRESS increases in recreational use of the river ? parking, riverbank erosion, loss of riparian veg, swimming ? Lose the roadside parking ? Find ways to keep the community whole, it functions well. EP community is an ORV ? Do not increase development here ? Areas should be restored ? everywhere ? restore ecological function ? Camping in Yosemite Valley ? it's not overly developed, provides a rustic experience. Don't need a lot of restroom or shower facilities

What needs to be fixed?

? How does the effort to designate High Sierra Camps as historic interface with the Merced River Plan? ? When Merced was designated, there was an understanding that existing levels of development would be grandfathered"/allowed to remain ? How will this plan affect the private land parcels in the Merced corridor? ? Remove possibility of hazardous waste spills in river corridor (bulk plant, EP gas station, new sewage treatment plant ? Complete biological surveys in river corridor (comprehensive invertebrate survey, deer population) ? Leaf blowers and noise pollution ? specify and enforce decibel limits on vehicles ? esp motorcycles ? Examine impacts of roads ? need to armor river banks, impact of sanding, need for storm drains? ? Clarify and enforce housing rules in old EP ? Provide more shuttle buses and more frequent runs in Yose Valley during peak visitation. Also provide more shuttle options from EP to/from the Valley ? Provide a taxi service for hikers to hike back to their cars/hotels/buses ? Restrict parking spaces to assigned sites - have numbered spaces to allow for reservations at peak times ? Traffic calming measures in EP ? rumble strips on 140, islands and plantings in old EP ? Acknowledge that staffing is continuously increasing along with housing needs ? Reduce amount of development and surface hardening (ie pavement) in the corridor ? Improve signage on Foresta Rd (the dirt one) not being passable to cars ? Consider impact of stock wastes on streams, including tributaries. Also, impacts on visitor experience and the trails themselves ? Increase # of bear lockers at trailheads and pullouts ? Examine development in all potential rockfall zones and assess the danger to visitors and residents ? Restore pine/oak woodlands in the river corridor ? Designate heritage trees and make efforts to protect them from human impacts ? In EP, use standard planning procedures with new construction or changes to existing uses. For example, providing sufficient parking and transportation ? When constructing new buildings, try to make them conform to existing historic buildings nearby ? Be careful using expedite NEPA review in emergencies

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**Correspondence ID:** 73      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,25,2010 18:09:34  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I have recently returned from my first yosemite trip and found it to be majestic and awinspiring. While there also on internet I wanted to see and find areas that would be open to kayaking and rafting. I was a bit shocked to see that the areas in the park are closed to boating or very limited this was a bit troubling. As a enviromental earth sci. and resource major I understand the need to protect and limit the use and explotation on our natural resources.Myself and many other would like to see some improvements in opening up some of these great places to paddle a balance can be met it will take some work and understanding on both sides. I for one cant wait to make it back and this time hopefully get to paddle on of the truely remarkable landscapes in the world. The Merced looks to be a great resource for the paddling community and should be open for use with respect for the area and safty also being met. Hopefully an agreement can be reached to allow this.

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**Correspondence ID:** 74      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,31,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Pam Meierding PO Box 48 Yosemite, CA 95389

Yosemite Superintendent Attn: Merced River Plan P.O. Box 577 Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

January 31, 2010

Dear Yosemite Planning Team I have previously submitted comments for the Merced River Plan but am doing so again because I realized that my jarbled collection of thoughts earlier didn't connect to the river's Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

I respectfully submit that Yosemite National Park employees and community in and around the Merced River are Outstandingly Remarkable Values that are both significant in a national context, and river-related because they would not have been doing their precedent-setting work here without the existence of the Merced River. I would be surprised if this viewpoint has previously been considered as the employees and community have usually come second to the natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience. However, the employees and community responsible for stewardship of the natural and cultural ORVs essentially underlie the maintenance and care of said ORVs; without due consideration of the employees and community administering the Merced River Plan, the park service cannot hope to entice the best stewards of the river to come here and stay.

Additionally, I believe it would be precedent-setting and have far-reaching implications if the park service considered the employees and community surrounding the Merced River as part and parcel of the ORVs because other planning efforts might follow suit?no longer would it be a false choice between care of the employees or care of the resources because it would be understood that without happy and healthy employees, the resources and visitor experience will suffer. In general, it is assumed that NPS employees should just be happy with their lot in life, regardless of long commutes to work, outdated worksites, and, in some cases, inadequate living facilities; yet how can the NPS hope that employees commuting for 2 hours each day and working in sub-standard office spaces without the necessary resources to do ones job will be able to do the job to a standard worthy of the Merced River? It is becoming clear that we cannot attract the best and the brightest to administer management of the Merced River without due consideration to issues such as housing and workplace.

The employees and community in and around the Merced River have set national precedents across the entire park service and some, such as John Muir, Ansel Adams, and Galen Clark, are part of the American cultural identity. George Melendez Wright and Joseph Dixon essentially provided the foundation for wildlife biology and ecology in the park service. Yosemite's handling of the Stoneman Meadow riots paved the way for NPS law enforcement policy. The Curry Company was one of the longest-running park concessioners and it helped NPS to forge concession policy. Dr. H.C. Bryant was essentially the father of nature guiding, and, hence, interpretation. Ansel Hall was the first chief naturalist and chief forester of the NPS, and his work helped to create the first NPS museum (in the Merced River corridor) and the first cooperating association in the NPS (in the Merced River corridor)?and his ideas influenced the entire NPS. The Yosemite Junior Nature School, which became the Junior Rangers, the first mountaineering school, the first fundraising association, and the first field school were all established in the Merced River corridor due to the vision of the park's employees and the greater park community. Rustic park architecture was established in Yosemite and spread throughout the service due to the community in the Merced River corridor. Yosemite employees in the Merced River corridor have led the park service in both search and rescue operations and in fire management. Maggie Howard was one of the first Native American cultural demonstrators in the NPS, and Lucy Telles and Julia Parker have continued the tradition. Gabriel Sovulleski is known as a sort of "godfather of trails." Rock climbing in America was forged in Yosemite, in part due to the community and employees around the park like Wayne Merry. Jan Van Wagendonk was not only essential in helping Yosemite (and the greater park service) creating fire management policy along with Harold Biswell, but I believe that he crafted the first Wilderness Trailhead Quota system in the NPS! And he lives right on the Merced on Incline Road!

In fact, the first employee housing was established by Stephen T. Mather, first director of the NPS, in the Merced River corridor?the Rangers' Club. This in itself reflects that Mather saw the need to put the stewards of the Merced River and the NPS as a top priority; he even paid for the structure out of his own pocket!

Most major initiatives in the NPS seem to come from the ground up, from characters and individual personalities?and the Merced River corridor has been on the leading edge of creating the space for these characters to grow and think critically. These employees have led the way for the NPS, and I get great enjoyment out of guessing who in the park today might go on to forge national policy, initiatives, and American cultural identity. Julia Parker? Shelton Johnson? Penny Otwell?

The employees of today and the future in the Merced River corridor are ORVs. Bret Meldrum is heading up the first social science branch in the NPS. Niki Nicholas built the Resource Management and Sciences Division from a handful of employees to over 200?and used a different funding mentality to make it happen. Steve Shackelton has forged relationships with UC Merced in support of a National Parks Institute. Jesse Chakrin has introduced new diversity recruiting programs. Jen Nersesian built a branch that changed the way Yosemite thinks about the gateway communities and began Hispanic/Latino outreach in the Central Valley. Lincoln Else was the first Yosemite Climbing Ranger, and Jesse McGahey is using new media to reach out to the climber community. Jeffrey Trust and Steve Bumgardner are changing the way Yosemite thinks about new media and technology outreach. Brenna Lissoway is piloting oral history projects and finding potential to spread out into the national arena. Alison Colwell is finding new plant species in the park. Bill Kuhn is modeling climate change on vegetation and changing the dialogue about oak species and meadows in the park. The Merced River corridor is a breeding ground for good ideas and interesting initiatives that are likely to influence the entire NPS.

Meanwhile, according to the latest Office of Personnel Management government-wide surveys administered in 2007, the NPS ranks

215 out of 216 government agencies in terms of work-life balance. Focus groups, including one held here in Yosemite, have revealed that long commutes and limited resources to complete one's job to the fullest of one's ability take most of the blame for this situation. In order to partially remedy this situation, I suggest adding dorm-style housing in El Portal for seasonal employees and interns, similar to the rangers club in Yosemite Valley and thereby freeing up housing for term and permanent employees so that commutes are lessened. Yes, there are archeological sites within El Portal, as there are in any place on earth that is habitable. This shouldn't stop the NPS from valuing its employees today.

Please make the housing and workplaces of Yosemite National Park in the Merced River corridor a priority as important as protecting the natural and cultural values and the visitor experience?in fact, those efforts will fail without the help and care of the YNP employees. Please put more housing in El Portal (versus Mariposa or Midpines) while keeping the intimate community feeling of the place. Allow employees to compost and plant gardens?perhaps by putting a community garden in Abbeville as it was in historic times. Allow employees and the El Portal community to have access to wellness classes provided by Balanced Rock at the old school. Brenna Lissoway, who grew up in Bandelier National Monument, says that growing up and living in a park has a completely different feel than living outside of it; living inside the park offers a bond with the resources and people feel more connected, more like stewards of the place. Please allow employees and the Merced River community to really feel like they are a valued part of the Merced River corridor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely, Pam Meierding

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**Correspondence ID:** 75    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.01.2010 16:16:24  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** There should be NO New building for "cultural or educational" purposes. Yosemite is a wild place and learning comes from being out in it not in a building.

All existing 'historic' structures need to be repaired and preserved. They have value.

DO NOT reduce the number of accommodations. There must be places to stay while experiencing Yosemite. This will help with congestion and pollution.

If the only way to preserve and protect Yosemite is non-use, what's the point!

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**Correspondence ID:** 76    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, LA Rivers Center  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/16/2009 4-8 p.m. LA Rivers Center, Los Angeles, CA

Comments/Questions

? Don't "Zionize" Yosemite Valley (requiring people to come in by shuttle bus) ? Concerned about the years of bookwork. What will happen to numbers of campgrounds in the meantime? ? Maintain river sites as they are ? Would like to have information about this plan at lodging reservation website, campgrounds, lodging check-in registration desk, etc. ? Why is the Superintendent living in a house in Yosemite Valley? Look at the number of tents that could be there! Why is the school still there when there could be campsites there? ? Concerned that the science may be skewed based on the agenda of a particular scientist/consultant ? There is so much to celebrate: the protection of meadows (we applaud this) ; the shuttle bus system (this is great). If you look at all the aspects and voices, the campers have not been heard. Backpackers, climbers voices are heard. But look at the campgrounds. ? Lots of people are getting into their cars to get ice/supplies at the store. What if there was a way to have someone come through the campground to sell ice? Keep people in campground ? As a family that has enjoyed Yosemite Valley for multiple generations, I see the reduction of camping as limiting the opportunity for new generations to enjoy and learn. These are the people who want to see the Valley protected. Don't eliminate them. ? We need an opportunity for affordable family drive-in camping. This has been totally left out of the picture: those who want to set up camp, enjoy the Valley for the week, this is being limited, pushed aside ? If people don't have a computer, they cannot find out about public meetings; NPS is concealing this info ? Would like transparency regarding the groups that are participating in the planning process. NPS needs to be clear about who is influencing the decision making. Who are the Tribes? Who are the agencies being consulted? ? How do you define the scope of your scope? Does it include all things near the river (like the stables?) ? How do you define "protection"? Are there areas that are being damaged that will be addressed in this plan?



(for example, riverbank erosion at North Pines) ? Will this plan have implications for other Wild and Scenic Rivers? Other national parks? ? What is the role of evolution and the natural processes in this plan? ? There's a contradiction between rapid rate at which the split-rail fence goes up along the river, yet the Upper and Lower River Campgrounds remain languishing with no action ? Since flood campsites have been reduced. Who gave the NPS the right to eliminate those sites? ? Been here before. And you guys will just do what you want ? Do not close Northside Drive. Not safe for emergency access and exit, especially during a flood ? When will we get a new concessionaire? (I don't like the prices). People are priced out ? Would like to see some competition for business in the park. No incentive to provide better service ? When there are fewer campsites, you have greater impact at those existing sites

What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)

? The diversity of things to do (for all age groups) at campgrounds in the Valley. ? Campgrounds! Restore to previous # of sites (before flood) ? Suggest that NPS limit advance campground reservations to 75%. The other 25% would be first come-first served ? Allow some compromise to natural resources in the Valley to provide for visitor use ? Build a bike trail to west end of the Valley (i.e. from Yose Lodge) ? Consider a sliding scale entrance fee ? by # of days in park

What should stay the same?

? Merced River watershed should be kept to Wild and Scenic ? Watershed should remain available for use by people ? Car camping

What do you want to see fixed? changed? improved?

? Mirror Lake used to be a lake 25 years ago. It's not a lake anymore. [clarification: restoration is not encouraged] What is the extent of restoration efforts or protection that you propose? Natural processes must be allowed to happen ? Circulation system touches on the river in several places. What is the relationship between planning goals and existing transportation facilities? ? Address parking and access at Mariposa Grove of Big Trees. Too much movement when capacity is reached and people need to be shuttled from the Village ? Greater volume of traffic at Wawona entrance is bound for the Valley, not Wawona ? Use camping reservation system to build mailing list ? think about other typical users and groups and contact them for meeting announcements ? Demand for camping is high. Clearly there is a need to disperse activities around the Valley ? About 5% of the river is actually being used by people, 95% is not. The rules for use are too stringent. Split-rail fences have been installed as barriers between the people and their river, without public input ? Park staff moved too quickly in closing campgrounds and building fences ? 60% of the park's campsites have been removed from public use, either by restoration or by exclusive access thru on-line computer system ? North Road must be kept open to public use ? Concessionaire should be replaced by someone/corporation that will provide services and merchandise at fair prices. ? Reduction in camping is a disservice to those people who really love the Valley and have protected it for years and years (generations). We can't get in ? Huge influx of tour buses has changed the park visitors experience ? Provide more campsites at affordable rates for families, people without RVs and other intrusive technology ? Identify interested parties and organizations by name for disclosure purposes and transparency ? Ensure objectivity of scientists and consultants throughout the planning process ? Numerous car trips are made by campers going to the Village for ice and back. Provide concession services in campgrounds, as mobile vehicles ? Do not Zionize Yosemite ? everyone parks down at the Visitor Center and rides a shuttle into the park ? Demolish the Superintendent's house and replace it with campgrounds; the school too ? Small details ? like ice at campgrounds are important. 1-hour parking at the market is a brilliant solution ? Restore the Firefalls! ? Reinstate campgrounds from Happy Isles to the Swinging Bridge ? Reservation system opens and closes almost immediately ? a huge load ? Provide a rationale for every action item e.g. what was the rationale for closing the Upper and Lower River Campgrounds? ? Campers should be required to re-affirm their reservations so that camp sites don't go unused when they fail to show up

What do you want to see protected?

? Making ice available locally at the campground; may seem like a small detail, but it makes a difference ? It would be absolutely catastrophic to close off Northside Drive (as was proposed in the YVP), especially if there was fire, flood ? Bear boxes and canisters have worked well ? Need to have these opportunities available for the next generation. There would be nothing worse than for there to be "look but don't touch" at our national parks ? Would like to see commercial tour buses coming in to park be converted to CNG ? The limits on morning campfires is OK if it's protecting the park. But we have to have campfires at night ? Would like to see some limited ability to pick up wood off the ground. Didn't have beetle problems when people were allowed to pick up downed wood ? Walkways in the meadows are terrific. When people camped in meadows, they were trashed ? Bears ? Trash used to be in one place. The bears went there instead of in the campsites. Once that was eliminated, bears went into campgrounds. Bear boxes are a good thing ? they work. ? If parameters for the river are as broad as presented, concerned it may mean the elimination of camping in Yosemite Valley ? Camping means so many things to so many people Love to sleep under the stars. Love the smell of Yosemite in the air. It's something to acquire by living it ? Back in WWII, camped wherever you plopped a tent. An inexpensive way for a family to enjoy a vacation. This is still important today ? What impressed most about the Ken Burns NPS special, that it came down to a single person who ignited others, creating wonderful park after another. It was that single voice, over and over again. Ken Burns captured it well ? Our family went to Washington DC to express a voice for family campers ? As long as there are people, there is no way to not impact the Valley. But so long as there is a way/place to keep impact contained, that is the purpose of national parks ? In Yosemite, your passion for the place gets woven into the fabric of your being

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**Correspondence ID:** 77    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Organization:** Public Scoping, Clark Community Hall  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Nov,07,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence** Transcript

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/7/2009 10a.m.-12 p.m. Clark Community Hall, El Portal, CA Comments/Questions ? EPTP AC & Homeowners Assn ? EP Listserv (perhaps create dedicated listserv) ? Word ofmouth ... finding a core group of community members to serve as conduit of info ? Table at Sal's ? YI staff mtgs ? Post office ? Specific cards/mailings ? EP Market ? Specific factsheetannouncement for EP ? EP newsletter (?) enews with links to make comments ? EP events (food and music) : Spring Fling, Sals ? What happens in 2011? Gap in plan -looks like a black hole ? Challenges for 2000 plan seemed impossible - how will we do this in 3 yrs? ? How is park going to make management decisions between now and end of plan? Is everything on hold? ? Will work on realtime communication proceed? ? Projects like the entrance station were allowed? ? Anything in EP allowed to move forward! ? Anything going on with trailer park utilities? Does that directly increase capacity? Exploring the trailer park because of loss of housing in Curry Village? Is it the original housing numbers from 1987 that will be used as baseline? ? How many residents know that the EP plan is being abandoned and will be done as part of MRP? ? Apathy in EP because of previous planning efforts ? Need specific communication efforts for EP ? General public and EP public are not aware of what is being planned ? Slate is clean ? Previous plans were programmatic, people think this plan is the same ? Use cooperative instead of collaborative - collaborative has developed negative connotation - feeling that people are being manipulated ? Visitor use - gives the impression that doesn't apply to EP residents ? Lodging doesn't translate to homes ? Refer to people instead of staff or visitor - use is use

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**Correspondence ID:** 78    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** N/A, N/A

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Everything - sorry can't pinpoint it. 2. What do you want to see protected? Wildlife, icons... 3. What needs to be fixed? More public campgrounds; less construction/detours in peak season (I'm aware this is difficult) 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Cars being able to continue to drive into the Park on their own! Extremely Important to Gateway Communities.

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**Correspondence ID:** 79    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 17:55:24

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Correspondence:** February 3, 2010 Don Neubacher, Superintendent Yosemite National Park

RE: Merced River Management Plan EIS -- Scoping Comments

Dear Superintendent Neubacher:

Thank you for consideration of the following scoping comments for preparation of the Merced River Management Plan EIS.

I am hopeful that a plan alternative will be developed that produces fewer impacts per visitor to the Merced River corridor, and natural resources of the Park in general, such that potential increases in visitation do not adversely impact the outstandingly remarkable values of the Merced River or the quality of the visitor experience. In other words: A Park for all people, with fewer overall impacts.

My questions and comments are geared toward producing such a sustainable plan alternative. Yosemite National Park should be a national and international leader in ecologically-sensitive tourism, and the preferred Merced River Plan alternative should be one that incorporates best practices in transportation, site design, energy efficiency, etc. that have demonstrated quantifiable benefits in other national parks and public lands.

Therefore, the Merced River Plan EIS should:

1. Clearly define the "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" of the Merced River corridor and its tributaries, with corresponding objectives to protect those values within each plan alternative. 2. Provide an assessment of the how proposed projects within each plan alternative will protect/enhance or degrade the defined ORVs.

3. Provide baseline resource conditions for the ORVs to be protected, along with a monitoring plan to assess changes to the baseline conditions resulting from the implementation of the plan. Describe how the baseline conditions differ from desired conditions.

4. Describe the enforcement measures that will be used to protect Park resources, informed by an evaluation of current resource protection enforcement practices.
5. Quantify the net impact on meadows, wetlands, riparian areas and other ecologically-sensitive areas under each plan alternative.
6. Describe acreage of net impervious surface gain/loss for parking, roads, facilities or other uses under each proposed plan alternative, and describe related stormwater, runoff pollution, flooding, erosion, and all other related impacts that would occur. The soil types and functions of areas proposed for new coverage or restoration should be described.
7. Describe the impact of recreation activities on recreation and resource ORVs. Will low-impact recreation options and facilities that have the highest positive correlation with attainment of resource protection and other values be given priority? What is the desired recreation/visitor experience, and how will each plan alternative help achieve that condition? 8. Analyze the impact of various visitor and resident modes on ORVs. Comparison options might include: automobile vs. bus/shuttle transportation, day use vs. overnight, workers living in vs. commuting to the park, lodging vs. seasonal camping, RV vs. tent camping, etc. Use this analysis to inform the assessment of user capacity. Since different types of visitor travel and experience have a greater or lesser "footprint" on the park's resources and ORVs, user capacity should describe both total numbers of visitors and average impacts per visitor that are commensurate with protection of ORVs.
9. Clearly map all potential rockfall/landslide zones, and describe proposed placement of facilities in relation to those zones in each plan alternative. Include updated rockfall studies.
10. Quantify the impact of proposed transportation options on the amount of impervious surface required for roads, parking lots, and related infrastructure, as well as emissions of carbon, NOx, PM 2.5, PM10 and other pollutants.
11. Quantify the benefit to ORVs of providing a more extensive intra-park transportation system, providing more frequent bus options from Yosemite Valley to Wawona, Tuolumne, Glacier Point, etc.
12. Quantify the benefit to ORVs of providing more frequent bus and shuttle options into the park for both visitors and employees. Examine reduced need for impervious surface (with associated runoff impacts), less roadside parking, and lower emissions associated with greater bus and shuttle options.
13. Analyze the impact of each plan alternative on greenhouse gas emissions (total and per person), and which plan will produce fewest impacts per visitor (measure in terms of carbon emissions, impervious surface area/visitor, energy use, total waste generated, etc). Please describe mitigation measures to offset greenhouse gas emissions. The greenhouse gas emissions inventory in the EIS should account for emissions from electricity, vehicle trips, water supply and transportation, operation of construction vehicles and machinery, transportation of construction materials, and waste disposal.
14. The EIS should quantify projections on expected increases or decreases in vehicle trips and miles traveled under each plan alternative. The EIS should provide details of the traffic model and assumptions used to justify those projections.

Thank you for consideration of these scoping comments.

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**Correspondence ID:** 80      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 17:57:57  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** To Whom It May Concern- As a frequent visitor to Yosemite Valley, I am writing to support the preservation of climbing access to in Yosemite Valley. Specifically in regard to the Merced River plan, we need to preserve access to iconic climbing areas such as The Rostrum, Cookie Cliff, and Middle Cathedral Rock. These areas are important from an historical and recreational perspective and are some of the more popular climbing areas in the Valley.

Furthermore, we need more options for camping. Personally, I have been climbing in and around Yosemite Valley for 15 years and have only experienced frustration with camping, especially in recent years. There are not enough sites and very few options both in and out of the "Park". It seems as if the National Park has been more interested in creating lodging and higher revenue-generating "beds" than in providing opportunities for camping and low-end users. Recreational "user" numbers in the Valley are only increasing, though campsites and access to them has been decreasing. Please do your part to ensure the preservation of not only the access to this beloved place but camping within it as well. Thanks, Renee DeAngelis

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**Correspondence ID:** 81      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Goodrich, Jim

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Yosemite Valley especially in the winter & spring. Glacier Point, the most breathtaking view in the world. 2. What do you want to see protected? Merced River quality, tourism infrastructure, trails. 3. What needs to be fixed? We need better bicycle access/trails around the valley floor. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? I like it they way it is (except for limited bike trails).

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**Correspondence ID:** 82      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Masonic Lodge  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Oct,26,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript

**Correspondence:** Masonic Lodge Comments/Questions Plan needs to have the flexibility to adjust to future technologies, etc. for the benefit of future generations ? New people managing the park, planning for the park. Who's going to be here to see it through? ? "Most plans are obsolete the day they're signed." Important to stick to the schedule. Hope the emphasis is on the best ideas for now ? Yosemite Valley Plan was rescinded. Back on the table: all transportation strategies, campgrounds, lodging, etc. ? NPS Director is advocating to not return campgrounds in Yose Valley. How can this be if the plan is moving forward with a clean slate? ? What do we count? buildings, horses, cars, etc. Look at history from late 1800s regarding user capacity ? Upper/Lower River Campground closure: Was it a knee-jerk reaction? Were there public meetings? What safeguards are in place (where decisions are made behind the public's back) that it won't happen again? ? There are lots of different ideas and opinions. What may be good for one group or gateway may not be good for another ? Need a true range of alternatives, broad and includes the spectrum of opportunities. That was part of the success of the GMP ? Today, there's no reason why everybody can't be kept in the loop. Best way for groups to stay tuned and provide input or a reaction as the plan develops ? Wawona property condemnation. Will that be the case now? ? Involving everyone, even those who aren't coming, who think that Yose is closed ? Gateways are discussing early warnings to provide real-time info, avoid congestion ? Congestion is a parkwide problem. Plenty of room if managed properly. Lots of things can be done. Lots of groups with historical ties, (campers, tribes, etc) need to bring them along too ? User capacity; how will workshops work? Concerned that three guys will come up with ideas, set in concrete decrease in use. What is the process? ? Carrying capacity has been an issue for 100 years. Cars were limited, Tremendous adjustment will be made in future ? GMP was a 20 yr old plan that never was completed. Is there a way to build in a five year review to revisit ideas and not be locked in? ? Open up the thinking ? Can build into plan an adaptive management cycle to incorporate new ideas when uncertainties exist ? Work with an established group to provide oversight, accountability ? Grow NPS constituency to promote parks. If you have no students, you flop. ? Reduce, diminish capacity ? What are the strategies for addressing user limits? ? Public safety in a box canyon - evacuation; how do you get folks out, flooding, wildfires? What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country) ? Unique view ? Campgrounds - need more! (youth campground for school groups, Boy Scouts, etc) ? Enjoying the natural river ? Leave Tenaya Creek blackberries in place ? Existing road width and configuration What should stay the same? ? Leave things the way they are ? Respect declarations of lineal descendants ? The courtesy, respectful attitude of park employees ? Don't mess with tradition ? Leave wild blackberries What needs to be fixed? ? Reinstate riverfront units at Housekeeping Camp because they would restore traditional/family use Ell Restore Upper and Lower River Campgrounds, especially because they have the best climate ? NPS should look at the number of CUAs [Commercial Use Authorizations]and who gets them, especially for guided climbing ? NPS should examine environmental impacts of changes MRP would cause ? Build review opportunities into plan (every 5-10 years depending on resource) ? Prohibit parking in and on Wawona cemetery ? Parking - especially day use for river floating ? More entry and exit river launching ? River cleanup regularly ? Interpretive material for floaters ? More enforcement of existing rules (i.e. 6 people/camp, rafters outside of rafting zone) ? Improve real-time communications to/with gateways ? More restrooms in Wawona (with signs) especially because busses overload existing restrooms ? ore parking everywhere ? Take out "temporary" employee housing at Y ose Lodge and behind Valley Post Office ? Don't always rely on modem (electronic) technology for outreach. Be redundant in outreach ? More campgrounds in the Y ose Valley and everywhere else ? Better signs indicating bike vs. pedestrian paths ? Need a transportation museum ? Need public day-use shelter, covered picnic tables, enough for big groups ? More and better turnouts for viewing ? Vintage tour busses ? More parking ? Do not dig up and destroy ... meant to protect, not build ? How many campsites are taken by park partners instead of public use? ? Better disabled access - parking restrooms, proximity to facilities, etc. ? Complete analysis of operational roads so as to determine what areas can be used (or not used) ? Decentralize admin functions and move out to gateways ? Provide friendly, fast, free transportation for employees outside of park - and coordinate work schedules with transportation schedules ? Maintain existing park roads - take care of what you have ? Do not widen roads ? Make sure Rangers are polite ? Once meetings were finished, do not forget to keep the public involved ? Make Mirror Lake back to a lake What do you want to see protected? ? eave Wawona alone? The issue of visitor capacity to maintain failL reasonable and quality park experience for visitors ? Mirror Lake should be an ORV. It used to be dredged and provided free grit for winter roads. Can this be revived? ? Private auto travel ? All the archeological sites - parkwide. Don't like to see digging (construction projects, etc.). Use federally recognized tribes as consultants ? Paiute culture ? What is the visitor experience and how do you define it? ? Some uses may be inappropriate and we need to define what is appropriate i.e. rafting on the river, bringing bicycles into the park ? Tradition includes things like golf course at Wawona - don't change them ? Preserve and protect, don't disturb and destroy ? Blackberries on Tenaya Creek - don't remove them

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**Correspondence ID:** 83      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Groveland Community Center  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**  
**Received:** Nov,06,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript

**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/3/09 4 - 8 pm Groveland Community Center, Groveland, CA Comments/Questions ? How does the park manage cap-city now? ? It's the amount of traffic, not so much the numbers of people. Perhaps have permit system or eliminate autos in the park ? What you are doing now is impressive and a lot, but court still wants numbers ? Carrying capacity: we could handle more people but not necessarily more cars. The park is a big place to accommodate people, but there's not the space to accommodate cars/buses. The park already has a good sense of what it can handle ? Could this plan touch the fee structure? \$x for cars \$x for buses, \$x for those going to Valley [Congress has authority] ? If you charge more for folks to go in Valley, it limits those at various economic background ? Explore possibility of putting limit on day use. When lot fills, they have to take bus/shuttle in from outlying areas. Those with lodging or camping reservations would still be able to get in ? In previous plans, there seemed to be a priority for additional capacity on staff housing/facilities to be located in Valley rather than providing capacity for park visitors. Appreciate that there is a tension between employee and visitor services. But don't take away opportunities for visitors ? Buses have to be part of the solution for moving people into and through the park ? In previous plans, there was no choice in how to get into park via bus system. Need to incentivize any transportation system ? Process: in my experience doing utility planning, the process included meetings with public, but also an advisory group to deal with more technical issues on a more regular basis. May help share issues to gain better understanding ? For northern CA visitors, seems 120 is the most direct route into the park. We ought to be doing more to encourage this highway. Makes sense from a carbon footprint standpoint ? MPS seems EI Portal centric/Mariposa corridor centric in terms of dealing with gateways ? Perhaps create an admin site in Groveland? ? 77% of Tuolumne County is rooted in public lands. With timber industry shutting down, recreation has become a large part of economic focus. We want to be good stewards of the natural resources. but federal lands limit ability to adapt to economic viability and vitality. The interdependence between park and community is crucial ? There is a tension between USFS and NPS. Scenic Byway partnership, NPS said "no". Would like to see this change, tear down tension between agencies What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, EI Portal, high country) ? Waterfalls on Merced River ? Historic buildings at Wawona and Yosemite Village ? Road and drive from Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Jct ? Fern grotto at Fern Springs near Pohono Bridge ? Pohono Bridge automated river gauge (easy to check online) ? Would like regular emails or web updates on natural events like dogwood blooms, water flow, etc. ? Use of river for rafting and kayaking ? Climbing Half Dome What should stay the same? ? Would like to make sure that people can enter the park in private vehicle. This is important to local people. don't want to be forced to ride a bus. If incentivize it to entice people to use bus, OK ? Being able to observe and appreciate and experience the natural environment. ? Keep it as open as possible while protecting and while allowing people to enjoy it ? Put additional Ranger-led interpretive programs at other more remote locations to alleviate crowding in Valley, e.g. interp programs or hikes at Hetch Hetchy ? Consider partnerships USFS/NPS/Tuolumne County, Groveland community visitor center. Pool resources for parking, housing ? What would people give up to protect the park? to make it more quiet? to make it better? Tramways ? Keep the west end of the Valley the same; there's a tranquility there that doesn't exist between Lodge to Ahwahneeo keep it the same, don't add parking, make people walk there. Don't move the stress of the East Valley to the west ? Would love to see more local population Old Big Oak Flat Rd at far west end of Valley is a peaceful, tranquil place to take in views of the meandering Merced River and Valley What needs to be fixed? ? Move Big Oak Flat Rd gate to Crane Flat on Hwy 120 ? House employees outside park in gateway communities supported by good transportation ? Gateway regional bus system ? Planning must extend outward to gateways ? Incentivise the bus system to complement lodging ? Provide financial data and work with community-based organizations to build understanding of park operations and capital improvement plans ? Bring YARTS into Groveland but develop a plan to include operations center, secure parking, etc. Deal with linear issues of infrastructure along Hwy 120; how do you get around once you have parked the car? ? Huge carbon footprint caused by distance from Yose Valley to Glacier Pt. Consider a hidden tunnel and elevator from Curry Village ? Valley is the primary destination. Do more to develop options to stay and enjoy other parts of the park. Hotel at Crane Flat? Encourage people to visit more remote locations (trade-offs with Tuolumne River planning options and alternatives) ? No hotel at Crane Flat ? Crane Flat is subject to winter road closures, which would complicate gate operations and park access ? Initiate busses as one stage in field trips. Ranger-led hikes in park, originating in gateway communities ? Coordinate communications between NPS and Caltrans, with regard to roadway conditions ? Communicate info on user capacity with gateway communities, so travelers know what to expect, when to stop ? Continue or expand use of social networking tools, like Twitter What do you want to see protected? ? Ability to travel to East Side even if park's vehicle capacity is exceeded ? Consider a parking facility in Groveland ? Move Big Oak Flat entrance to Crane Flat because it would serve as a convenient point from which to direct visitors to or away from the Valley ? Explore possibility of free entrance passes for those who stay in gateways, as a way to alleviate demand for park lodging and stimulate bus travel ? Natural tranquility and quiet ? Special status plants and animals ? Water quality ? Riparian areas ? Keep some areas hard to reach to preserve natural quiet and solitude ? Variety/levels of accommodations ? Access to park ? Consider whether any changes in visitor flow would transfer impacts elsewhere ? Consider snowsheds on Tioga to keep the road open year-round

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**Correspondence ID:** 84      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Sacramento Southside Clubhouse  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,10,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/19/2009 4-8 p.m. Sacramento Southside Clubhouse, Sacramento, CA Comments/Questions ? How does GMP define "crowding"? perception? gridlock? ? Will the NPS "throwaway" the older history of park? (in particular "discovery" of Yosemite/documented history on signs which depict early residents as Miwok and not Mono Lake Paiute)? ? What about direct lineal descendants who have traditionally been excluded from planning consultation? ? Finding my true self there ? When you find archeological evidence in the corridor, who does the park contact? How does the NPS determine who to contact? What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, EI Portal, high country) ? Expand bike use, bus schedules, rafting on river. Encourage Merced Lake visits (to encourage use of HS camp loop trail) ? Night-time Ranger programs ? Personal tent camping ? Skating rink ? Ranger-led daytime programs ? Wawona is never crowded even on 4th of July. Good hikes. Golf in Wawona is unique ? Hiking and biking trails, views, Ranger talks, finding uncrowded areas ? Finding my true self there What

should stay the same? ? Natural processes (where possible). Keep in mind processes that may not have been seen/recorded by humans ? Famous views ? Make sure collaboration with other parks ? Restore some famous views not have ? Archeological area/artifacts have been lost due to development. Would like to see that decisions are not made based on net gain or net loss. It's a loss that can't be regained ? New information is coming to light about history that will alter cultural program in Yose NP (Indian Cultural Center). Cultural history of Yosemite lineal descent is with Paiute, not Miwuk. Yet it is a history that appears on signs throughout the park ? People working in park not taking concerns seriously (i.e. NAGPRA consultation) ? Transportation in Y ose: How far along are you in making decisions lawsuit had to do with capacity? Busy 100 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Need to come up with a system that works. It's a major problem to be addressed in this plan ? Per settlement agreement, NPS will hire consultants. How will it be dealt with in plan? ? Concerned about soundscapes in the park, natural quiet. Helicopters are used in emergency ops. But noticed that more and more, training ops are being conducted and land in Valley ? Making it inconvenient for cars - congestion comes from people looking for too few spaces ? Include more Latino history. Give Latinos something to identify with - that will be able to bring more Latinos inside ? Reach out to Latinos (employees) that have given programs re Latino history ? Human footprint on the Valley - how will NPS reduce ? NPS past plans to reduce human footprint caters to elite groups ? Park is a place to enjoy nature. Park should be focused on park experienceno Disneyland ? Park is never ending construction field. Hide construction until we leave ? Park has consolidated facilities to one area ? When in NPS going to wrap up construction? ? 30 years of maintaining park was neglected, now NPS is catching up ? Restoration is not laying down more concrete ? Should be some sort of reasonable transit but not 30 busses driving in circles ?Thank you. It is a challenge ... thanks for listening What do you want see fixed? changed? improved? ? Outlaw any POV bigger than SUV /pickup ? Reduce vehicles in Valley (parking lots outside Valley floor) ?Save as many old cabins/tent cabins from Camp Curry during creation of new housing outside fall area ? Outlaw horse use; expand bike use ? No tv use outside SUV, no radio broadcasting outside SUV ? Remove corrals, remove old storage sheds ? Visitor capacity - transportation system is malfunctioning esp during 100 days of summer (spring -summer). Dealing with this is probably the major problem ? User capacity, accountability and credibility must be defined, established, clarified ? Raft rentals should be eliminated. In the 1950s, 60s and 70s, people could bring their own and the river was less crowded ? Tentcabin "train wreck" at Highland Ct & Boystown at Curry Viilage - fix it! ? Employee housing at Curry Village and behind the post office at Yose Village ? Employee numbers may be high due to unnecessary concession sales, like mountaineering and apparel stores ? Sundry, obsolete buildings in Y ose Village - repair shops, warehouses full of junk, should be removed and replaced with more parking to reduce scale at Camp Six ? Restore balance at Camp 6 ? Put parking spaces closer to buildings where they are needed ? Road from Stoneman Bridge to Yose Village could be elimated so that Upper and Lower River campgrounds may be restored to natural conditions. Why is this road needed if the goal is to restore former campgrounds to natural condition? ? Curry Village - Sentinel Bridge Rd would have to revert to two-way traffic ? Eliminate concessions stable ?Create camping at concessioner's stables and NPS storage site east of Ahwahnee Hotel ? Only walk-in or group camping should be accommodated at new sites ? Do something to landscape campgrounds with native vegetation - too much dust and disturbed areas ? Parallel parking at El Cap Meadow: relocate it north to old road bed, closer to Valley cliffs (Old Big Oak Flat roadbed) ? #1 objective: Regulate day use vehicles. Take advantage of new technologies, electric signs, reservation systems on line, etc ? Add restrooms in West Valley - practically none exist there (II Expand shuttle service to West Valley ? West Valley should otherwise remain undeveloped iii Remove golf course, convert to a wetland, and tennis courts at Wawona, also decommissioned tennis courts at Ahwahnee ? Wawona- provide a second crossing of South Fork of the Merced for fire and emergency access. Could be one lane, but two-way traffic is appropriate ?Information provided by NPS about first 1st tribe should be amended to acknowledge Paiute people, not Miwuk. Paiutes are the original people of Yosemite. Tenaya translates to "our father" in Paiute ? Control burns are too infrequent and often too late. Medium-large trees are being killed off. Remainder trees need to be removed ? Get the youth involved in these planning processes! ? More frequent and comprehensive surveys by USGS for RFHZs ? Native American resources monitors should be neutral third party - not NPS, nor specific tribal reps ? Several years ago a user capacity forum was held. Posting on web would be helpful ? Parallel parking is useful at some locations - provides access for some who cannot walk or walk so far ? The shuttle system is working well, but the parking situation won't be resolved through added controls. Fix transportation system before further reducing the number of parking spaces What do you want to see protected? ? Paiute heritage and accuracy in NPS information about ancestry ? Archeological sites must be preserved in place. All of them are important ? Honest and open consultation processes with Native American Tribes ? Yosemite unique to capacity planning. Ideas with user of river, climber, sightseeing at the Falls ? Soundscape, understand heicopters have to rescue, however fire training is a bit much ? River from raft rentals. Personal rafts are okay ? Climbing access protected. Camp 4, making sure camping opportunities available ? Noisescapes ? Keep Jess McGahey ? Wilderness access from many locations ? Public access to park employees, likes to be able to visit with park staff ? View of the night sky ? Astronomy programs ? Glad that security lighting is gone ? Merced Lake with ability to backpack there and the fact that it is a difficult hike; one of many places with opportunity for solitude, exercise ? Cultural Outstandingly Remarkable Values: Indian burial, spiritual landscape, etc. Once it is removed, it is gone forever ? El Portal 1962 sewer plant burial site. Leave it alone. Don't remove plant Just leave it alone

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**Correspondence ID:** 85      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Da Silva, Peggy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** We need much better access for bicycles around the river and many fewer motor vehicles. this should be important in the plan. Thank you

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**Correspondence ID:** 86      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Carlson, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Your bias is stunning and unprofessional! The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp is an abomination. Its an ugly, tacky, polluting shit-hole! It should be removed at once and you should be ashamed for promoting it! 2. What do you want to see protected? Water quality, native species, wilderness character, wild river's natural values (not outdated, anachronistic, polluting activities like High Sierra Camps and the Valley stables), solitude, quietude, primitive trails free of dust, manure, flies, etc., caused by too many stock animals 3. What needs to be fixed? Remove the High Sierra Camp and restore the site. Remove the Valley horse stables and restore the site. End all commercial stock use. (Its not necessary) Strickly regulate all private stock use (require manure catchess, 2nd require all animals be quarantined and feed weed-free feed for 2 weeks before entering the park (to prevent introduction snd spread of weeds.) 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The Valley Plan's requirement to remove the commercial horse stables from the Valleyh and restore the site. Stop Dragging your feet and DO IT!!

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**Correspondence ID:** 87     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Anderson, Steve  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I don't love anything about the High Sierra Camps. They are an eyesore and an intrusion of urban life that I am trying to escape in Yosemite. 2. What do you want to see protected? The scenic beauty of Yosemite as well as the water quality. 3. What needs to be fixed? Nothing, just remove the camps. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Nothing, Please remove the High Sierra Camp from Yosemite.

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**Correspondence ID:** 88     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ostrand, Kelly  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,30,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** Needs fire pits, and grills for cooking! For people who are not camping.

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**Correspondence ID:** 89     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Gonzales, Daniel  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do youlove about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? Nice sites, great staff, location, location, location! Nice that the road at the top is bus only. 2. What would make it a better camping experience? Car camping or generator free zones. Limit number of people in the Valley. 3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same? Nice Staff. 4. What about your camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? Less pavement!

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**Correspondence ID:** 90     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Magavern, Bill  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Hiking trails, views, rivers, Ranger talks. 2. What do you want to see protected? Rivers, and streams, views, hiking and biking trails, opportunities to enjoy nature away from crowds, wildlife habitat, historical and cultural and archeological sites and artifacts. 3. What needs to be fixed? Reduce # of vehicles in Valley, especially day trippers. Limit vehicles rather than people, especially on summer weekends. Espand bike use. Reduce TV use. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? No new construction of major facilities. Keep skating rink, bike rental, visitor center wilderness center. No more paving or concrete.

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**Correspondence ID:** 91     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Wyatt, David  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence** Park Form

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Other than the obvious natural beauty, I love the teaching moments Yosemite offers. Each year I bring a group of students to Yosemite for a full weekend to explore Wawona, Glacier Pt, Yosemite Valley, and Vernal Falls. The interpretive signage and facilities are top notch. 2. What do you want to see protected? I believe that the NPS is doing a great job at Yosemite in protecting its resources and natural beauty. 3. What needs to be fixed? In all honesty, I can't think of one thing that I am dissatisfied with and feel needs fixing. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Again I believe the NPS is doing an outstanding job at Yosemite. Thank you and keep up the great work that you are doing.

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**Correspondence ID:** 92 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Maytag, Christopher P

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:**

Dec,07,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? To answer that I have to ask you to imagine something: Yosemite, as it was 1000 years ago. That is the essence of what I love about it. 2. What do you want to see protected? Long term, intensive ?????, such as climbing, must be protected at all costs. The ability to sleep in the open under the stars, year-round must be protected. Yosemite is a gift not a "profit rearing" or a hotel, or an amusement park. 3. What needs to be fixed? People, cars, pollution, redirection of wildlife populations. Too many buildings, cars, noises, etc. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Everything that was there before the Park Service ever existed.

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**Correspondence ID:** 93 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Haberkern, Fred

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:**

Jan,29,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Y. Valley - obviously the awesome beauty of the granite. Wawona - the Redwoods, Cabins, Chicawana Falls 2. What do you want to see protected? Leave it as is. Dont develop more. 3. What needs to be fixed? Wider bike lanes. Encourage more bicycling. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Aside from bicycle lanes, do what you are doing now. Dont develop or take away access. If Rangers have to enforce existing policies, so be it. If we need more Rangers, hire them. It's cheaper that creating "boundries."

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**Correspondence ID:** 94 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Browder, Hal C

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:**

Dec,28,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I especially enjoy the River in those areas where the Merced is allowed to naturally meander and flow unrestricted. 2. What do you want to see protected? Ecological restoration and protection is the most important issue in the Y.V.P. 3. What needs to be fixed? Visitor contact at gates with what to expect on visits. Traffic and numbers and flow - West end of the Valley needs shuttle service! More funding for interpretive staff. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The trail system seems to be adequate! No asphalt!

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**Correspondence ID:** 95 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Dornan, David

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:**

Feb,02,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Eliminating cars from Yosemite Valley is a good idea, and having energy clean buses available for visitors. Also increase bike rental availability and retain climber friendly amenities like showers, camping, & shops. I would like to spend two weeks a year in the Valley and recognize it as a world-class climbing area. The drawbacks are the huge crowds and air pollution. Save the Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 96 **Project:** 18982 **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan



**Name:** Schaaf, Matthew  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** Thank you for inviting my input on the protection of the Merced River. Please be sure that campsites are increased so all citizens can enjoy Yosemite Valley. I find that there is a vocal minority of people who are extreme environmentalist who would like nothing better than to further limit access. DO NOT CLOSE ANY MORE CAMPSITES and consider adding more. I would also like to see the sand dredging resumed in Mirror Lake before it into Mirror Meadow.

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**Correspondence ID:** 97     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Thanks for the Card! Please do not restrict access to the river; we have a wonderful, natural treasure that has not suffered any significant damage from human usage so step aside and stop fretting over it-nature will take care of itself!

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**Correspondence ID:** 98     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 99     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Curtiss PA, Vaughn W  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** To Superintendent Re: Your post card Its important to me that we can continue parking in the park. There are many people like myself that feel that way, that you do not hear from. You will hear more on this and other matters from the Sierra Club but they don't represent the majority of visitors.

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**Correspondence ID:** 100     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Felciano, Celeste  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,02,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** I am writing to comment on the Merced River Plan. Please take this input into consideration as you make decisions re: our park. I am a regular visitor to many of the areas effected and believe there needs to be a significant change.

My opinion is that all of the High Sierra Camps should be closed. I have traveled through these areas on numerous hiking trips and believe they no longer have a place in the wilderness. They never should have been developed. They are polluting and degrading the environment. The wilderness should not have pre-fabricated camps set up for visitors who are willing to spend a lot of money. The wear and tear on the land because of all the horse packing to supply camps, combined with the guest use is destroying and polluting the area. There is not enough water to supply all these needs - not to mention the pollution of waste disposal.

Regarding the use of packstock: There is so much to say but I will try to keep it focused. I have backpacked the John Muir Trail and many other Sierra areas. The erosion and pollution I have witnessed from excessive pack useage is disheartening. The Wild and Scenic River corridor should be free from any horse traffic. In general, the groups should be smaller than they are and the "camps" they build and "live" at should be monitored. The manure on the trails is excessive. Why can't the animals wear catchers? This should be required. There should not be any grazing allowed. This wilderness is too fragile and was not meant to supply horses with grass. The food that is brought in must be weed free because of contamination by invasive plants. Please, these things are a must for responsible wilderness management.

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**Correspondence ID:** 101      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Mono Basin Visitor Center  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct.27,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript

**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 10/27/2009 4-8 p.m. Mono Basin Visitor Center, Lee Vining, CA Comments/Questions ? Get more people to come to these meetings ? One way circulation system needs to be maintained. Two way would cause traffic jams ? Upper/Lower river campgrounds are not working. Camping experience in the Valley is not pleasant, too crowded. Disperse camping to other/new sites around the Valley ? Provide convenient transportation to promote access from outside the park ? Don't build one huge parking lot, build many small ones ? People really love YARTS ? Treat hotels like hostels - bus stops at appointed hours ? Repair/maintain restrooms and trash cans everywhere; dysfunctional and overflowing ? Best lodging experience at cabins in Curry Village ? Showers provided for volunteers are terrible (especially at Curry Village). Adopt pay-for-service models, like at state parks ? Nothing has been well maintained in the park ? "On Vacation" syndrome - nobody picks up after themselves. Post reminders to clean up when done ? Utilize corporate volunteers from the Valley more often. VIPs [Volunteers In Parks] take a stewardship role in long term ? Rafting concession is well run ? Historic or long-established uses should be respected or maintained ? Provide transportation for employees if they are relocated out of the park ? Don't make facilities bigger, make them better ? YARTS type system should be enlarged or added to serve more of the park ? West side of park/Valley is difficult to visit from here, especially in early spring when Tioga Pass Rd is still closed (most compelling time to go) ? Provide more guided walks - YA or fee-for-service in lieu of declining Naturalist programs ? Upper and Lower river campgrounds - might be OK to have smaller campgrounds in their place Need to consider more campgrounds outside of the Valley ? Campgrounds outside of the park (USFS) are nearly always full ? Transit and out of park camping could alleviate congestion ? Yellow Pine campground was nice. Perhaps consider sites at western end of Valley ? Would like to see people park car at campground/lodging and be required to leave it and use the shuttle ? Would like to see shuttle busses operate later in the evening so that people eating late dinner would still be able to get back to campground/lodging ? Like that planning process is providing ample opportunity for people to give comments ? People want to see more transit, frequent transit, and ability to take kayak, bikes ? Love the great swimming holes ? Would like to see campgrounds a bit smaller and more dispersed. RVs get bigger every year; more generators, they don't fit. If you're camping in a tent you don't want to be next to a generator ? At June Lake, day use area became open to RVs as overflow ? Would like to see more separation of camping types ... RV, tent only, etc. ? Want to see RV size restrictions/limits in Valley. Suggest natural screening for separation ? The park is a vast wonderland and I prefer to be in backcountry (with fewer people) ? Stock: Personally worked on restoration of trails but packers still use those trails. See the need for stock to supply the high camps. But how do you fix the stock that go off the trails? Animals at the back of the train are less experienced and cause more trails damage ? Riders at the back of the pack cause damage to trails, braiding, widening ? Hope people don't get too polarized in this process. Keep the process open. Nobody will get all they want. ? What we have now is about the capacity that the park can handle ? Go composting (toilets) - technologies are improving ? Dad brought family to Yosemite Valley every year to see the dogwood bloom What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite National Park? ? Hiking without huge numbers of people. Backcountry = favorite; High Country Loop and Vogelsang ? Merced Lake = least favorite. Footprint is obvious where tents ought to be. Needs restoration. Tents too close together ? Visitors should not be denied the High Sierra experience ? Mt Whitney is an example of all that's gone wrong. Consider composting toilets and other new technologies to deal with visitor use ? Issue is: how many people can use the trails at the same time? Rely on Resources Management people ? Incredible places like Bernice Lake ? In-Park transportation works well

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**Correspondence ID:** 102      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, REI Fresno  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov.05,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript

**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/3/2009 4-8 p.m. REI, Fresno, CA

Comments/Questions

? Plan needs to have the flexibility to adjust to future technologies, etc. for the benefit of future generations

What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)

? I love everything about Yosemite that is natural ? Packing it in and packing it out ? People picking up garbage ? good feeling ? In 5 minutes you can find a spot of your own ? Beautiful, quick hikes ? Peace and quiet driving a winter storm ? Restore and bring back the meadows that were historically in Yose Valley, but don't cut any trees not necessary for that task. Meadows provide flood control. Yosemite can set precedent for wetland restoration ? Valley ? in the early 60s: quiet, clean air (now smoky) little traffic except during firefall; meadows respected, people stayed on trails ? Watching sunrise over Glacier Pt while camped at Lower Pines with fellow volunteers. Starts your day really good ? The way Wawona has been maintained as historic village ? the way the river has been cleaned up in the last 10 yrs or so ? Publish Happy Isles Nature Center more for kids ? great place for kids ? Yosemite! period! ? Existing bike trails; so pleasurable to go through trees ? only way to see the Valley ? Going up to Glacier Pt to see the sunset ? Coming across a bear and bear runs away from me. I love the bears ? Ranger talks: impressed they are so diverse in knowledge of

subjects. Don't want to see become endangered species. Very important to the park

What should stay the same?

? Restore pre-1997 flood campsites that have been removed ? the fact that they were momentarily flooded doesn't mean that they cannot be restored ? Mist Trail ? Riverside parking lot at Arch Rock ? Gateway communities ? publicize warnings not to feed wildlife; start info campaign before people get into the park ? Post bear warnings/food in cars warnings at each entrance ? Outreach should be kept general for the general public, not "targeted" or discriminatory ? National Pass fee is too high; reduce to allow access at lower fee ? Yosemite Fund ? Jr Ranger and materials need not cater to Hispanic-only audience with programs or outreach materials ? No "free" admission based on ethnic groups ? Historic archives, access to research library should be publicized ? Yosemite West is a fire hazard ? Increase fines for DNC when they habituate wildlife (mtn lions, raccoons, etc) (food storage is the problem) ? Fix or cover potholes in Yosemite Lodge parking lot ? improper or insufficient snow removal; clear walkways ? Plain wooden surfaces on bridges, esp at Yosemite Falls ? no asphalt on pedestrian bridges ? Don't use bear skins in Ranger talks; desecrates the animal; use fake fur instead ? Adopt zero tolerance for putting bears down, forcing you to put policies into effect that will meet the objectives ? Eco-engineering: don't use too much asphalt ? Keep/expand meadow restoration and invasive plant eradication ? Private boating allowed on river

What needs to be fixed?

? People parking in meadows ? Raise the fine for littering ? Entrance stations ? people with passes should have a wave-thru line ? Dissemination of info so that people understand which roads are open. Inform people ahead of time, en route to park ? Perhaps build an elevated viewing stand to protect El Capitan Meadow ? Like the shuttle bus system ? Air quality! It's (smoke) killing the trees and making me sick ? Communications with Indian people. Proper consultation a must. The so-called "Tribes" not inclusive ? include lineal descendants ? No buildings or campgrounds should be done on the river ? Do away with mountain climbers ? Taft Toe parking was a great idea ? Kempner-Tregoe decision-making model, to weigh issues and get all ideas out in the open ? Would like to see a bike path through the western end of Yosemite Valley (10 ft wide) to get bikes off the main road. Right now there is no road shoulder (from trail system in East Valley [Yose Lodge] to Pohono Bridge and back) ? Consider bike trails in Wawona; around the community from the hotel, etc ? Consider bike path around Tenaya Lake ? Bike parking in the Valley is needed. Racks are deplorable! APBP.org [Assn of pedestrian and bicycle professionals ~ 850 members] Report contains good examples of some of the nation's best bike parking design ? Need good racks at Happy Isles. Often overcrowded, over capacity for available racks ? Get more people to bike, leave cars behind ? Are there bike racks on the Valley shuttle busses? ? With bikes you can get around easily to access great views and places to take photos ? Need more paved turnouts, esp along Tioga Rd. (particularly from Crane Flat to White Wolf) There is very little space for slower drivers to pull over, improve safety. Place turnouts every < mile ? Protect the lichen from people who deface rocks. Perhaps add this in the Jr Ranger guides. Teach kids about the fragility of lichen ? Air quality! Consider prohibiting campfires, or at least have some smoke-free campgrounds. I get sick every time I stay overnight in the Valley. I can't be the only one! ? Restore Wawona golf course to natural state ? Replant trees cut across Yosemite Lodge (e. of lodge) ? Install warning lights for motorists when bicyclists are in tunnel (lights are activated by the cyclists) ? Would like bike lanes or separated paths for them in west end of Valley and down to El Portal What do you want to see protected?

? Everything in the park ? Joe Public camping in Valley, high country. High Sierra Camps. Bears! ? Would like limits on tour buses (#per day) ? Would like to see commercial vehicle inspections to continue and be increased ? Protect the ability of the average person to visit the park. No limit to # of people, but vehicle limits would be OK ? Would like strict penalties for those who feed wildlife (esp bears) and better enforcement ? Would like to see less asphalt on trails. It's hard on knees and because it's not natural ground for park animals. Asphalt also increases runoff and water pollution ? Increase Ranger numbers in summer; Enforce ban on feeding wildlife ? Would like to see # of cars in Yose Valley reduced- develop a parking facility at Taft Toe ? Increase day-use parking in the Valley ? Would like to see private vehicles banned from Valley ? If cars are banned from Valley and public busses are developed as an alternate form of transport, they need to run frequently and have room for suitcases and camping gear ? Protect cultural properties, esp American Indian sites ? Consider banning rock climbing ? at least ban any permanent bolts, defacements, etc on cliff faces ? Prohibit boating on Merced River. Prohibit swimming in Merced River ? Protect the wonderful swimming holes on the S Fork Merced in the Wawona area ? allow people to keep swimming in them ? Preserve opportunities for rock climbing. Visitors should be able to enjoy the park in their own way so long as it does not interfere with other visitors or damage the resources ? Abolish High Sierra Camps ? Protect Wilderness values by prohibiting electronic communications ? a form of mechanical transportation ? within the Wilderness. Emergency use falls within the administrative provisions of the Wilderness Act ? Preserve Indian sites in El Portal ? Preserve interaction of visitor with nature. Avoid creating barriers, either literal or figurative (e.g. Glacier Pt rock walls replacing iron railings). People are disconnected from cliff experience; it's no different than being on the top of a building ? Create a plan that has a firm focus on the ORVs. What are the data gaps? Will the public get to know this? [yes] ? Will the public have an opportunity to review the science/data that describes the natural/cultural ORVs before making comments on the draft plan? [yes] ? Work on relationship with Tribes in order to help inform traditional cultural practices and what to protect ? What will this plan say (NPS) about the terminal moraine that was blasted by Galen Clark?

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	103	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Dec.07,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Letter				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	In the 1970's it was pleasant in summertime to float down the Merced River, simply by bringing our flotation devices. In more recent years, the concessioner has been allowed to operate a Raft Rental business, not only destroying the calm of a float trip, but turning				

the Merced into an unsightly freeway of visual blight. I have no objection to the Curry Ice Rink, a charming, human-made structure. Similarly, the bike rental puts users onto asphalt paths built and maintained by the Park. In stark contrast, the Merced River is a natural feature. I propose that the National Park Service rescind the Raft Rental concession. Notice of the change can be posted at campgrounds, lodgings, and in park brochures and media outlets, a year or two in advance of the closure. Anyone who subsequently complains should be asked whether they would demand rental facilities for tents, lawn chairs, tennis shoes, gloves, winter caps, or anything else they should have brought from home. While an argument can be made that a bicycle isn't so easily transported, an inflatable raft or inner tube is very easily transported. In short, the Merced River should never be treated as an amusement park flume ride.

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**Correspondence ID:** 104      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** NA, Chelsea  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am not as familiar as I probably should be concerning the wild and scenic rivers at, but from a common sense point of view, the area around Bryceburg is far from wild and scenic. It has campgrounds from the Bryceburg bridge down to railroad flats. A quarter mile down there is a residential house. Just across the bridge from Hwy 140 there is a private residence and a section of blacktop road with speed bumps in it. How could one even want to consider this section wild and scenic? Someone mentioned to me that the wild and scenic quarter that was being considered was eighty-one miles long. Hwy 140 parallels the river all the way to Yosemite Valley with housing all around the river. None of this should be considered wild and scenic because it isn't.

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**Correspondence ID:** 105      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** What do you want to see protected? -Special status wildlife and plants. (eg. YLF, Willow Flycatcher) -Wildlife & plants in general -Water quality

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**Correspondence ID:** 106      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,02,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** What needs to be fixed? It would be great to have a sign at the waste water dump in the bathroom explaining just how to do dishes i.e. get water at potable spigot wash at campsite and just dump at sink. A lot of people seemed confused.

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**Correspondence ID:** 107      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Petersen, Stan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? a. I love the Natural Evolving processes(s). b. The pristine beauty of this Corridor. c. The fauna and flora. 2. What do you want to see protected? a. The Natural Evolving processes(s). b. The pristine beauty of this Corridor and the surrounding visual and sensory characteristics. c. The Flora and Fauna (ie; Grizzly Bear and reptiles etc.) d. The 1980 Master Plan'. e. Air Quality - reduce hydrocarbons f. Greater separation of campsites from each other in Campgrounds with the addition of shower facilities for campers. 3. What needs to be fixed? a. Protecting the Flora and Fauna (Human trampling) b. Transportation system (adjusting to Carrying Capacities). c. Human impact on the River riparian resource (ie; El Capitan Meadow, errant trails, the use of 'Control Fires'). d. Day Use needs reduction with the adjustments of 'carrying capacity'. e. Enforcement f. Add more Picnic Areas within Shulte Bus routes. g. Traffic congestion (use staging areas outside the Valley) h. Discourage roadside parking (add more rock berms). i. The use of Park resources for un-associated, elite purposes, like Golf. j. Northside Drive closed, except to emergency use and/or Shuttle Bus access. k. Removal of Exotic flora and fauna. l. Reduction of noise (decibels). m. Reduce the use of asphalt and/or concrete. n. Re-introduction of the Grizzly Bear (Ursus horribilis). 4. What would you like to see kept the same? a. Hybrid Buses b. The bridges c. Existing designated trails (No additional trails) d. Undeveloped areas. e. No Firefall

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**Correspondence** 108      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**ID:**  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Yosemite Valley Auditorium  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Yosemite Valley Public Scoping 12/2//2009 Yosemite Valley Auditorium

#### Comments/Questions

? Is concession services plan subject to NEPA? ? How about extending existing contract until MRP is approved? So there won't be conflict of interest ? Concerns about Scenic Vista Management Plan ? how far will it go? Will consideration be given to biology, forest succession, etc? ? Will transportation plan be part of this process or is it a separate plan? Explain relationship between transportation issues and river plan ? How will you take into account the 10,000s of comments submitted for YVP and MRP 1? ? Role of the court in planning process? ? Are you having specific meetings with FOYV and MERG ? would that not be a good idea? ? User capacity ? will it be the same process as before or will it change this time around? ? Protect the upper pines campground area near Happy Isles ? archeological significance, other resources that should remain as is ? YVP called for a walk-in campground at that location, so the comment is important, seconded, reinforced ? Day use reservation system should be enacted. Also, construction of by-pass road encouraged at Yose Lodge ? Look at capacity of campgrounds ? sites are too close together, not being allowed to regenerate ? Utilize EP/Foresta for intensification of visitor support ? parking, staging areas

What do you want to see protected?

? Air quality ? The camping and hiking opportunities ? Water quality of the Merced River ? The easy access to the Valley ? Protect Foresta from becoming a parking lot ? The adventure, feeling of being spontaneous, without control ? Restrict campfire

What do you Love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?

? Clarify source of financial support for YARTS ? not funded through subsidies from hotels ? Have some meetings on weekends ? Experience today without any cars in the park! ? Love the shuttle bus (from Wawona) ? Very little exposure to information for visitors who aren't aware of what to expect when they get to Yosemite ? Rely on gateway communities to provide info and provide services ? We need to re-establish some campgrounds. Elimination of parking spaces must also be addressed. Day use parking is key ? Prior planning efforts not quantitative issues ? Scheduling of commercial operators. Tour buses can/should be contained ? Public access to research library ? Open the horse trail at Happy Isles to foot traffic ? Paving at John Muir Trail ? improves visitor experience ? The way it is ? don't change a thing ? Coffee with the Ranger in campground and Ranger talks ? learning opportunities

What needs to be Fixed?

? Make clear the pathways around ? not thru- to get to water, bathroom, campsite ? Signage reviewed to correct it e.g. Village Store to 4-way intersection, esp walking signs: truth the clarity by walking the route ? Better supervision of # of campers per site ? Restore junkyards "corporation yards" used by NPS, upper and lower river campgrounds, old gas station between Sugar pine Bridge and The Awahnee ? Day users cannot get info about park before they are in the park ? what to expect, where to go besides the Valley, etc ? Why not open Badger in summer with shuttle to Glacier Pt to ease congestion at Glacier Pt? ? Consider "no burn" ie no campfire days in Valley ? Consider no campfires ever ? Restore upper and lower river campgrounds and design restoration with ecological principles as primary factor ? Restore scenic views at scenic view pullouts by cutting down the trees ? Do scenic restoration tree cutting sparingly ? Vehicles stay parked at campsites. Transportation while in Valley by alternate means. Private vehicles for arrival/departure trips only ? Eliminate road corridor parking/pullouts ? Confine human impact where we are impacting eg at Lodge: get same # of rooms but over smaller footprint. Confine not spread out areas of impact ? Any plan should result in less or equal impacted areas ? No tradeoffs of rehab one area so you can impact another ? Traffic jams ? Day use automobile congestion ? Base of cliffs regenerated/restricted where climbers access ? Restrict rock access in same manner (spirit) that backcountry is restricted ? Restore native fauna in the areas climbers frequently access ? Can't see big trees grove without long hike at elevation unless you are handicapped (tram tour \$26 each) ? Add shuttle bus to trees so you don't have to pay tour price or extend free shuttle ? Expand shuttles to more places in park ? not just Valley ? Emphasize making park available to all economic classes ? Reduce visitor costs ? Increase web interactivity during planning process ? Find balance to construction projects that makes sense. Help protect resource ? YF trail maintenance has done a lot to reduce impacts ? YF needs to be more transparent, concessioner too ? Yosemite Guide needs more emphasis at entrance stations ? Like 2 lanes at entrance stations ? Next time concession contract comes up there should be public input te prices and providing opportunities for enjoyment ? DNC has done a better job ? Operations excludes lots of people (pricing) ? Valley campgrounds should be run like Tuolumne ? half reserved, half first-come, first-served ? YARTS not answer to get people in and out of Valley (camping, gear). For day use could be okay or overnight with a couple of suitcases ? How will renewal of concession services plan synchronize with this process?

What would you like to see kept the same?

? The NPS should be more in the preservation business and less in the construction business; divorce the Yosemite Fund ? taints park's focus ? Keep the trail system the same ? no more asphalt. Keep education going about impacts of social trails. Provide access guide to climbers

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**Correspondence ID:** 109      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Organization:** Public Scoping, Wawona Community Center  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/4/09 1-4 pm Wawona Community Center, Wawona, CA

Comments/Questions

? Plan needs to have the flexibility to adjust to future technologies, etc. for the benefit of future generations ? New people managing the park, planning for the park. Who's going to be here to see it through? ? "Most plans are obsolete the day they're signed." Important to stick to the schedule. Hope the emphasis is on the best ideas for now ? Yosemite Valley Plan was rescinded. Back on the table: all transportation strategies, campgrounds, lodging, etc. ? NPS Director is advocating to not return campgrounds in Yose Valley. How can this be if the plan is moving forward with a clean slate? ? What do we count? buildings, horses, cars, etc. Look at history from late 1800s regarding user capacity ? Upper/Lower River Campground closure: Was it a knee-jerk reaction? Were there public meetings? What safeguards are in place (where decisions are made behind the public's back) that it won't happen again? ? There are lots of different ideas and opinions. What may be good for one group or gateway may not be good for another ? Need a true range of alternatives, broad and includes the spectrum of opportunities. That was part of the success of the GMP ? Today, there's no reason why everybody can't be kept in the loop. Best way for groups to stay tuned and provide input or a reaction as the plan develops ? Wawona property condemnation. Will that be the case now? ? Involving everyone, even those who aren't coming, who think that Yose is closed ? Gateways are discussing early warnings to provide real-time info, avoid congestion ? Congestion is a parkwide problem. Plenty of room if managed properly. Lots of things can be done. Lots of groups with historical ties, (campers, tribes, etc) need to bring them along too ? User capacity; how will workshops work? Concerned that three guys will come up with ideas, set in concrete decrease in use. What is the process? ? Carrying capacity has been an issue for 100 years. Cars were limited, Tremendous adjustment will be made in future ? GMP was a 20 yr old plan that never was completed. Is there a way to build in a five year review to revisit ideas and not be locked in? ? Open up the thinking ? Can build into plan an adaptive management cycle to incorporate new ideas when uncertainties exist ? Work with an established group to provide oversight, accountability ? Grow NPS constituency to promote parks. If you have no students, you flop. Reduce, diminish capacity ? What are the strategies for addressing user limits? ? Public safety in a box canyon ? evacuation; how do you get folks out, flooding, wildfires?

What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)

? Wawona golf course should remain here [part of evacuation plan staging area] ? part of the community, historic nature, part of the waste water treatment regime ? Broad range of water distribution systems [28] should be consolidated ? except private wells ? Social benefits ? barn dances, interp/edu programs ? Lack of crowds, peace and quiet ? Maintenance yard is a good candidate for restoration ? Can some or all of the maintenance functions be moved away from Wawona to Fish Camp? ? Guiding principle: does it really have to be located in Yosemite? Use this question to analyze land use decisions and actions ? Natural functions of rivers and meadows, interaction of wetlands, loss of upper and lower River Campgrounds is a good thing ? You always need 2 x the number of campgrounds than you have in Yosemite Valley ? think carefully about where they belong ? even if it's outside the park ? Transportation ? existing shuttle bus system is good, but sort of a token. Further development of a bus system is essential to resolving issues throughout the park ? Sequencing of development projects is important (ie bus parking at Yose Falls) ? Explore other (non-diesel) forms of mass transit, such as CNG and propane ? Consider regular bus service between Fresno and Yosemite ? no diesel, use smaller buses that are full vs huge diesel buses that are often half empty ? Restoration of clean air and natural quiet should be ORVs of new river plan ? YNP trees create oxygen and sequester carbon ? let clean air produced by park be unaffected by diesel bus operations ? People need options to camp in the Valley ? it should be increased and expanded. Existing limited # of campsites is not reasonable, given demand. Lodging options are too expensive and not available (beyond reach) of regular park visitors, families, etc ? NPS is obligated to provide camping for the visitor experience, education and development of a constituency for conservation

What should stay the same/be protected?

? South entrance and store parking lot and Mariposa Grove ? all 3 are used for M Grove parking. Most used is the store, it is in the river corridor. It gets overcrowded. Build out south entrance lot to offset needs at store lot ? Improve intra-park transportation system, for visitors and employees. If there was a bus from Wawona to the Valley, I'd use it. Once people get to park encourage them to use a free shuttle system ? River plan maintains Wawona as a community, protects the integrity of the community. Respect adjacencies in the planning of NPS land uses ? Protect private land ? keep it the same ? Won't get people to leave their car behind, so ask them to park it once they are here ? Teach people that we have transportation options before people get to the park ? Make sure river planning process involves the community ? Protect community, preserve mountain residential character, ie avoid placing dormitory ? high density housing within residences, campgrounds, etc. And road widths, traffic ? NPS planning should respect county and state planning for community of Wawona ? Ongoing planning for Wawona should be set up to include Wawona Town Planning Advisory Committee ? Don't force use to private property e.g. if contain use in some area but users still access river via private land. Create public access routes to river ? South entrance could be a major transportation point for people wanting to go to Valley, Grove, Wawona,. Major area that could support projects ? Wawona shouldn't become a bus depot. Storage of empty buses. Maintenance yard is too big ? Could be an alternative for people that do not want to park their car ? Give people choices to stop here, or go other places ? Campgrounds impact large number of visitors. Are fewer campgrounds now that before, would like to increase the number of sites ? could campgrounds be more river-corridor sensitive/compatible eg so they could survive a flood, had no

permanent structures, could be washed with flood, used again? ? Bring back upper and lower river campgrounds ? Campground impacts the river but does not abuse it ? need to make that distinction in this plan ? Have a map that shows clearly what structures are within the plan and which ones are outside the plan ? Native plants are a high-value resource, particularly along the roadway for invalid or others who wouldn't/couldn't get off the road so they can enjoy them for painting, photographs, viewing, aesthetics, etc ? More pullouts on road ? Restore parking in Valley ? Controlled burns should be monitored so high value or rare species are not wiped out ? Scientists should be hired by NPS and working on the river plan. Include biologists and botanists ? Non-necessary staff (NPS and concession) should be moved out of the Valley and park ? Certain services should be moved out of the park; let the gateway communities do it (liquor sales, grocery, etc) ? Other transportation needs to take over where YARTS stops ? No diesel bus system ? check what is happening with visitation ? especially from local areas. Campground use free on fee-free weekends ? Fee collection process and spending of fee money should be both transparent and made public ? Density housing, concessioner housing next to SDA would cause problems, danger to children. Child safety is an issue ? South Fork is quite different in hydrology, river flows lessen, gets pretty low during the season ? Shuttle used to go to campground, once a day, now people have to drive cars to the shuttle ? Is small dam OK regarding free flowing? Is there a process looking to alternate water sources that the little dam provides? ? Several water systems have increased costs and entire system may have to be studied ? Golf course is part of evacuation plan, identified as place of significance ? Multiple water systems allow way for private residences to still get water ? don't expand road width to accommodate bigger buses, bigger RVs or semis ? Limit size of vehicles coming into park ? No semi/18 wheeler come into park ? Add restrooms at Wawona Village store ? Maintain all ORVs ? NPS should not cherry-pick ORVs to fit their development plans ? Include clean air and natural quiet

What needs to be fixed?

? Stud Horse Rd (old logging road in wilderness). In order to protect the river corridor from increased traffic on Forest Dr, consider formalizing as an access point to Camp Wawona. This would provide an emergency exit for South Wawona (this may have congressional support) ? Sewer, water, most phone service is all provided in road corridor. Power should go under road vs installing new power poles ? Port-a-potties at Swinging Bridge. Need permanent restroom facility, perhaps tied into existing sewer line ? Planning should be logical (NPS removed gas stations and parking spaces, but cars are still coming absent public transit) ? Need to correct GIS maps (not accurate +/- 30 yards ) change wilderness boundary near Camp Wawona ? Consider the congestion at Wawona Hotel and store/Mariposa Grove shuttle parking in planning ? residents have a tough time getting mail, can't find parking ? In looking at carrying capacity, be sure to consider the congestion around Wawona Store in July and August. Linkages to the Mariposa Grove and congestion there. Consider adding some parking near the entrance station to handle Mariposa Grove overflow, shuttle bus could pick up there. Improve communication between parking areas and entrance station to better direct visitors and reduce congestion ? Visitors come up Chinualna Falls Rd confused that they will see a waterfall, or they are looking for a sequoia grove. ? Would like to see a shuttle from Wawona to Yose Valley. Needs to be frequent enough (every couple of hours, 2-3 times in morning/afternoon). People also ask about a shuttle to Glacier Pt/Badger Pass (estimate getting this question at the store 10-15 times per week) ? Where do all the cars park? Don't want Wawona to turn into a bus depot, esp at NPS maintenance yard. Don't want Wawona to be a way station to the rest of the park ? Is there a milestone chart for the public to see specific activities and timeframes so public can see what's happening [see Appendix A of Settlement Agreement] ? ACOE or judgment of a prudent professional; 2.33 yr floodplain = Ordinary High Water Mark ? What can we do on our own property? ? What is the boundary of the Wild and Scenic River? ? What happens if a natural occurrence dams the river? What will NPS do? ? Yosemite is going to be a special case in terms of planning and the Wild and Scenic Rivers. Is the NPS looking to other wild and scenic river plans? Is there a template for planning? ? Wawona visitors (overnight) should be encouraged to leave vehicles at lodging/cabin and follow a better designated access point to river (now they tend to drive to access points in fear of not wanting to trespass on another property owner's land ? Visitors often ask "where is the Ranger Station?" Not sure exactly how to respond because NPS ranger operations are all over (eg info station vs law enforcement vs wilderness permits) ? Reconfigure the South entrance to achieve project objectives. It's a major driver to addressing issues in Wawona ? Approve Wawona specific plan ? Wawona as it is currently configured supports the avoidance of environmental abuse. NPS and private land; as the NPS considers uses on its land within Section 35, would like to see uses compatible with single-family homes, character of community (dorms or campgrounds would be incompatible with the family community character that exists today). Private property serves as a buffer to protect the river ? Create better public access and facilities to river. Avoid forcing public access through private property. Respect the adjacencies ? To ensure an ongoing integrated planning, would like to see reciprocal input: WTPAC to NPS planning as two-way street. Recognize the role of WTPAC in the plan, especially as actions pertain to Section 35 ? PG&E Wawona Pt issue needs to be resolved

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**Correspondence ID:** 110      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Public Scoping, Doubletree Berkeley Marina

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Nov,16,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Transcript

**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/9/2009 4-8 p.m. Doubletree Berkeley Marina Conference Center, Berkeley, CA

Comments/Questions ? Consider using the camping database to reach out to long-time campers. Needs to be some kind of balance to maintain camping facilities for families in Yosemite. They would be some of the NPS's biggest advocates. Campers, at times, feel like victims as much as a part of Yosemite. The fences keeping people away from the river ? need to define what is a "natural state" ? What vision do we go with? NPS legislation? Gifford-Pincho? John Muir? if it means limiting use to conserve a place for future generations, that is part of the price ? What will you base your decisions on? ? When you say you are going to "look at" campgrounds, etc, what do you mean? ? Are all of these different aspects the plan weighted equally? ? Too often seen that areas covered as part of cumulative impacts are not followed through or are mitigated in ways that are not ? Concession Services Plan should not be a driver of the new Merced River Plan. Any new CSP should answer to the new river plan to be protective of the river. Need to put any new CSP through the protect/enhance mandate of WSRA ? Glad to see the NPS is considering webinars and other means of connecting/conducting outreach ? In YVP there was a tremendous amount of input. Suggest considering these comments as valid for this new process ? A lot of those previous comments capture what is experientially important ? all info that is still valid ?

Who makes the final decision? Who decides and what is the process for making decisions and factoring what goes into the plan (behind closed doors)? In past, USFS team engaged in a process to analyze comments. Feel that this was not an effective way to capture comments that are meaningful. It's too easy to give over comments to a consulting firm. Want to know that the NPS is reading and taking into account the full comments (not just selected quotes) Nuances may seem small, but because it is Yosemite, they are not small. At minimum, planning team and decision makers all need to read and be familiar with the depth of comments? Is there a document that lays out the requirements for defining what goes into a plan or what can and cannot take place with the river corridor? [WSRA, Secretarial Guidelines, WSR Reference Guide]? Draft ORVs on website: feel this is inappropriate when things are supposed to be open? Website still shows 2000 and 2005 Merced River Plans in a category as "completed plans". Since they are "dead plans" this may confuse people? High Sierra Camp at Merced Lake? suggest a permanent presence that is not on par with Yose Valley, El Portal, Wawona? Like the idea of getting on REI's schedule of monthly meetings What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)? High Sierra Camps? History of people and what they went through to protect Yosemite? Rare geology (i.e. glaciation, amount of waterfalls, etc)? Ability to work there? Devil's Elbow swimming hole? Ranger-led programs? Used to enjoy large masses of people enjoying Yose Falls viewpoint (changed with Lower Yose Falls Loop Trail)? Fern Spring (except it is now "protected" but the experience has changed)? Some informal trails? there is something about the quality of a nearwilderness experience? NPS destroyed river gauge at Happy Isles. This is example of some historical item that was lost. Do not take away historical pieces What should stay the same? Merced River watershed should be kept to Wild and Scenic? Watershed should remain available for use by people? Car camping What do you want to see fixed? changed? improved? Provide handicapped access to places along the river so that folks with mobility impairments can access and enjoy the river (e.g. for fishing, watching the water, etc)? Would like to see virtual representation of river on web (like YA's web cam; focus one on the water)? "MRP" title does not represent comprehensive nature of plan? Crowds at public meetings are too small (more meetings at places like REI)? Do podcasts so people can take info on their own time? Backcountry permit system: commercial packing has bigger impact than individuals. Do they have same weight as far as access? Goal is to minimize impact along corridor. Differentiate between commercial packing and individuals? Crowds in Yose Valley. People don't come because of crowds. Can we address access to trails without turning them off due to overcrowding? Parking situation needs to be fixed? Education on safe use of park (i.e. don't know all dangers of Half Dome)? Hooks in all bathrooms? Only necessary concession? less concessions, a lot less? Advise campers at reservation to bring own stuff in car (be prepared). Change campers expectations? Recruit more US citizens to be employed in Yose? Visitor experience should be based on natural values. Redefine cultural ORVs? Don't let development define planning. Less development, less pavement? More sustainable design to campgrounds? CSP? greatly reduce concessions? Yosemite is a national treasure, not a resort? remove city/suburb amenities? Put in a shelf in men's restroom at Camp 4? Is YI's planning for Henness Ridge possibly in scope for MRP? Worth looking at some of that plan as impacts? Campground reservation system should conform with other NPS systems? 5 month in advance window, open day at a time instead of just one day a month? Set aside % of unreservable for drop-ins? Should be more equitable? Provide more handicapped accessibility (ensure feel) where possible? Work fixes to transportation from perspective with foundation of ORVs including types of existing experiences and working up? Easy access to park rangers 24 hrs/day? Bike access to destinations away from crowded areas? Keep entrance stations open for longer hours (people know to come late and not pay)? Protect the bears instead of killing them. No overflowing garbage cans. Take a look at different campground configurations? Public outreach to schools about feeding animals in national parks? Concession Services Plan: MRP needs to be reconfigured around current plan. Within scope of MRP things within CSP need to be revisited, as needed? Look at appropriate vs inappropriate as defined by court, regardless of hierarchy of values What do you want to see protected? The ability of "average" visitors to reach their goals in life. Protect abilities and rights of people to do what they want. It allows people to build selfconfidence? Scenery? Quiet places like west end of Yose Valley and trails along edge of Valley? Be careful not to change experience in the name of protection? Protect area at Swan Slab (i.e. trees, habitat, etc)? Quiet experience near/at Fen? Scenic ORV is Yosemite Valley? Viewsheds

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**Correspondence ID:** 111      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Public Scoping, Mariposa Government Center  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Nov,02,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** Transcript  
**Correspondence:** Public Scoping Meeting Comments 11/2/2009 4-8 p.m. Mariposa Government Center, Mariposa, CA

Comments/Questions

? On postcards, perhaps include more of the agenda, time of presentations, etc. Check box for those who wish email vs regular mail (opt out)? Add to presentation slides (#5 river planning in Yose) NHPA? What about the a864 law that set aside Yose, CA [1890 Retrocession Act] Grant back to federal govt? El Portal Admin site legislation: how will that factor in this new plan? How will real time management of visitor use be articulated in the plan? Public transportation forum: comprehensive and not exclusive? Look to other W&SR plans and learn from them; look to connect people who participated in those planning efforts? Outreach: Include park visitors in process. Also bi-lateral relationships with China (sister parks) may be another opportunity? Equestrian groups are forgotten in planning process. Experience in the saddle is different than on 2 feet. It's an historic activity [signed: Mariposa Mountain Riders]? Outreach to editorial boards to help in form of news media of issues, educate them (i.e. understanding of user capacity)? Reach out to folks who have been here from outside CA? In plan, articulate how potential future changes will be addressed/made; what will be involved in the process? Scoping period closing Dec 4? would like additional time (90 days from now)? Would like to know more about the data/info/research that is available. There is a great deal of historic info about past management actions that could inform this new plan? How is 1980 General Management Plan factoring into this new plan? Is it "speaking from the grave" or is it still alive? Scoping comments submitted prior to settlement agreement should be considered but marked "prior" and "post" settlement agreement? Continue the process as planned. The settlement agreement had no bearing on scoping. The judge said to do a new plan and explained what needed to be done 2 years ago. The settlement agreement only affirmed that. There was nothing new? YVP was rescinded? If the NPS rescinded the YVP and didn't know about it, how does the public know? Build a plan that pragmatically stands a chance of being funded? The more alternate ways you have to move through the park, the more intimate the



experience you can have. Too much concentrating in Valley vs being dispersed to other beautiful trails, making sure those areas are publicized and people know about them

What do you Love about the Merced River in Yosemite? (Yose Valley, Wawona, El Portal, high country)

? Swimming in the rapids ? Skipping stones ? Finding cool rocks ? Splashing around in the water ? Relaxing and having a good time  
? How can we get back out of the box to explain user capacity, explain the complexities ? Find positive ways to explain it to the public. Great potential for good outcomes. Make conversation open, positive and inclusive of public

What should stay the same?

? Current access ? no further reduction in access or use ? Keep the mountains ? Keep it simple ? No reduction in access ? Review the number of parking places removed. Keep pullouts. Look at bringing back more parking ? Keep the courtesy and professionalism of the NPS employee ? Add positive conflict resolution process ? El Cap pullout was a great idea ? Need more pullouts ? East end of Valley picnic area need new one. Could ride shuttle there ? Give people a chance to stop and look at things. ? Merced River: dirt trail maintained; need alternate routes and park entrances for walking/biking so people can park on go on trail (and not have to go to the Valley) Keep them off busy roads ? More alternate trails walking and biking breaks things up and helps convergence in Yose Valley; use more of the park ? Developing smaller areas for camping dispersing high density crowds throughout park ? Trails, trailheads disbursed so people can spread out ? May create opportunities for park and riding instead of driving all over the place ? Keep creature comforts for segment of population that needs them to access the river ? Picnicking by the river

What do you want to see fixed? changed? improved?

? Address traffic congestion not only in YV but Wawona and Tuolumne Meadows. Optimize use of existing infrastructure and/or intermediate steps , e.g. don't do; avoid: satellite parking and bus system with large fleet. Look into agreements with Yose View Lodge, Cedar Lodge and Tenaya Lodge (and others) to keep POVs off roads. Reduced fee incentive to get people to use the system ? Complement with a day use reservation system ? Traffic management ? optimize existing lanes according to demand. Trickle in-flow on south side all a.m. but peak period for exiting parking is 3:30-5:30 pm. Make Southside Dr. Northside Dr. stays one-way from Stoneman Bridge. 50% of all cars are up here on a daily basis ? Utilize Badger Pass parking lot for staging in summer time ? prohibit large delivery trucks during daytime hours ? Parking impacts on river must be avoided or minimized at El Portal (plans in past to expand parking here) ? Prevent further development at park boundary to keep parking requests low/down ? Park at El Portal allows entry only for people with reservations at hotels or campsites [this concept was less favorable to the latter suggestion per same speaker/individual]. Assumes payment of rights of access/privilege of hotel use. Could be offset. Picnicker and hiker deserve access to remote sites ? Aggressive enforcement of speed limit!

What do you want to see protected?

? ORVs ? Merced High Sierra Camp ? some want it retained, others want it removed to protect wilderness values ? Consider environmental impacts of supply and travel horse groups to Merced Lk. See High Sierra Hikers comments on 1992 Concession Services Plan. Does such use conflict with protection of ORVs? (esp water quality, amphibian protection, hiker experience, and scenic experience) ? Protect: river sounds (esp consider impacts of traffic on natural/quiet sounds). Esp buses and motorcycles ? Protect night sky and experience ? control lighting ? See if CA code requires motorcycle mufflers and how that is enforced. NPS should consider this or even a stricter noise limit ? Protect fishing access ? Bring back Mirror Lake! ? Consider limiting or eliminating rafting on Merced ? Consider relocating Swinging Bridge picnic area. Replace this at Lower River Campground ? Provide formalized bus parking. ? Restrict size of buses ? Consider a bus carrying capacity for the Valley and a reservation system ? Protect ability for people to visit the Valley in same numbers as now ? Parking spaces serve an important function in reducing pollution, keeping people from driving around and around ? Appreciate the nice NPS employees ? Use existing infrastructure rather than jumping to extraordinary transportation systems (e.g. satellite/out of valley parking) ? In some areas there are very few pedestrian walks/trails ? Enforce existing vehicle noise laws ? aggressively ? Outreach to motorcycle retailers and renters re: noise

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	112	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	N/A, Form Letter 1				
<b>Outside:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Organization:</b>					
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.				

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two

criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 113      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Appleby, Andrea  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am an avid climber, aging as I am now 50 but still love to climb. My biggest concern is if the park is shut down to vehicles, how will it impact access to climbing areas. I think the access in Zion works well. If you get a climbing permit you can drive into the park before the buses start running. This works well since most of the long climbs in Yosemite require a very early morning start.

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**Correspondence ID:** 114      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Stabel, Aaron  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Yosemite is a beautiful place. I visit often. My passions are whitewater kayaking and being in nature. Yosemite offers a unique combination of world-class whitewater and stunning beauty. I fully support the park's embrace of a low-impact, conscientiously driven outdoor activity such as whitewater kayaking.

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**Correspondence ID:** 115      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Acree, Marty

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** My hope is that the MRP will be a visionary plan that goes beyond federal floodplain guidelines to remove development from the one hundred year floodplain and allow the river processes to continue. George Melendez Wright challenged the Park Service to live up to its founding document and apply the injunction of "unimpaired" preservation of animals within park borders. Wright sensed that "the very heart of the national park system" was imperiled by an attitude that narrowly defined the park ideal to preserving pretty views for tourists in automobiles. He proposed that nature be allowed to take its course in the parks and that "Our natural heritage is richer than just scenic features." He stated, "Our greatest national heritage is nature itself, with all its complexity" and "If we destroy nature blindly it is a boomerang which will be our undoing" (Duncan Yosemite Fall 2009) Just as Wright pleaded with his peers, I hope and pray this plan can bring some of the same insight into the future management of the Merced River, one guided by the very processes which created the river, the canyons and valleys through which it flows. This plan has the potential to guide future development with removal of undesirable development, allowing the restoration of riverine processes, and the landform it created. Previous versions of the MRP shared some of this vision, one that with a little imagination is "visible" looking down at Yosemite Valley from Glacier Point. Unfortunately, the present "Valley View" from Glacier Point as well as many views throughout the river corridor has degraded significantly since the Merced's designation as a Wild and Scenic River. Today's view from Glacier Point shows a variety of ever expanding parking lots, which evolved without the exacting environmental compliance or best management practices deserving of a place like Yosemite. One parking lot was a former garbage dump (Curry Dump) long since covered in gravel, that is now a dirty, dusty parking lot. Another parking lot is Camp 6, now known as Day Use Parking. Aerial photographs from the 1980s show Camp 6 as a former campground with scattered tent cabins supporting employee housing. Seen in these photographs and known to the author is a sweet place along the Merced River with tent cabins existing side by side with native vegetation and remnants of the landform or topography, shaped over time by the river processes. This riverside area was not a pristine meadow by any means, but the point I hope to make is that this plan must deal with areas in the floodplain that are severely degraded over time under the guise of temporary staging areas. What I have come to understand over my decades of being a Yosemite lover and keen observer is that a staging area is a thinly disguised means to trash an area and make it appear less pristine prior to development. One might hope this is not the truth but I say it here to highly encourage alternatives to this type of piecemeal development and take the bold move to restore the area known as day use parking. This is an essential wildlife corridor and linkage between Cook's and Ahwahnee Meadows. Additional staging areas, which the previous plans slated to restore, include what became known as the floodplain restoration project. This site has the potential to restore the function of over 150 critical acres of former meadow, floodplain, and river terrace habitat the Valley, essentially restoring the linkages and function between Ahwahnee and Stoneman Meadows. Again, the view from Glacier Point allows one to imagine this consequential river restoration. There is relatively little land between the two meadows when looking at it from that perspective. Unfortunately, with the present use as "temporary" construction staging areas these sites are essentially becoming brownfields. The remaining linkage of historic river habitat in the east end of the Valley is the vision from the earlier plan that removed North Pines Campground and the Concession Stables. In conjunction with the closed lowlands of the former Lower Pines Campground, it is easy to visualize a restored Laymon's and Stoneman Meadows one again, bisected by the Merced. The current accessible campsites in North Pines show the river cobble that was excavated to accommodate the hardened concrete pads. No question, this was once part of a dynamic, migrating riverbed. North Pines is inundated regularly with overbank flow, as is the closed part of Lower Pines. This speaks for itself of the wisdom of relocating camping from these sensitive floodplains. Other words of wisdom gleaned from the previous plan is to remove existing campsites 150 feet from the river to allow for the essential replacement riparian vegetation, future course woody debris and shade. Full restoration of these areas requires the removal of the roads in Stoneman and Ahwahnee Meadows. Additionally the areas of Housekeeping Camp inundated in the 1997 flood should be removed and the site restored. The roads in Cook's, Superintendent's and El Capitan Meadows and associated utilities should be moved out of the meadow and located on the historic road corridors. Northside Drive and associated utilities west of Black Spring should be relocated away from the river routed through the former Pohono Quarry. In conjunction with this relocation, the everincreasing footprint of Valley View would be removed with an all access trail and boardwalk accommodating the view. At the MRP presentation to the EI Portal Planning Advisory Committee and community on 1-12-10, the NPS stated the condition of the river enhanced and protected, is that at the time of designation in 1987. Since designation some enhancement and protection has occurred with efforts such as ecological restoration at Stoneman and Cook's Meadows, removal of the Cascades diversion dam, and pilot riparian restoration projects at eleven sites. The long-term human impacts were well documented post designation. Interdisciplinary teams documented the river and river corridor impacts and gave prescriptions for restoration of a healthy, functioning river system. (Madej) This report showed how management of the river was disharmonious with the need for a healthy system. The report illustrated the effects of concentrated human trampling of vegetation, compounded with severe impacts to the hydrologic processes from poorly designed bridges, compounded with concentrated development of campgrounds and roads, compounded with channelization, rock, rip-rap revetment, compounded with removal of overhanging vegetation and in-stream course woody debris, compounded with incompatible recreation uses (rafting) which resulted in a biological wasteland. Sections of the river doubled in width since 1919 with warm shallow water, which equated to fewer native fish and invertebrates. Erosion unchecked by vegetation or by rigid infrastructure set up a chain reaction up and down the river. The scour holes below most of the beautiful yet poorly designed bridges add significantly to this chain reaction. Below scour holes are mid point gravel bars which displace flow which erodes the bank at an accelerated and unnatural rate sending more material into the system and the chain reaction continues to proceed downstream. The human reaction of the past was to armor the bank with rock to prevent more erosion, which only focused more energy on the next unarmored bank, which then needed armor to the point where one eventually could visualize the Los Angeles River in Yosemite Valley. The essence of the Madej report is essential to a Merced River Plan in regards to

enhancement and protection. The Madej report and ecological restoration projects are positive actions with positive changes to the 1987 condition. It is also important to note the actions, which have degraded the condition since the time of designation. Only a river plan, which truly enhances and protects the future conditions will compensate for these past actions, most of which are infrastructure development. Areas slated for comprehensive ecological restoration in prior versions of the MRP remain viable and will help balance the negative impacts related to development. My hope is for a comprehensive look at true ecological restoration, one where river process is the agent of change. I will attempt to compile a list and description of projects and actions, which have negatively influenced the river and river corridor since designation in 1987: ? Valley View expansion at the west end of Yosemite Valley. Rock revetment replaced riparian vegetation to further armor and repair ten-year-old failed Hood repair work. ? The Narrows and The El Portal Road reconstruction. Over seven miles river corridor impacted by cut and fill road building. These projects contributed to the loss of innumerable old growth oaks, pines, laurel, and other species and added rigid erosion control features such as riprap revetment (grouted and non-grouted). Compounding this loss of canopy and cover are the disturbance related invasive species such as cheat grass which compete with native species and changes to fire behavior. Compounding the immeasurable change to the canopy, composition, and cover of the vegetation for these seven miles of Merced River Corridor was the vast rearrangement of the geological features. Many huge house size boulders were blasted to accommodate road widening and straightening as well as provide for slope stabilization materials. (Pre-construction video of this project area is available in the park archives to assess the 1987 time of designation condition.) ? Isolated reconstruction in Old El Portal with an estimated four houses reconstructed. Infill has included "temporary" modular offices with negative changes the look and feel of the historic character. Additional negative infill in Old El Portal has been the increased use of residential buildings, in particular the Standard Oil barracks to permanent office space with little regard for the historic use of not only the building but the adjacent parking, formerly used for community functions at the Clark Hall. The site improvement to accommodate the . ~k::ft A Kiewit trailer at the old river channel was never mitigated as called for and the site has now ~ evolved into an informal parking lot Unacceptable loss of mature Valley Oaks has occurred to accommodate historic preservation projects as well as temporary office trailers. ? Rancheria Flat has seen substantial new development since 1987. The first apartments were built in 1987. The mid 1990's new construction significantly increased the development footprint as well as the number of available bed spaces, population and associated criteria for such increase such as increased traffic, competition for parking and use of local recreational as well as commercial services. This development included all the Barium Mine apartments as well as infilling of numerous single-family homes. The El Portal School was expanded at this time with the addition of the new multi purpose room and new building accommodating office space, the county library, and the Yosemite Park High School. ? The Greenmeyer Sand pit was used as a "temporary staging area" for emergency flood repairs on the El Portal Road. Huge boulders and many thousands of cubic yards of construction material remain on the site, the largest of the boulders directly on the bank of the river. The 1997 flood had done a good job initiating the ecological processes and restoration of the area only to have the construction related materials "bladed out" as well as stock piled on site. This area has great potential for ecological restoration, as the only development is a well and well house. It is also an example of how long areas remain impacted when used as "staging" areas. Perhaps the plan should consider not allowing construction staging areas in the river corridor. ? Railroad Flat/NPS administrative complex. At time of "designation," the only development at this site was the sewage treatment plant and ponds and a ramshackle facility for the solid waste crew. Formerly the park had an incinerator at this location. Remediation of the contamination of the groundwater continues to this day from this historic use. The remaining area was a bone yard and burn pile. The area contributes second to the El Portal Road. Reconstruction Project as having the most drastic change to the corridor, which occurred since designation. The huge multi-story structures, with battered sloping construction make one curious about what the architects may have been thinking. Was this battered lower story supposed to deflect the rising waters and boulders during a raging flood? Those processes made it to the fence surrounding the sewer ponds as the river attempted to reclaim the valley bottom flood plain in 1997. (In August of 1996, on a commercial flight from Reno to Los Angeles, the pilot suggested to look out the left side of the plane to see Yosemite Valley. From my window seat on the right side of the plane, I had been observing the landscape below since leaving Reno. I had observed small clear cuts, mines, state highways and other development. For a split second, I spotted below me what appeared to be some mega industrial- military complex, definitely the most out of place thing I had observed on the flight. I quickly realized this was the infrastructure needed to create and restore Yosemite Valley and free it of man's intrusive development, the Railroad Flat Complex.) ? 1997 Flood Emergency Flood Repairs State Highway 140 El Portal Administrative Site and Foresta Road @ Sewer Plant. Hundreds of feet of the Foresta Road disappeared January 1 - 3, 1997 as the river started to reclaim the Railroad Flat flood plain. This section of road reconstruction used thousands of cubic yards of imported fill material and armored the riverbank with grouted riprap revetment, essentially nullifying any hope for riparian vegetation recruitment. This heavily engineered solution replaced the stated highway below Patty's Pond as well and armored the pullout and utilities at the confluence of Crane Creek, as the mighty Merced had reclaimed both these sites. The author witnessed plumes of concrete entering the river as this reconstruction occurred. Additionally, the emergency flood repairs utilized a site as a "temporary staging" area across from the present RMS building which until that time had supported a lovely display of wildflowers in the spring bloom. Construction materials again were bladed out to blend them in. The "temporary" utility pole and non-night sky friendly street light remain to date. The site presently, like Camp 6, is a dusty dirty parking lot. The "flood recovery" response looked at sections of road that survived the flood for the reconstruction model. Unfortunately for the river and the biological world, grouted riprap revetment is very flood-proof. The reality is that grouted riprap revetment alters the hydrology and sends the erosive forces to other adjacent unarmored riverbanks. This plan needs to set in place a measure to prevent this type of degradation to the river and river corridor under emergencies such as floods. Roads and rivers are a bad mix. As shown post-1997 flood, efforts to reclaim lost real estate, was land which was only borrowed from the river in the first place. Perhaps a better alternative is to look to the long term, relocate roads and development out of the floodplain, and minimize the footprint when absolutely essential to rebuild with technology such as vertical mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) walls. Engineers try to flood-proof what they build, and this engineering needs to be checked with the need to have an aesthetic and biological component to floodplain development. ? MSE basket walls could be constructed without the rigid concrete facing and instead allowed to support living riparian vegetation, adding not only shade and cover for the aquatic habitat but the friction which exists on a natural stream. ? Revetment, if absolutely deemed necessary could support vegetation rather than filled with concrete. Flood recovery efforts need to assure the river qualities and values envisioned in the Wild and Scenic River Act prevent the destructive rebuilding practices witnessed post 97' flood. History seems to repeat itself Two floods prior to 97' washed out State Highway 140 east of the El Portal gas station. (Memories of El Portal, J.Law) The engineered response to these floods is evident with the thousands of feet of grouted riprap revetment levee, which extends from El Portal Road more than half way to Crane Creek. The effects of this channelization seen post 97' flood was dramatic with a historic house dating to the 1920's -1930 has totally washed downstream. Additionally a prehistoric car sized bedrock mortar (BRM) moved 30 meters downstream with mortar holes on end facing the river. The native people resided in the El Portal area for over 9000 years and through our wisdom and engineering, we have re-arranged the geology in less than fifty years time. To prevent history from repeating itself in the future it is essential to set up guidelines for emergency flood responses in this plan. As demonstrated in former and present flood recovery efforts, the concrete grouted riprap revetment engineered solution is far from the call to "protect and enhance" directed in the Wild and Scenic River Act.

Flood processes must be restored and mitigated to truly "protect and enhance" as caretakers of the Merced River. I write to illustrate the 1987 condition. The damage done since includes habitat loss due to development and poor land management practices such as construction staging and disposal with virtually no mitigation. To compensate, this plan must fully embrace major efforts of enhancement, preservation, and ecological restoration of the river and floodplain. Areas which must be included as the areas undeveloped and lightly developed have decreased dramatically since the river was designated. There is no more wiggle room for additional sacrifice of such a dwindling resource from a local, park, state, national, and global level. We must stand ground and respect the natural river environment to the utmost level of protection. Areas with criteria for enhancement, protection, and restoration are most likely if they have light or no development. Listed are some of the sites with greatest potential for enhancement, protection and restoration: ? The area identified as "the Potential Land Exchange" in the very first MRP. These eight acres of NPS land in the El Portal Administrative Site deserve the highest level of protection. The parcel is the only remaining land in the entire Merced River Canyon never to have the impact associated with a road or railroad constructed on the bank and bed of the river. This site is extremely rich with irreplaceable resources and is worthy of the highest level of protection. ? Additional restoration efforts in El Portal would re-establish the former river channel from the gas station to below Odger's petroleum bulk plant. Such an effort would act as a flood relief valve and help compensate for the post "designation" development. The market relocation and loss of the motor inn cabins would be a small price to pay. With the addition of three bridges or box culverts and the excavation of the former river channel, a beautiful greenbelt would restore and enhance river, biological, and town values. ? The trailer park is only flood proof due to a shoddy levee. This area was originally developed in the 1950's to relieve the need for environmentally destructive road widening being called at that time to accommodate the ever-increasing use of travel trailers. Think Airstream trailer, not Winnebago motor home. Unfortunately, very recent upgrades have illuminated the night sky with excessive security / streetlights, which pollute the night sky. The 1960's through the 1980's fill and road building covered many natural and cultural resources such as historic rock walls and low lying former bottom lands. Being a lightly-developed floodplain makes the feasibility of restoration of former more compatible uses of the site realistic. Through excavation of these materials and reconstruction of the rock walls the historic preservation and restoration of Hennessey's Ranch is possible. The monoculture of Himalayan blackberry would give way to a sustainable "ranch," once again growing food locally as was done at this site in the 1870's. Careful excavation and reconstruction would bring back the features lost since the modern uses. Similar to partnerships with farmers on the Sacramento River, this floodplain could once again function more harmoniously with river processes. The levee could be removed as flooding and sustainable agriculture would coexist. This living history/sustainable farm/garden would demonstrate MWSR values far greater than the present use as a trailer park and relieve the development pressure. (see Memories of El Portal, J. Law for pictures of the 1870's condition.) ? The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp degrades the "Wild" condition of the river and corridor. The camp is feet away from the river. The high water table makes sewage treatment difficult if not impossible and potentially degrades water quality for all downstream users. The stock support needed to operate this camp creates excessive erosion as the trail is heavily used. The manure and urine make for unpleasant hikes as well as likely water quality degradation. This use negatively affects approximately fifteen miles of the river corridor. Additional degradation to the water quality is likely coming from Sunrise and Vogelsang High Sierra Camps as both have marginal sewage treatment systems in the Merced watershed. The camps attract concentrated heavy use degrading the "Wild" values of the corridor. ? To enhance the free flowing conditions, remove the diversion dam at the top of Liberty Cap Gulley. The historic bridge abutments remain which spanned this former overflow channel. This dam removal would rewater this braid of the Merced, which has been dry for a century. Some trail rerouting would be needed as well as a bridge placed on the historic abutments. ? Until the 1960's open burn dumps were used to "landfill" in Yosemite Valley. These dumps continue to have physical and chemical impacts to the river and watershed. River formed topography and landform such as cutoff channels and oxbows were filled with garbage from tourism and residents, burned, and then capped with gravel from an adjacent river bar. The restoration and remediation of these sites will enhance, protect, and restore river values as well as water quality throughout the watershed. ? An additional historic impact to address in the MRP is the blasting of the El Capitan moraine. Studies suggest this had effects on the hydrologic processes reaching miles upstream, as far as Yosemite Creek. Soils in much of this reach of the valley would support more meadow like vegetation if restored to the former hydrological condition. Restoration of the moraine could be phased incrementally (perhaps with the use of multiton, nylon-polypropylene sandbags). As the moraine height is gradually restored, the impacts could be studied (including impacts on infrastructure). Positive results would be noticed immediately as meadow soils whose seed bank lay dormant for over 100 years come alive in response. A century of accelerated succession of conifers with major loss of the open meadows would finally be checked. Vistas unseen for many decades would open up once again. ? Practices, which heavily manipulate snags, tree cover, and the removal of course woody debris, should be curtailed. The ultimate demise of rafting needs to be addressed as it is incompatible with river processes. This was planned in the 1990's and dismissed due to economic hardship to the concessionaire post 1997 flood. I have seen perfection in the natural river processes, where ecological restoration was the first tool. At the former El Capitan picnic area and dump restoration project, the NPS removed safety hazards and revetment, which had long exceeded their usefulness. High water, a one-hundred year flood, more high water, and sixteen years have passed. The thalweg of the river has moved forty to fifty feet into the restoration site allowing the hydraulic forces of erosion and deposition to function. Erosion is balanced with deposition, and where vegetation eroded from one site, seed deposited nearby supporting the perfect assemblage of species. These same processes have the potential for miracles to occur throughout the river corridor if prescribed in the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. Mother nature will prevail regardless of what man does. I hope and pray that this plan is bold in allowing the same river process to restore, preserve, and enhance the mighty Merced.

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**Correspondence ID:** 116      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Baer, Adam  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
Feb.08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** hello and thanks for the invitation to opine:

i support places near park entrances where backpackers can park their vehicles safely against removal or vandalism, registered, even if for a SMALL fee, take the shuttles to trail heads, and access wild back country that will remain unspoiled and unexploited forever.

i support the most complete protection to keep the largest amount of land possible in its pristinely natural state.

thanks for your work to keep yosemite wild. after all, most of the rest of the planet is paved over and polluted so this is critically important work.

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**Correspondence ID:** 117      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Herman, Abram  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,30,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

One of my biggest aspirations has been to one day complete a climb on El Capitan and Half Dome. It would be devastating to be unable to complete my goals based on the unreasonable litigation of a privately interested group who seems to forsake the scientific and public opinions put forth on the subject for their own self interest. Please keep the desires of the climbing community and individuals like me who support our public lands in mind as you draft a new plan for the Merced River area.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

#### Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 118      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Caldera, Angela  
**Outside Organization:** Yosemite Campers Coalition Recreational Groups  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am Angela Caldera, co-founder of the Yosemite Campers Coalition. Our coalition was born the night of the NPS open house in Pasadena CA 1997 when the NPS unveiled their VIP Plan. In the last 13 years we have had many different scoping plans, scoping meetings. I personally have organized meetings of campers, handed out petitions, written more letters, made more telephone calls, attended many of your meetings and have essentially done all the things that are required to work within the system. All my efforts have been to preserve and accommodate affordable family based auto drive-in camping. So here we are 13 years later and I'm still here. But there are many more campers involved now and in numbers our voice is louder. Go to our petition site, we will not be silent. Read the comments and you will know what camping means to us and our families and future families to enjoy this marvelous gift. You are not just dealing with real estate, you are dealing with the memories and spirits of camping families. As Ken Burns stated in many different ways in his "National Parks" series, the Parks belong to the people. Listen to us, we will not be silent.

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**Correspondence ID:** 119      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Johnston, Al and Nancy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Thanks for providing multiple opportunities and mechanisms for sharing our thoughts with your planning team. We appreciate it. We are not really familiar with the specifics in the current version of the Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan, but we offer our comments nonetheless. We realize some of them are not directly related to the Merced River, but the postcard we received implied that any activities in the Valley impact the River...

Yosemite is one of our favorite places, and we've visited at least once a year for 40 years. We've backpacked, day-hiked, cross country skied, biked, swum, and tent and car-camped in the Valley and it's surrounding area.

We've liked the changes that have occurred over the past few years, both human-planned and nature driven, and think the philosophy behind those decisions, all of which have impacted the River, should continue:

1. the decision to not replace, due to flooding, the: - camp grounds/camping spaces - the lodging at Yosemite Lodge
2. the net results of the construction of the new employee housing in the Curry Village area! We really didn't like the idea when we first learned about it, but the results are very nice.
3. the improvements in the Fen
4. the nature trail at Happy Isles and the fencing in that area
5. the on-going removal of inappropriate vegetation along the River and in the meadows and the commensurate "revegging"
6. the construction of fencing of some kind along various paved trails in the Valley to make it more difficult for visitors to access the

River's banks

7. the construction of fencing along different sections of the road, particularly the area across the road from the new employee housing in Curry

8. the wooden walkways in the meadow just downriver from the Chapel and the recycled plastic walkways in the meadow across the River from there

9. redoing bridges, both of roads and walkways

In line with the above, we recommend the following additional actions:

1. Current policy allowing rafting, tubing, etc. on the Merced inside the park should be reversed. Swimming in appropriate and safe areas should certainly be OK, but anything but human bodies should not be allowed. The visual pollution is bad enough, but that many people in the River can't be doing it or its banks any good.

2. We have mixed feelings about hang gliding into the Valley but would not be sad if it, too, were disallowed. I'd rather have wild and scenic views of more naturally-occurring events and colors.

3. We strongly recommend that the bike path which historically circled the entire Valley be updated, repaved, and added to the existing nice bike paths in the east end of the Valley. It could be located farther away from the River in places, if and as needed. We think that would draw lots of folks, both walkers and bikers, away from the currently more heavily used parts of the Valley which invariably result in negative impacts on the River.

4. Wherever the banks of the Merced are currently compacted and degraded, we think serious efforts should continue to return those areas to their natural state. That would include potentially removing or relocating additional camp sites in Lower Pines and North Pines which are close to the River and potentially the sites in Housekeeping Camp which are closest to the banks.

5. We don't really know if the horses available for trail rides in the Valley adversely impact the River, but they certainly impact any trail they use, stretches of which are near the River. Generally, a Wild and Scenic River Area would be improved by not having horses and the accompanying flies, droppings, and odor in the area. Occasional Rangers or truly "handicapped" folks, fine.... but bunches of tourists galumphing along??? Not Wild and Scenic in our view.

6. The Swinging Bridge Picnic Area, at least I think that's the name, needs lots of work, similar to the work done upstream from there on both sides of the River. We know its heavy use compacts the soil tremendously. If the south River bank in that area could be fenced and "re-vegged", that would be good. Probably additional large rocks might need to be placed along there to make access to the water a bit more difficult. The sandy area across the bridge does allow people interested in getting close to the water easy access. Maybe moving the tables closer to the road would help? Maybe reducing the size of the parking area? And in a perfect world a "real" restroom there would be nice. Maybe all picnic areas should be on the non-river side of the road?

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**Correspondence ID:** 120      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Moyer, Amanda  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Please consider the effects of the Merced River Plan on existing climbing opportunities within Yosemite National Park. Loosing access to the established climbs that will be adversely affected by the plan would be devastating. Thank you for your consideration.

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**Correspondence ID:** 121      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,3010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love seeing the old black oak trees throughout the valley and the remaining meadows. I love the massive butterfly migrations in El Portal especially near the Yosemite View Lodge that com to the river drink.  
  
2. What do you want to see protected? I want to see denuded areas along the Merced River restored with native riparian planta. I



want the remaining rare plant populations surveyed, protected, and studied.

3. What needs to be fixed? There needs to be more government housing in El Portal available for term employees. I want to experience less development in Yosemite Valley and more restoration activities in place. The river is becoming more shallow and wider, too!

4. What would you like to see kept the same? Letting the natural forces prevail inside the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 122      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Urban, Andrew  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.02.2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am not your regular activist. I am a regular camper, hiker and visitor of Yosemite National Park and particularly Yosemite Valley. I have hiked Half Dome four times, camped at the High Sierra Camps, hiked in the Valley and surrounding trails and try to camp in the valley at least once a year. Please don't reduce the drive-up camping site in Yosemite Valley any further. It is already very difficult to get a camping reservation in the summer months, and any reduction in the number of camp sites available in the valley by reducing or eliminating any sites at Lower Pines, North Pines or Upper Pines Camp Grounds would be a camping visitor 'disaster'. The camping experience in Yosemite Valley is a unique natural splendor that should remain available to visitors from all over the world. Make the reservation process a lottery like the Sierra Camps or increase the price of most of the camp ground sites (leaving some allocated to financially struggling visitors), but don't change the number of available sites or their access to cars. Thank You

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**Correspondence ID:** 123      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Janelli, Fr. Antohony  
**Outside Organization:** Our Lady of the Snows Parish Churches, Religious Groups  
**Received:** Feb.03.2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:**

1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The way they reflect life and beauty in such a way that it enbales us to discover these qualities in ourselves and challenges us to bring them forth more fully in our lives.
2. What do you want to see protected? The awareness that the valley has always been a place for human presence and involvement, and that it has been and is an important source of personal and spiritual vitality and renewal. And there needs to be a continuing commitment to this in all of our interation with the natural forces present in the valley.
3. What needs to be fixed? The tendency to limit participation in the valley to an elite defined in terms of physical prowess, wealth, culture or knowledge. It has to be available to all. And in this regard, there needs to be a grater provision for the needs of the physically limited as well as handicapped.
4. What would you like to see kept the same? A readiness to adapt and change and respond t people's needs and dreams.

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**Correspondence ID:** 124      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Modin, John and Chris  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec.08.2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Following years oflitigation Friends of Yosemite Valley the NPS and Dept. of Interior have entered into a Settlement Agreement that will grant protection to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (CORV'S) of the Merced River. This agreement will require the defendants to comply with their obligations under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and other applicable federal environmental statues to protect these resources from continued degradation and over use. Under the Settlement Agreement the NPS will develop a User Capacity Program designed to protect the Merced River and other Park resources from the excessive visitation that has seriously impacted these values for decades.

Following Court directives and the Settlement Agreement a User Capacity Program will be developed that win be the fundamental component of a new Merced River Plan (MRTI). Current and past levels of day use frequently results in unacceptable traffic gridlock, human congestion and near chaos as many long time Yosemite visitors can attest. During these events Park resources are

seriously compromised and the visitor experience is reduced to zero.

In order to avoid these recurring episodes of gridlock and congestion a number of alternative actions must be considered to resolve this decades old problem. A check on unregulated day use will be a fundamental component in the Park's effort to protect the Merced River and other Park resources and will provide for a quality visitor experience not realized during current periods of gridlock. Any system regulating day use must be developed with and supported by commercial interests and stakeholders in the gateway communities where they can provide, to their advantage, increased levels of food, lodging and other visitor services during these periods when day use visitation pressure exceeds capacity. The adaptive management strategies preferred by many in the NPS to regulate use can then tier off the user capacity mandate and can be used to complement the many additional alternative actions needed to further enhance and protect the ORV'S of the Merced River. Reducing day use visitation will be only a first step in the multiple actions required to reduce the human impacts on Yosemite Valley resources.

Some actions to consider in developing a new MRP. 1. Return of as much of the Valley to natural conditions as possible including developed areas destroyed in the 1997 flood. 2. Reduce as many unnecessary visitor amenities as possible. Apparel and souvenir shops, a golf course and tennis courts, ice rink, concessionaire stables and stock use in a confined valley and a large screen TV pavilion are some examples of visitor services and activities that are not appropriate in Yosemite Valley. 3. Consider closure of the one-way road between Stoneman Bridge and Yosemite Village, and restore this roadway and former campground and flood plain to natural conditions. 4. Maintain current Valley loop road alignments including Segment D, the section 900 feet east of the 120/140 intersection to Pohono Bridge. Maintain one way traffic pattern currently in use except for the section between Sentinal Bridge and Curry which would then require two-way traffic if the road west of Stoneman bridge is closed. Widening Valley roads only encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles, RV's and tour busses. 5. Reduce the incredible inventory of obsolete "stuff" in Yosemite Village. Unnecessary buildings, warehouses, a vehicle repair facility, junked equipment, and an unserviceable helicopter that is no longer necessary for current operations could be or should be reduced or eliminated from Yosemite Village and Valley. Removing as much of this outdated and obsolete infrastructure would allow relocating much of the day use parking in camp six to more appropriate locations closer to visitor services in the Village area. Wetland areas in camp six nearest the river could then be restored to natural conditions. 6. Reduce Merced River rafting to a more appropriate level. 7. Maintain current alignment of North Side Drive (NSD) at Yosemite Lodge and address the pedestrian! traffic conflict at the Yosemite Falls intersection with regulated day use or another on site pedestrian! traffic solution. 8. Eliminate roadside parking at El Cap meadow. The Cathedral Rocks/Spires view shed is one of the most iconic in the Park and it is permanently debased with a solid Hne of vehicles and visitors trampling El Cap meadow to dust trying to get a look at rock climbers on near by cliffs. There is a suitable non sensitive area north of NSD on an old road alignment that could accommodate vehicles and observes where they would be out of sight of the meadows and view shed and not impact sensitive meadow wetlands. Additional restrooms and increased shuttle service should be included in this restoration effort. 9. Increase shuttle service throughout the Valley including to west Valley destinations to reduce private vehicle use and restrict short term roadside parking to only designated turnouts. 10. Reduce NPS stock use to minimum essential levels and eliminate concession stock and stables to reduce stock waste and pollution and to minimize other stock related impacts to Valley resources. 11. Reduce visitor impacts along sensitive river shoreline and direct river access to non-sensitive sand and gravel bars. 12. Encourage visitor activities directed toward natural and cultural Park qualities over non ecocentric activities like golf and tennis that would be appropriate outside a National Park. 13. The size and number of tour buses and the under regulated emissions emanating from those vehicles greatly impacts the ORV's of the Merced. Public transportation is an important objective to relieve congestion along the Merced, but their numbers and impacts needs to be addressed. 14. Increase the number of walk-in and group campsites and consider placing them in presently occupied areas including the Concessionaire stables area or the area east of the Ahwahnee currently being use as a NPS storage area. 15. Maintain a view shed management and invasive species program. 16. Reduce the number and density of tent cabins at Curry Village.

El Dorado Hills, CA

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	125	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb.03,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Park Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	<p>1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The fact that I can get to it by car and enjoy it. I am handicapped and can not walk many places. Thank you for letting me drive into Yosemite and sit by the river while viewing Half Dome and Yosemite Falls.</p> <p>2. What do you want to see protected? I want to see as many of the elderly and handicapped access the wonders of Yosemite. Please continue to allow cars/vehicles to come into the park, to ride the free shuttle, to explore using paved walkways that allow my segment of society to enjoy this park. I know you will protect the park for generations to come. Please allow my kind to access everything.</p> <p>3. What needs to be fixed? There needs to be a way to cross the road from Yosemite Lodge to Lower Yosemite Falls without stopping the traffic. The congestion happens when cars need to leave the park at the end of the day or Sundays - they get backed up because so many people need to cross to get to the walkway to the falls!</p> <p>4. What would you like to see kept the same? The hotels, the services, the walkways and driveways. I will probably miss the greatest expanse of Yosemite because of no access - but keep the current roads and facilities so that generations of my kind will also enjoy</p>				

beautiful Yosemite.

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**Correspondence ID:** 126      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Sloan, Erik  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I look forward to the new management plan for the Merced River to accommodate the needs of Yosemite residents. Things like appropriate sized housing for each year-round resident(person holding a position that is considered year-round) and basic community amenities like a coffee shop and wellness center(located near where most employees live) should be only starting points. How precious is this national treasure we can Yosemite. How much vigilance is required to educate visitors about the sensitivities that are unique to this environment? The best resource we have for preserving and celebrating Yosemite is our OVJTI community. The more we come together as a healthy, supported community whose most basic needs are met and whose creativity can then find greater expression the more we will help others enjoy this paradise and let Yosemite shine on for generations to come.

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**Correspondence ID:** 127      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Wells, Angela  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** My public comments for the new Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced River are dedicated to the memory of Richard Kunstman, who was an avid protector of wildlife and natural resources, and who worked tirelessly as the Conservation Chairman of the Yosemite Area Audubon and a Director for MERG (Mariposans for Environmentally Responsible Growth) in his pursuit to protect Yosemite National Park from the development and commercialization agenda of the National Park Service. Richard Kunstman was a dear friend, a dedicated mentor and the most gifted intellectual fighter I have ever known. While I have captured some of his words of wisdom within my comments with his permission, all of the public comments he made for all plans related to the Merced River Plan, and all versions of it, must be included in the Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced River as if they were being submitted today. All of the public comments that Richard Kunstman submitted from 2000 to date related to the Merced River Plan are as relevant and valid now as they were then, and these must be included today. NPS cannot exclude Richard Kunstman's prior contributions or diminish their value. I salute the women and men who have chosen to protect and preserve wilderness and nature, and serve society through their roles in Yosemite's National Park Service. The work performed by these individuals to protect Yosemite's natural environment and its native species is commendable. Most people recognize that the vast majority of NPS personnel do not make decisions, but instead, they carry out decisions made by the minority upper brass of the National Park Service. To keep their jobs, they are required to follow orders even when those orders slice against the grain of their integrity to the detriment of the nature and species they serve to protect. Comments below speak to National Park Service decision makers ? specifically the upper brass and your predecessors ? not you, or the women and men who are required to carry out the NPS upper brass decisions. It's my understanding that you are the Acting Superintendent at Yosemite on a temporary basis only. The upper brass of the National Park Service has historically behaved like a bad child who is determined to do the wrong thing, then seek forgiveness and approval for its bad behavior from Mother Court while Father Congress is too busy handling the affairs of the country to give this bad child the pants-down whipping it deserves. Yosemite's NPS upper brass has painted itself as the golden child who can do no wrong, all the while using propaganda and deceit to hide the truth, certain that if the lies are well told, then the Courts and Congress will buy into the stories that NPS has spun, as will prospective donors, special interest partners and taxpayers. To date, the Merced River Plan has been nothing less than a Trojan horse. Presented to the public as a benign plan with potential solutions to complex issues, the Merced River Plan was embedded with a proliferation of zoning and land use sanctions that violated the purpose and intent of a comprehensive river management plan as required by the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and betrayed the public's trust. Though offered as a plan to protect the river, the National Park Service used the MRP as a vehicle to vest itself with newly created power and authority to implement broad and far-reaching development goals that would not have gained public acceptance or approval on a national scale had this plan been factually and accurately presented. It was neither. NPS usurped its duty and overstepped its authority. NPS manipulated facts and information, and used propaganda and deceit in an effort to convince the public that it was doing the right thing ? protecting the Merced River. As the last 10 years have proven, Yosemite's NPS upper brass has advanced their strategic development agenda on the pretense and false assurances of river protection. Portions of the development sought by Yosemite's NPS in the Yosemite Valley Plan, and related plans, now stand on the Yosemite Valley floor in the flood plain and rockfall zones. Expertly hidden within the MRP were broad-brush zoning alternatives that authorized NPS to make future changes in Yosemite National Park that were not supported by the 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) or the public. Written in vague generalities, the MRP's five alternatives vacillated between numerous options without specifics. The public could not effectively engage in the public comment process because scientific studies and analyses were missing. There were no science-based facts or research to support NPS assumptions or alternatives, therefore potential actions and related consequences could not be assessed nor potential outcomes understood. In addition to lacking a scientific basis, the MRP was a poorly written, highly redundant and voluminous plan that presented alternative actions and potential consequences without clarity or the ability to be quantified. 1. Going forward with the new Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the Merced River, this plan should not re-hash prior Merced River Plans (MRPs); the new CMP must be a fresh, science-based, fact-filled, accurate and honest presentation of the Merced River CMP goals to be achieved and available alternatives. 2. The CMP for the Merced River must include valid scientific studies and analyses that support NPS assumptions and proposed alternatives; the science must support NPS reasons for desired changes, and resulting effects of proposed alternatives upon the Merced River and its Outstandingly Remarkable Values, as well as the natural habitats and animal species, and the archeological resources above and below the soil. The 2000 MRP Executive

Summary stated that, "...because the Merced River Plan derives its authority from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, it does not tier off the GMP; instead it provides the same level of guidance and direction as does the GMP. Specific actions will be determined in future implementation plans, such as the upcoming Yosemite Valley Plan, and will need to be consistent with the guidance set by both the GMP and the Merced River Plan." Yosemite's NPS elevated the MRP to the same level of authority as the GMP, and amend the GMP in ways that would not have been allowed otherwise. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is not a license for NPS to usurp the General Management Plan. Yosemite's NPS has long favored implementation of a development and commercialization agenda that diminishes the goals of the General Management Plan, and dresses up Yosemite Valley to look like a world-class resort. Yosemite is a national park for everyone to enjoy; it is not Disneyland and the cost to visit should not be comparable. 3. Going forward, the new CMP must recognize and coordinate the legal requirements of the 1980 General Management Plan with the legal requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. 4. In the new CMP for the Merced River, Yosemite's NPS must abandon the "Build it and they will come" approach that has dominated and derailed past planning efforts. With the new CMP, Yosemite's NPS upper brass has an opportunity to start with a clean slate and do the right thing; their sincerity and commitment to an honest, forthright process hang in the balance. The printed CMP will be the stamp by which their integrity is measured. Since the January 1997 flood in Yosemite, the National Park Service has cried crocodile tears of counterfeit sorrow about the destruction and backlog of maintenance problems. Yosemite's NPS sought from Congress, and was granted, almost \$200 million dollars to address these issues. Then, Congress allowed the National Park Service to raise gate fees from \$5.00 per vehicle to \$20.00 per vehicle, and to make the temporary fee demo project permanent with the NPS keeping 100% of gate fees collected; 80% to be retained by the each collecting entity (in this instance, Yosemite National Park) and 20% for smaller entities within the park system as described in the Legislative History of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Project dated 12/01. A significant amount of infrastructure and new employee buildings now exist in the Merced River floodplain of Yosemite Valley, built in the 10 years after the original 2000 Merced River Plan was introduced. 5. The new CMP should include an accurate accounting of how almost \$200 million dollars in federal appropriations from Congress and multiple millions of taxpayers' dollars from the Recreation Fees collected from the public to date have been used to address Yosemite's 1997 flood damage and the backlog of maintenance issues that NPS presented to Congress as justification for making the Fee Demonstration Project permanent. 6. The new CMP should include an accurate accounting of dollars used to construct multiple, two-story employee dormitories and other employee facilities since January 2000. 7. The new CMP should include an accurate accounting of dollars used to construct the massive utility and sewer infrastructure for existing and anticipated future public facilities that now exists or is currently under construction throughout Yosemite Valley. 8. The new CMP should include a transparent, straightforward, clear and concise accounting of the Native American Cultural Resource Center construction, describe exactly which Native American tribe, or tribes, will be able to use this Center, and which entity will maintain control over this Center and its cultural resources. If Yosemite's NPS is going to use private special-interest partners to build facilities within NPS, then the public has every right to review the facts and figures that are involved in this process, and weigh in. 9. The Native American Cultural Resource Center is being built in an area well known as a rockfall zone, and funded by the Yosemite Fund, a special-interest partner. Yosemite's NPS and the Yosemite Fund will be responsible if rockfall related deaths occur here. They are disregarding history and the danger this area presents, and building this facility with full knowledge that people could be killed here if a calamitous rockfall event occurs. Yosemite is a local and state treasure, the crown jewel of the National Park System and a world heritage site. The National Park Service has a duty to diligently present this plan to the greater national public. Given the breadth and scope of this new Comprehensive Management Plan's authority and powers, the current level of public awareness and participation is paltry as reflected by the failed efforts of Yosemite's NPS upper brass to get the word out about the expansive legal ramifications and potential consequences this CMP will impose upon Yosemite, as well as the potential adverse effects on future visitors to Yosemite National Park. 10. Going forward with the new CMP for Merced River, more public input should be actively sought by Yosemite's NPS by engaging the assistance of the Concessionaire and special-interest partners (Yosemite Fund, Yosemite Institute, Yosemite Association, Sierra Club, etc.), all entities which maintain vast databases of park-users and donors. These entities have collaborated with Yosemite's NPS before, and NPS should call on them to assist in informing and encouraging greater public participation in the CMP scoping process. Yosemite National Park Service has a taxpayer supported Public Relations Department that has proven effective at getting the word out to multiple news agencies throughout the state and country when the NPS agenda attempted silence opposition to its development and commercialization plans for Yosemite. With this CMP, a few vaguely worded public announcements have resulted in poor turnouts to public scoping meetings. Had Yosemite's Public Relations Department issued a press release that indicated the CMP could drastically alter the public's ability to access the Valley on their own terms ? as they do now ? it is highly likely that greater public participation would have occurred. 11. Going forward with the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS should utilize their Public Relations Department to effectively advance and inform the public's right to know about the expansive ramifications of the new CMP. 12. Yosemite's NPS should provide an expanded public comment scoping period after this message has been broadcast to news agencies. 13. Yosemite's NPS Public Relations Department should invite the news agencies to the Park and to Public Scoping Meetings to convey the message to reporters who can then get the word out to the public. 14. Yosemite's NPS Public Relations Department should ensure that public libraries across the country have copies of all park planning documents and media as part of their government records archives. This will ensure that people everywhere can access information in the plans, even if they do not have a computer, internet access or sufficient computer skills to navigate the cumbersome NPS plan documents on the NPS web site. According to the June 1976 Update: Yosemite Master Plan, issued by the US Department of the Interior ? National Park Service, the General Management Plan's Phase I ? Data Collection included "48 public workshops held in the Spring of 1975, with 34 held in California and 14 held in major cities across the country. An excerpt from this document stated that, "Using your ideas and some concepts from previous plans for Yosemite the planning team developed THE WORKBOOK. We distributed over 59,000 copies and received returns from over 20,700 individuals and groups." Further, "In mid-November, 1975, Yosemite Park and Curry Company, the major concessionaire in the Park, sent a letter to more than 100,000 persons who had used the company's services in the past year. The letter described the current planning process and urged recipients to participate by requesting a copy of THE WORKBOOK on an enclosed printed postcard." Regarding cost, "The cost was 57 cents per copy, including the envelope, for 62,500 copies [of THE WORKBOOK]." By comparison, NPS printed approximately 10,000 copies of the 2000 Merced River Plan. Approximate costs for printing were \$38.00 per two-volume set, plus the cost for Priority First Class mail was \$8.50 per set. Monies from the 1997 Flood Recovery Fund, authorized by Congress to repair flood damage to Yosemite National Park, were used to produce, print and mail the MRP at a cost in excess of one-half million taxpayer dollars. 15. Going forward with the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS should make a concerted effort to reach out and communicate the potential effects of the CMP to the millions of park users who actually visit the Park, in addition to the caring public who may only visit occasionally such as international visitors. 16. During the last 10 years with multiple plans, Yosemite's NPS claims that thousands of people have submitted public comments to address these plans. If true, then going forward with the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS should have a well-documented database of people from whom they can actively encourage public comments regarding this new CMP. This database should be used. To date, I have received one postcard, and a CD with the Environmental Assessment postmarked 1/21/10. The meager effort to get the word out has been insufficient to be of any value to this process. It appears that NPS is wasting taxpayer

dollars and going through required legal motions for a plan that they do not want the public to comment on. The total number of individuals who participated in the public hearing process for the MRP did not come close to matching the number of people who offered public input on the GMP ? even though Yosemite's NPS presented each individual comment as if each had come from a singular individual when in fact, the majority of comments came from far fewer individuals who each submitted pages of multiple comments. Yosemite's NPS upper brass wanted it to appear that far more people had participated in the public comment process than actually had to give the appearance of adequate public participation for the process. 17. In this CMP, NPS must reveal an accurate count of the total number of individuals who submitted comments and the total number of comments received during public scoping. If 1,000 people reply with 4,000 comments, then NPS must not falsely portray this to appear as if 4,000 people participated. The total number of people is the number that should be included alongside the total number of comments those people submitted: 1,000 people submitted 4,000 comments. The public, Courts and Congress have a right to know how much public participation actually occurred ? anything less is tantamount to NPS trying to blindside the truth and hide their failure to inform the public. There are many possible reasons why the MRP suffered from a low response rate, in comparison to the GMP. The 2000 MRP inundated the public with 1,136 pages of rhetoric, superfluity and verbosity, and it weighed over 14 pounds. Heavy card stock, and margins up to 3.5" wide were used extensively. According to the Council on Environmental Quality, which provides oversight for NEPA, the Environmental Impact Statement should "normally be less than 150 pages and for proposals of unusual scope or complexity ? less than 300 pages." Had Yosemite's upper brass used recycled paper and 1.0" standard margins, far fewer taxpayer dollars and trees would have been wasted unceremoniously, especially after NPS dumped a large number of those plans in the local landfill because not enough people had requested copies. 18. Going forward with the new CMP for the Merced River, Yosemite's NPS must demonstrate a higher degree of environmental stewardship and more sustainable practices that make wiser use of taxpayer dollars and environmental resources for printing and distributing plans to the public. Printed plans are preferable to CDs or online web sites as many people do not have computers, internet access or the computer skills to navigate through these forms of media. The 2000 MRP contained confusing text that emphasized concern for the protection of the Merced River, while zoning for numerous possible development actions. "Alternative 2 emphasizes a balance between the Merced River Plan goal to 'protect and enhance natural resources,' and the goal to provide diverse recreational and educational experiences." However, river protection boundaries were drawn around the edges of existing and proposed developments, such as Yosemite Lodge, even though this facility is located in the floodplain and was severely damaged by the 1997 flood. The 2000 MRP text was contradictory and misleading. Under the section labeled "Issues and Concerns," two issues that were "not addressed directly in the Merced River Plan" included the El Portal Road (Segment D) and the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp. Segment D I was omitted because "it is too detailed an issue for this document." The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp was omitted because it will be "addressed in the Yosemite Wilderness Management Plan." That these issues were "not addressed directly" in the 2000 MRP meant that all public comments received regarding these two issues were not addressed either. NPS wasted the public's time, and betrayed their trust in the process. However, NPS raised both issues numerous times throughout the plan and, as a result, inclusion prompted the public to focus their concern and public comments on these issues. The index contained 92 references to the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, therefore, any public comments received regarding this issue should have been addressed by virtue of the fact that the issue was raised repeatedly by the NPS in the plan. 19. Going forward, in the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS must not sprinkle references to facilities, landmarks or public user areas into the plan if those areas will not be addressed by the plan and public comments for these references will not be accepted or addressed. 20. In the new CMP, Yosemite's NPS must refrain from using contradictory, misleading text and manipulating information. 21. Likewise, the new CMP must not bury important actions, alternatives and consequences ? mentioning important issues only once within the plan ? while simultaneously wearing the public down with redundancy of less important issues as occurred in the 2000 MRP. While much has changed in the last 10 years since the 2000 MRP was issued, the example below taken from the 2000 MRP illustrates a technique which was abundantly used by NPS plan writers to inform people about proposed actions and outcomes within each alternative. This vacillation technique violated common sense and public trust as it confused readers, and yielded no information that was of any use to anyone. "In Alternative 2, approximately half of the existing campsites in Lower Pines Campground would be relocated from the corridor or removed from the park. The North Pines Campground and the Valley stable would be zoned 3A, and could be converted to walk-in camping. An area east of Upper Pines Campground that does not currently have camping uses would be zoned 3A and could be converted to walk-in camping. As mentioned above, Yellow Pine Campground (zoned 3B/3C) could be used as volunteer camping or visitor camping. Although the majority of Housekeeping Camp would be located in a compatible 3C zone, a small number of units would be within a 2C zone and the River Protection Overlay, and those units could be relocated from the corridor or removed from the park altogether. At the Wawona Campground, approximately one-third of the campsites would be located within the River Protection Overlay and could be relocated from the corridor or removed from the park. The prescriptions would allow for the addition of some camping areas, and the reduction of some camping and lodging (Housekeeping Camp) areas. The net effect of the zoning prescriptions could result in no net change in park accommodations, a decrease in park accommodations, or an increase in park accommodations. It is expected, however, that any net change in the park accommodations would be relatively low given the application of management zones under this alternative. A decrease or increase in these facilities would have the effect of shifting the mix of overnighters and day visitors (local overnighters and day excursion visitors). It is assumed that the total number of annual visitors would be the same as under Alternative 1." The above example represents excessive spin-speak; it yields nothing of any value, and the conclusions are neither meaningful nor clear. 22. Going forward in the new CMP, if NPS cannot succinctly present proposed actions and outcomes in a logical, sensible manner that clearly communicates the issues in an honest, accurate and easily understood manner, then NPS has a duty to hire professional writers who have proven ability to succinctly communicate these concepts to the public without wasting the public's time as did plan writers for the 2000 MRP. The technique and form of writing in the above example strongly suggests that NPS upper brass directed plan writers to create reams of verbal diarrhea to confuse, overwhelm and inundate the public so the public would not know how to respond. The net effect was that Yosemite's NPS removed hundreds of campsites that it has no intention of replacing in the Valley, it has yet to repair infrastructure that supports many campgrounds in the Valley, and given that far fewer campgrounds are available, visitors will be required to pay for lodging if they want to stay overnight in Yosemite Valley. It represents an adverse impact to low- and moderate-income individuals and families, and a major beneficial impact to the primary Concessionaire's profit margin. As Richard Kunstman pointed out in his earlier public comments, the 2000 MRP violated Code of Federal Regulations Title 40, Section 1501.2, (a), and (b) which states that, "Agencies shall integrate the NEPA process with other planning at the earliest possible time to insure that planning and decisions reflect environmental values, to avoid delays later in the process, and to head off potential conflicts. Each agency shall: (a) Comply with the mandate of section 102(2)(A) to "utilize a systematic interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and decision-making which may have an impact on man's environment, as specified by ' 1507.2. (b) Identify environmental effects and values in adequate detail so they can be compared to economic and technical analyses. Environmental documents and appropriate analyses shall be circulated and reviewed at the same time as other planning documents. (c) Study, develop and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of

available resources as provided by section 102(2)(E) of the Act. In the 2000 MRP, Yosemite's NPS failed to meet the requirements of the above section, 1501.2, due to the critical lack of interdisciplinary environmental, biological research and natural resource sciences to support many of the development projects that were featured in zoning text of the MRP as "reasonably foreseeable future actions." Failure to include the Draft Biological Assessment with the 2000 Merced River Plan represented a violation of the above section, 1501.2 (b), as critical information was not immediately presented and made widely available when the MRP was mailed and circulated to the public. NPS deprived the public of essential, critical information that demonstrated unacceptable and avoidable impacts to the natural resources of Yosemite. The Biological Assessment ? a critical document that should have been included in the MRP Environmental Impact Statement ? had to be specifically and separately requested from the NPS. NPS failed to provide the public with all of the information they would need to weigh the alternatives and render valid public comments. 23. Going forward, the new CMP should comply with all federal regulations and standards, it should integrate the NEPA process with all planning activities and specifically comply with NEPA requirements (a), (b) and (c) listed above, and provide the necessary and relevant interdisciplinary environmental, biological research and nature resource sciences to support the goals, alternatives and consequences of the new CMP. Further, the Park Service's hollow concern for protecting Yosemite's natural resources, especially including rare, threatened and endangered species is demonstrated by a preponderance of "reasonably foreseeable future actions" repeated throughout the "Environmental Consequences" chapter of the 2000 MRP that lacked enough recent or relevant natural, resource-based science to support the high level of proposed development actions that were zoned for in the 2000 MRP. This was unacceptable then and unacceptable now. 24. Going forward, the new CMP for the Merced River should provide recent and relevant natural, resource-based science to support any development actions that may be zoned for in the new plan. While the 2000 MRP suggested leaving trees in the river to provide riparian habitat for fish, few suggestions were made to diminish the cumulative effects of the MRP as described on page IV-11 of the Biological Assessment. It stated that a combination of past actions caused some species to be "extirpated from the park." The 10th edition of Miriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines extirpated in two ways as: 1a: to destroy completely: WIPE OUT, (b): to pull up by the root, and 2: to cut out by surgery, syn see EXTERMINATE. The 2000 MRP Biological Assessment stated further that, "Past and ongoing activities which affect rare, threatened or endangered species include construction of dams, diversion walls, bridges, roads, pipelines, riprap, recreational use, buildings, campgrounds, and other recreational features." On page IV-13 of the Biological Assessment, a list of "reasonably foreseeable projects" included a majority of construction related development projects featured within the environmental consequences subsection reviews (wildlife, vegetation, wetlands, air quality, etc.), without any indication or ability to measure the cumulative potential loss of rare, threatened or endangered species, as caused by these actions, except with the final summary notation, "Therefore, cumulative adverse effects associated with this alternative in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions could be long-term, major, and adverse." NPS has a duty to the public to clearly and accurately communicate the environmental consequences of these activities to the public. It is the responsibility of NPS upper brass to clearly communicate this plan, the alternatives and effects to the public, and to ensure that plan writers can accomplish this task. 25. Going forward, the new CMP for the Merced River should succinctly describe environmental consequences and adverse effects of each alternative or action as each one is listed, instead of waiting to summarize cumulative adverse effects in a roundabout meaningless manner as illustrated above. What are the potential consequences of these proposed actions ? extirpation of more species? Which species would be affected, and to what degree? NPS should have the ability, intelligence and education to succinctly spell out cumulative, adverse consequences to rare, threatened or endangered species in a clear and meaningful manner that the public can make sense of it. In the 2000 MRP, stated on page III-12, "Of California's 7,000 plant species, about 50% occur in the Sierra Nevada. Of these, more than 400 are found only in the Sierra Nevada, and 200 are rare. About 300 terrestrial vertebrate species (including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians) use the Sierra Nevada as a significant part of their range." According to the Biological Assessment, "Approximately 85 native mammal species in six families inhabit Yosemite. Yosemite's wide range of elevations and habitats support a diversity of birds: 150 species regularly occur in the park, and approximately 80% of these are known or suspected to breed within park boundaries." In the Assessment Methodology found in the Biological Assessment, apparently little science-driven research was utilized. "Due to the programmatic and prescriptive nature of the project it is difficult to predict impacts on individual species with any accuracy. No attempt is made to quantify discrete impacts to individual species and the conclusions herein are limited to general statements about rare, threatened, or endangered plants and animals considered as a whole. Species specific determinations are presented in Chapter V." Who is in charge of this information? How can NPS not know this information? How can NPS upper brass not have the education, talent and ability to "predict impacts on individual species with any accuracy"? 26. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, if the "programmatic and prescriptive nature of the project" makes it difficult for NPS to accurately assess impacts to individual species ? species they have a duty to protect ? then NPS should change the programmatic and prescriptive nature so this work can be performed with a greater measure of professionalism. The new CMP should have baseline studies and ongoing plans to monitor natural resource conditions. 27. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, species-specific determinations should not be separated from the Assessment Methodology and placed into a different chapter. Keep all relevant information together in a clear, comprehensible manner. The National Park Service's documented procrastination, resistance and laziness in inventorying natural resources within the parks is unacceptable and illustrated further by the following paragraphs, parts of which were excerpted from the 2000 MRP. Of the 68 Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species found in the "Determination" section of the Biological Assessment, each species analysis included the statement that, "Implementation of conservation and protection measures will ensure sustainability of the species. Conservation and protection measures included below are hereby incorporated (pages V-23 through V-28 describe specific measures) into the plan to ensure implementation of the proposed action does not result in adverse affects to listed or other special status species." In the "Conservation Measures Common to All Species" section, "the following hierarchy would be employed to avoid, minimize or compensate for adverse effects to rare, threatened and endangered species. ? Avoid adverse effects to rare, threatened and endangered species when practicable. ? Mitigate/compensate for adverse effects to rare, threatened and endangered species when practicable. ? Mitigate/compensate for adverse effects on rare, threatened and endangered species when practicable." Likewise, the NPS use of the caveats "as warranted," "as appropriate," "where practicable," and "to the extent practicable" are unacceptable when describing adverse impacts to species as this equates to NPS vesting itself with authority to extirpate any species at any time for any reason it can justify. NPS does not have this authority. 28. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, the plan must include clarification to determine the threshold of what is "practicable" to avoid, minimize, mitigate or compensate for adverse effects on rare, threatened and endangered species, and the clarification needs to be addressed in detail. After all, how does NPS define practicable? Who decides when it is "practicable"? If a great gray owl's nest sits in a tree in an area that NPS has zoned for commercial use in the Valley, then how "practicable" is it to conclude that either the tree or nest will be there a year later? In addition to clarifying biological thresholds, NPS must succinctly and truthfully communicate what constitutes "practicable," and provide relevant examples. 29. In the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS determination of what is "practicable" must be weighed against the impacts to all species using scientific rationale for the adverse impacts, as opposed to development or profit-motive rationale. The scientific rationale should always receive a higher level of priority in order to protect and enhance ORVs for the Merced River. NPS is not authorized to protect and enhance rare, threatened or endangered species, and all other species, only when it is practicable.

Protection and enhancement of ORVs is a legal requirement, and NPS must obey the law. 30. NPS must use science-based facts to support the broad scope of proposed actions and potential consequences. This paltry list of "conservation and protection measures" is a clear indication that NPS upper brass needs to hire educated and trained professional scientists to provide this plan with a backbone of relevant research. A portion of the National Park Service mission statement excerpted from the 2000 MRP states that: "The National Park Service will seek to perpetuate the native animal life as part of the natural ecosystems of parks. Management emphasis will be on minimizing human impacts on natural animal dynamics. The native life is defined as all species that as a result of natural processes occur or occurred on lands now designated as a park . . . Native animal populations will be protected against harvest, removal, destruction, harassment, or harm through human action." The National Park Service's mandated protection is not limited to "rare, threatened, or endangered" species. ALL native animal species are to be protected ? whether listed as rare, threatened, endangered ? or not. Harm through human action includes removal, destruction or degradation of habitat. This habitat, as well as animal and plant species are ORVs of the Merced River. 31. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, Yosemite's NPS should make a stronger effort to live up to its mission statement, and protect and enhance the ORVs of the Merced. If individuals came into Yosemite National Park and started "harvesting" species in an area zoned for commercial development, NPS arrest these individuals, prosecute them to the fullest extent allowed by law, and make an example of these individuals to the rest of the world. It would be a circus of huge proportion. On the other hand, if these same native animal habitats and species were eliminated through the "removal, destruction, harassment or harm caused through the human action" by NPS, its concessionaire, or affiliated contractors, vendors or suppliers, NPS upper brass would explain that it was not "practicable" to prevent it from happening. 32. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS should make every effort to limit zoning for development and commercialization to those immediate areas that have already been impacted. There should be no further expansion or increase in development or commercialization, and no further loss or degradation of animal habitat. 33. Further, NPS should make a concerted effort to reduce and remove existing employee housing, commercialization and development that is not necessary for baseline park operations. As Richard Kunstman made clear, paraphrased here, the Biological Assessment of the 2000 MRP postponed analysis of potential impacts of "site specific actions" focusing instead on "Reasonably Foreseeable Activities". As described in "Considering Cumulative Effects," by the Council on Environmental Quality, January 1997, NEPA requires the National Park Service to perform a comprehensive analysis of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. NEPA prohibits "piecemealing." 34. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, the National Park Service must respect and adhere to NEPA requirements, and perform a comprehensive analysis of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions related to native species. NPS must fulfill this requirement. An appropriate historical note describes the process by which the National Park Service has failed to "make a genuinely lasting commitment to science-based management," provided by noted National Park Service historian, Richard West Sellers. Sellers, author of "Preserving Nature in the National Parks ? A History," describes the Park Service's history in building an environmental record, which is excerpted here to emphasize that the underlying lack of knowledge cannot be contributed to a lack of awareness for the necessity of such information in land management programs such as those administered by the NPS. "One of the significant changes repeatedly recommended in the reports was for the Service to inventory the parks' natural resources and monitor their condition over time. Without such data, a scientific understanding of the parks could not be achieved and any Park Service claim to leadership in environmental affairs would be seriously undermined. Virtually every report emphasized the need for this information ? and the Service accrued a considerable history of promises, each followed by resistance and procrastination. Long before the external reports began to appear in 1963, the Park Service had declared its intention to inventory and monitor species. Made official policy in 1934, Fauna No. 1's wildlife recommendations included the charge to undertake for each park a "complete faunal investigation?at the earliest possible date." Although making little progress, the Service repeated its commitment to this task through the 1930's and during World War II ? for instance in a February 1945 report on research. Such declarations became more common in the environmentally conscious 1960s. The 1961 internal document "Get the Facts, and Put Them to Work" recognized the need for a "continuous flow of precise knowledge" about park resources. Two years later, Director Conrad Wirth stated that the insistence of the National Academy Report on inventorying and monitoring in the parks was a "basic recommendation" ? that it would "bbe implemented as rapidly as possible." And in October 1965, the Service reiterated its commitment to prepare "an inventory of existing biotic communities" in the parks. Fifteen years later, the Service issued its first State of the Parks report, aimed at gaining congressional support and funding for the Service's resource management and science programs. The report admitted that there was a "paucity of information" on park conditions and called for "comprehensive inventory" and "comprehensive monitoring." [As a result] the Service substantially increased its monitoring capabilities for air and water quality in the parks. This progress was offset by widespread neglect ? in spite of the need for data to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and especially with the Endangered Species Act. In a 1988 commentary on inventorying and monitoring, journalist Robert Cahn, awarded a Pulitzer Prize for an earlier analysis of national park issues, reported that "possibly the greatest failure" in Park Service history was the bureau's not having gained "solid knowledge" about park resources through "systematically identifying them and regularly determining their condition." A similar charge appeared in the 1989 National Parks and Conservation Association report on park management. And the same 1991 Vail conference draft document that exhorted the Park Service to "embrace a leadership role" in environmental affairs noted that more often than not the Service knew "little about the actual resources parks contain, their significance, degree of risk, or response to change. As had others before it, this document urged a "comprehensive program" to inventory and monitor park resources. In 1993, six decades after Fauna No. 1 and three decades after the Leopold and National Academy reports, this entreaty was repeated in the Vail Agenda. That the National Park Service can admit "a 'paucity of information' on park conditions" in its own records ? and decades later, shift their emphasis to development and commercialization of Yosemite National Park ? and other national parks ? without ever fulfilling its duty and responsibility to Congress, the Courts and taxpayers, means NPS upper brass has shifted its priorities in the wrong direction to the continued detriment of Yosemite National Park, and the wild and scenic designated Merced River. 35. Going forward, in the new CMP for the Merced River, it is crucial that NPS inventory the "parks' natural resources and monitor their condition over time," that NPS perform a "complete faunal investigation?at the earliest possible date," that NPS develop a "continuous flow of precise knowledge" about park resources, and that NPS prepare "an inventory of existing biotic communities" in the park. Richard Kunstman's comments regarding what qualifies as "unnatural barriers" is as relevant today as it was before. In the Biological Assessment of the 2000 MRP, on pg. I-4, NPS provides a long list of adverse effects that could impact threatened and endangered species (TES) without indicating effects on non-TES species; which comprise a large part of the ORVs that contribute to the visitor experience. Roads, bridges, ditches and campgrounds are the identified as "imposing unnatural barriers to plant and wildlife movements." However, commercial structures such as lodging units, hotels, an ice skating rink, stores which sell groceries and liquor, garage auto maintenance facilities, cafeterias, restaurants, gift shops, as well as administrative and employee housing, support facilities and offices are omitted. These also represent "unnatural barriers" to plant and wildlife movement. 36. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS should identify ALL unnatural barriers to plant and wildlife movements, and quantify the impacts and effects of these barriers to the animal habitats, plant species, biotic communities and all of the parks natural resources. 37. In the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS's comprehensive analysis of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions must include existing facilities as well as proposed facilities and the impacts on the park's resources as a result of

siting these facilities within the floodplain of the Merced River. As described in the Biological Assessment of the 2000 MRP, "the structural form, connectivity, size, productivity, and diversity of wildlife habitats located at and in the vicinity of potential development sites could be adversely affected (long-term, adverse and moderate to major intensity)." Did NPS mean to use the word "extirpate" instead? This is an unacceptable use of NPS authority to destroy wildlife habitats for the sake of future development, and this type of action defies NEPA and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act intent and regulations. The National Park Service cannot vest itself with unmitigated authority to destroy park resources in exchange for development additional park infrastructure or facilities. 38. In the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS has a duty to protect and enhance the ORVs for the Merced River, and re-site proposed development of any facilities if the development sites could adversely affect wildlife habitats, especially if the effects could be "long-term, adverse and moderate to major intensity". Extirpation is unacceptable. Further, as Richard Kunstman pointed out, an ORV need not be a rare, threatened or endangered species. Thus, adverse effects on any park species would constitute a failure to protect and enhance the ORVs. Yosemite's NPS cannot grant itself authority to adversely impact ORVs that stand in the way of developing site facilities. 39. In the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS has a duty to protect and enhance the ORVs which include all animal and plant species not just those that are threatened, endangered or rare species. NPS has a duty to re-site and minimize all development facilities that will adversely impact any species. NPS has an equal duty to minimize the existing disruption to all species along the Merced River by reducing and removing the non-necessary personnel and concessionaire staffing, as well as related housing and support facilities outside of Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service wants the public to believe it is acting in good faith, on their behalf, and on behalf of future generations "to fulfill its requirements" to protect the Merced River, and its Outstandingly Remarkable Values." NPS behavior and actions to date confirm this is not true. The 2000 MRP authorized new development along the Merced River corridor, even though the 1980 GMP called for the development footprint to be reduced in Yosemite Valley, not enlarged and upgraded to include an expanded host of new visitor and employee accommodations as presented in later plans. In one public hearing related to the 2000 MRP, when people raised questions about MRP zoning, NPS representative, David Siegenthaler responded that, "They wanted to be able to leave the door open to accommodate a host of development projects that have been on the table for a very long time." 40. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS upper brass should focus on protecting the Merced River ? not exploiting, developing and commercializing the lands around it. NPS must shift its priorities back to protecting the Yosemite's natural resources and away guaranteeing that the concessionaire can make a profit using taxpayer-funded facilities in a taxpayer-funded natural resource setting using taxpayer-funded federal services to its distinct and monopolistic advantage. 41. In the new CMP for the Merced River, NPS has a duty to provide public review and inspection of the concessionaire's operating records for lodging and recreational facilities within Yosemite. The concessionaire's profits are directly related to taxpayer funding and support of Yosemite, its facilities, infrastructure and federal employees; and thus, the public should have the right to review the concessionaire's accounting records in detail for all Yosemite operations so that the full effects of NPS plans to zone the Yosemite Valley floor and areas around the Merced River for development and commercialization can be fully understood. 42. NPS has a responsibility and duty to protect the Merced River, not exploit it to the advantage of the concessionaire and to the disadvantage of low- to moderate-income individuals and families who cannot afford lodging quarters at concessionaire facilities. NPS has a duty and responsibility to replace campsites in Yosemite Valley that were removed during the 1997 flood and thereafter. The following comments and concepts are attributable to Richard Kunstman and shared again with his permission. The 2000 MRP did not provide for protection or enhancement of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) of the Merced River and adjacent land areas. Instead, the plan was littered with new zoning and loopholes for justifying future adverse impacts to ORVs. The primary reason that the Merced River was nominated for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System (WSRS) was due to Outstandingly Remarkable Values in the river and adjacent land areas . . . "A wild, scenic, or recreational river area eligible to be included in the system is a free-flowing stream and the related adjacent land area that possesses one or more of the values referred to in Section 1, subsection (b) of this act. (P.L. 90-542 Sec. 2 (b)) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers 7 7 7 possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition 7 7 7 shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. (P.L. 90-542 Sec. 1 (b))" The primary reason for designating a river for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System is to protect and enhance those ORVs, as required by law . . . Each component of the national wild and scenic river system shall be administered in such a manner as to protect and enhance the values . . . In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archeological, and scientific features. (P.L. 90-542 Sec. 10 (a)) (Emphasis added.) 43. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, the National Park Service must provide for protection and enhancement of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) of the Merced River and adjacent land areas. It is not enough for NPS to name the ORVs and indicate the segments of the Merced River where specific ORVs can be found. This is too generic and vague to be of any use. The only way to ensure that a river segment is not degraded by future activities and actions is to know where the ORVs exist on a map. The 2000 MRP failed to provide this information. 44. Going forward in the new CMP for the Merced River, the National Park Service must include useful maps which display and detail specific locations where the ORVs occur and exist on the Merced River so the public can ensure that the NPS does not allow degradation of these ORVs to occur, either through NPS actions or failure to act. Lastly, in the new CMP for the Merced River, all previously submitted public comments related to prior Merced River plans should retain their full force and effect as if these comments were made for this CMP. Given that NPS must start over with this Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced River does not diminish or devalue public's effort to offer criticism or input to date, and NPS cannot dismiss the public participation that has occurred to date on prior River Plans. That participation must be included for this CMP. While Yosemite's NPS has failed in previous planning efforts to meet NEPA and WSRA federal guidelines, that failure should not impact the public's participation, time, effort and expense offered to date for these plans. This new CMP must envelop the public's past public comments and effort to engage in this process. prescriptions would

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**Correspondence ID:** 128      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 129      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan



**Name:** Enriquez, Raymond  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,21,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Superintendent,Subject Yosemite parking Just giving you some thoughts on the parking problem in the park that might be useful. 1 . One way to solve some of the problems of parking is to let only campers drive into the park. And once they are at their campsite they can use the trams to get around the park or bring bicycles. ( Your tram service is an excellent way to see the park) Day use visitors would park outside the park and use the trams to come into the park. The problem is where to build a parking lot? (Oakhurst, Coarsegold, Mariposa etc.) 2. One way to solve the parking outside the park is have the various local cities build parking lots and transport visitors to the park for a small fee or paid as part of the entrance fee. Doing this will help these small communities commerce and business. The City of Visalia takes visitors from their Sequoia campus parking lot to the Sequoias for day use and brings them back at the end of the day. I hope this might help. I have been camping in Yosemite since I was a kid which now is over 50 years. And we thoroughly enjoyed it and now we have passed this on to our children and grandchildren, who also enjoy the camping experience. You have done a Great Job managing the park and still letting visitors enjoy the Yosemite experience.

**Correspondence ID:** 130      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I heartily agree with Mr. Brian H. Ouzounian, and the efforts he has been making for years..just to preserve a wonderful camping experience for all who seek it. I have been coming to Yosemite since 1969, with my famiy and friends...love it every year. We have only missed one year in all that time. We have seen many changes, some are good and some are not so good. We don't like to see how things are changed to accomodate the masses, ie. tour buses, at the expense of the simple campers. We love our Yosemite and hope and pray it will still be there to enjoy as we have known it for all these years. We don't need to get rid of the campsites...we need more at this point....

**Correspondence ID:** 131      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Part of the great high sierra loop experience. Launch Point for Hike into Yosemite Valley  
  
2. What do you want to see protected? High Sierra CAmp Experience: Hike into and camp without large packs Camaraderie with other hikers Good Food and Showers  
  
3. What needs to be fixed? Trails and camp area beaten up by horses/mules. Ref: Mered Lake HSC.  
  
4. What would you like to see kept the same? The High Seraa Camp Experience

**Correspondence ID:** 132      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Forbes, Paul  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am an individual residing at 277 W. Vartikian Ave. Fresno Ca 93704. I wish to enter my comments on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Managment Plan. I am somewhat familiar with the ongoing litigation and would like to be kept informed of the ongoing process of plan development. I am a recreational user of the Yosemite National Park and have participated in all of the following activities within the last 2 years: Hiking, swimming, floating on a raft, walking my dog, sightseeing, photography and using the river as a source of drinking water when hiking in the back country. I am happy that I can float down the river on my own raft, or rent one and feel this is an important part of summer recreation in the Valley. I fully support limiting either the number of swimmers, or the number of access points to the river as a means of reducing human impacts. I believe trying to preserve the river in a pristine state however, is unobtainable and would be counter to the goals of the national park service. Enjoyment, means sonie form of Human impact and I would discourage any kind of sectioning off of large areas of the river on the Yosemite Valley floor for preservation. With that, I would also like to see greater public education on the need to minimize impacts and reduce harm done to

sensitive areas. Since I use the river as a source of drinking water, I would also like to preserve the quality of this resource as much as possible, which is why I support continued limiting of the number of wilderness permits in the back country, however, I feel that the current number of day users on a summer day is too high, but the number of overnight campers on the Happy Isles to little yosemite valley is too few. I have never had the opportunity to stay at a High Sierra Camp, but would like to. Because the number of people allowed is too few, I have never been able to obtain a reservation. Would it be possible to increase the number of people and greatly reduce the number of livestock: horses and mules? I feel that human access is much less damaging than large mule teams, and don't understand why they are allowed, but the number of humans is so limited.! was disturbed by the preponderance of algae in the merced river in summer of 2008 in Little Yosemite valley. In summary Here is what I would like to see preserved: access to river for swimming and recreation all along the river, and especially between upper pines campground and swinging bridge. access to high sierra camps public education on environmental protection limited commercial activity along the river public input meadow restoration and tree removal in the valley Here is what I would like to change: Greater overnight camping access in the back country. Reduced day use along the Happy Isles, Lake Merced Corridor. Reduced use of livestock along the river and in the watershed. Increased number of high sierra camps or greater capacity at existing camps.

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**Correspondence ID:** 133      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Shepherd, Ronald and Annette  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent; We got your postcard asking about what is important to us re: Yosemite. Well, we would really like to see more campgrounds in the Valley, at least double what there is now! We try to do a lot of RV camping in the Yosemite Valley during the year, but so far it is impossible to get reservations during the summer months. We know you closed down some campgrounds a few years back, due to flooding or something; but opening some sites to camp away from the river would be quite acceptable. Thank you for your considerations of our ideas.

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**Correspondence ID:** 134      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Kern, Anne  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Sir or Madam, I am writing to support the maintenance of access to classic climbs in Yosemite Valley, which I learned might be threatened by the Merced River Project. Rock climbing is a historical and cultural part of Yosemite Valley. Thousands of routes exist on the granite walls, and the climbing is regarded as some of the best in the world. It would be tragic to lose access to climbing that is within a quarter mile of the Merced River. I ask that you please keep the climbing community, history, and culture in mind as the MRP proceeds. I visit Yosemite at least ten times per year to climb, and I can't imagine not climbing on those beautiful walls.

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**Correspondence ID:** 135      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Valencia, Analila  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,06,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To Superintendent, My biggest concern while you are planning and considering issues of lodging, camping, and park operations is that the forest and animals will be effected. I am not sure exactly what type of process you are conducting but please be aware that most people go to Yosemite and Merced Wild to get away from the city and people. If it becomes overcrowded it will unbalance the harmony we seek with nature and the animals. I would rather wait and sign up months in advance than to have a park that can accommodate several people. I will like to reiterate I come to see the beauty that was created and not see several RVs and cars.

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**Correspondence ID:** 136      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Arena, Anthony  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,  
  
 Firstly, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). As a teacher and biologist, I understand the problems facing our remaining wild places and the increasing human impact on them. As

someone who studies the impact of invasive species due to human actions, I know the harm people can intentionally AND unintentionally do. The Merced River is in a unique situation, with major portions located within Yosemite National Park. This not only allows visitors to appreciate and use this resource but also allows for the potential for damage due to the number of people. However, I am also a climber and like most climbers, pride myself on low impact use of our wild places and fostering a respect for nature among other citizens and outdoor users.

Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

#### Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 137      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
Bercot, Haley

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** It seems to me that one of the best ways of limiting impact and visitor confusion would be to limit the any of facilities available within the Valley. All shops should be located solely in the "Yosemite Village" area. Yosemite Lodge and Curry Village could convert their current shopping facilities to additional dining or office space, or perhaps remove the buildings entirely. Each lodging area reany only needs an eatery and perhaps a very small store, like the Ahwahnee sweet shop, where some basics (toothpaste, shampoo, bottled water etc) could be purchased. To limit driving, the park should eliminate all roadside parking within the developed end ofthe Valley. This should be strictly enforced by Law Enforcement. Visitors should only have six parking options: Yosemite Lodge, Yosemite Valley Day Parking, the Campgrounds, Curry Village, Housekeeping Camp & the Ahwahnee. The eastern section of the loop road would be for shuttle busses only and could perhaps be blocked off with the same system used at airports. huttle busses could open the road gates with a remote control and visitors with accessibility needs could be given a code to punch into a keypad. All other visitors would need to walk, bike, or use the shuttle busses to get around the eastern end ofthe Valley.

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**Correspondence ID:** 138      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mennig, Ph.D, Jan C  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:**

1. What do you love about camping in Yosemite Valley and/or Wawona? Great campsites in wide areas of the park. The variety and altitudes involved is striking.
2. What would make a better camping experience? More sites or expansion of existing sites. Better access to pre-educate potential campers on camping equipment and concerns (safety) while in the park.
3. What about your camping experience would you like to see kept the same. Cooking Sites
4. What about your camping experience and the surrounding area do you want to see protected? Keeping the same or any expanded campsites.

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**Correspondence ID:** 139      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Coyle, CarolN/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** What I love about the Merced River, Wawona ... The S. Fork of the Merced and Wawona are perfect for families: The elevation of 4,000' allows it to have the 'perfect' climate for all ages. One can actually get in the water after the early melt slows down. Mosquitoes not as bad as at Tuolumne. What do ! want to <ee protected? Access to it from all banks ..including the river in the campground should be available to ali in the park ... not just the campers. The purity of the water: Park Service should provide port-a-potties where ever the public can stop for picnics, etc. Campers using soap in the river needs to be watched more closely. Trails, wildflowers, park animals, clean air, clean water. What needs to be fixed? More port-a-potties everywhere. Those two restrooms by the Wawona history center are not sufficient either. Access along all its banks ... including those in the campground Garbage & single stream recycling bins everywhere throughout the park. Don't expect people to separate tin/aluminum/colored glass from dear glass. If Marin County can do it, surely the National Parks can. Entrance fees should be kept in the Park in which they are collected. Tour Bus parking not be allowed in the White Store parking lot. They also pollute the air. Parking for those taking the shuttle to the Mariposa Grove should not take up store and history center parking. Can parking area be increased on back side of hotel? What would you see like to be kept the same? Keep the community school in Wawona. Shuttle parking near south entrance.

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**Correspondence ID:** 140      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Chastain, Mas  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form

**Correspondence:**

1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The easy access to the Merced River from the roadway. The visitor experience can be just from a car if needed or desired.

2. What do you want to see protected? The existing trail system so that visitors can explore the back country.
3. What needs to be fixed? The valley needs more campgrounds and parking.
4. What would you like to see kept the same? High Sierra Camps

**Correspondence ID:** 141    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bailey, Carl and Ellen  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,10,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** We camped one time for 4 days in Yosemite Valley in Oct. 2008. We liked being able to camp where it was convenient to the places we wished to see. We hope you keep it that way.

**Correspondence ID:** 142    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Dalderis, Barbara  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love the natural beauty and open space of all areas mentioned. The wildflowers along the Merced River. Camping and hiking in the Yosemite Valley. I have been lucky enough to hike to the High Sierra Camps and only wish reservations were not so hard to obtain. I love that I get a senior discount for entrance and camping at YNP. 2. What do you want to see protected? All the natural beauty needs protection. The Merced River, the animals, meadows, waterfalls and the trails. 3. What needs to be fixed? Fewer buses should be allowed in the valley. They bring in too many passengers. Refurbish Curry Village tent cabins and campgrounds. Fewer hotel rooms and more campgrounds. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Cars should continue to be allowed in the valley. The park and ride system seems to be very effective.

**Correspondence ID:** 143    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Chaston, Laurie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Hiking trails, campgrounds, bike paths, fishing and rafting.  
  
2. What do you want to see protected? There has to be a balance between protecting the ecosystem and people recreating/enjoying the beauty Yosemite has to offer.  
  
3. What needs to be fixed? More paved bike paths in the valley, parking lots/capacities, more campgrounds, bring back those near the river. 4. What would you like to see kept the same?

**Correspondence ID:** 144    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Karne, Benn  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** My main concerns are as follows: 1. MORE CAMPSITES: The steady erosion of sites has put the concessionaire in a better position, but campers are left with fewer and fewer options. If the concern is one of flood plains, please flood-proof the sewer and other utilities (above-ground boxes, etc.) as necessary. 2. MORE BIKE PATHS: The plan to make one side of the valley a bike-only road is not a horrible thought, but it isn't really very good either. The one-way loop works well for auto traffic, and gives options for when work, accidents, whatever partially or fully blocks northside or southside drive. Let's just add to the existing bike paths around the valley. And restore the old BigOakFlat road as a bike path into the valley, while we're at it. 3. ELIMINATION OF EXOTIC SPECIES: From bullfrogs to blackberries, let's make an ongoing volunteer program that can make use of a few hours each of us can

contribute whilst visiting the park. Not all of us can contribute full days or weeks to such a program, but if there was a full-time (well, maybe 3-seasons) project leader in the field who could accept volunteers as they arrive and put them to work, many would be happy to sign up (coordinate at the visitor center).

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**Correspondence ID:** 145      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Chappell, Doug and Kathy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,08,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I would like to register the following comments regarding the new Merced River Plan. I have a long history with the park. My family first lived in YNP in the 1930's and I am currently a home owner in Foresta. I feel very strongly that the park is FOR THE PUBLIC. My #1 request is for accommodations that were lost in 1997 flood to be replaced as soon as possible ..... (in other words- IMMEDIATELY) .. When tourist visit a park, they should be able to stay in that park. Yosemite's policy of not replacing the overnight accommodations has caused a huge amount of traffic on Highways 140 and 41. Tourist are forced to drive back and forth to the gateway communities to sleep thus spending a great deal of their vacation in their cars. This is wrong for so many reasons .... but particularly it is harmful for the local environment. Affordable lodge rooms need to be rebuilt. But even more essential, campgrounds need to be available. What greater way to experience Yosemite than camping. I hope that you not only replace the lost valley campsites, but greatly add to that number. I would like to see new campgrounds in the valley .... as many spaces as feasible. But I also would like to see more campgrounds added outside of the valley or enlarge the current campgrounds at Crane Flat, Hodgen Meadows, Wawona and especially along the highway up to Tuolumne Meadows and Tioga Pass. It should not take "an act of God" to get a camping space in YNP. The park should welcome all people willing to camp and should have enough spaces available in popular areas to accommodate these hearty souls. If it would be easier to get a campground space, I think more people would camp. There should be more campground spaces added than lodging units ..... a higher priority should be given to camping that staying at the lodge. A true YNP experience should include camping if that is desired by the visitor, however, it is so difficult to get reservations, many people are forced to stay in hotels, etc. I also feel that the river plan should continue to include rafting in the valley. On a hot summer day this is an extremely popular activity .... for good reason...it is a delightful way to spend the day. I am sure that park employees can find ways to protect the riverbank areas that are becoming damaged from overuse. Restrict areas where rafters can go ashore .... such as only allowing rafters to get out of the rafts at the larger beaches or close fragile areas using the roped off areas as you have done in the meadows..... but please do keep the current rafting experience. I realize that employee housing is a big problem-I have several family members and friends who have worked in the park and lived in temporary housing-and they loved it. The white tents are acceptable (even a fun experience) for your college age workers in the summers. More permanent housing is still needed and I would encourage this new housing to be similar to the new housing near Curry Village. I DO NOT want to see employees having to drive long distances to work .... it is costly and bad for the environment. Please provide more housing in the valley and in Wawona. I would hope that most employees could have the option to live close enough to their jobs so they can walk or bike to work-especially in the valley. I would be very sad to see the white tents disappear ..... it is such a tradition for the summer employees. I have a few other miscellaneous comments. I love the free shuttle system. Please do everything possible to keep people out of their cars. I would encourage you to allow all employees to ride the Yarts from the gateway communities for free or certainly for a greatly reduced price so that they will not drive their cars. Keep campground prices reasonable so that the average family can still afford to visit. Add more signage in the park-especially in the valley. I think it is still difficult for the newcomer to find their way around. Example: I do not think there is a single sign showing visitors how to find the stables. Please keep/add as many activities as possible in the park that are inexpensive, but environmentally sound .... such as rafting, horseback riding, rental bikes and ice skating, skiing etc. I would also like to see increased information throughout the park pertaining to history that took place in particular areas. Yosemite is rich in interesting history and information with historic pictures located at those historic sites adds so much to the park experience. Thank you very much

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**Correspondence ID:** 146      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Berner, Bill  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

I am an east coast climber who has visited Yosemite several times in the last 10 years. Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP).

Most importantly, I want to ask that climbing be identified as one of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values. In the last 50 years the traditions of Yosemite and climbing have become so interconnected that neither would be well represented without the other.

I understand with many other demands, the details of this recognition must be flexible. My hope is that when compromises are needed that climbing is not considered an easy concession. Losses to climbing are losses to Yosemite.

As far as transportation, I have been amazed at how well the L.L.Bean buses in Acadia work. I was very reluctant to give up my

private transportation, but the frequency, coverage and responsiveness of the buses in Acadia actually make the park more accessible than it is by car. I suspect that with bigger back country trips and climbs possible in Yosemite, buses would need much more accommodation for carrying big packs.

Given the number of people on many of the climbing routes in Yosemite, the "wilderness experience" is already diluted. So I think that speed and safety on those routes would be greatly enhanced by placing bomber fixed belay/rappel anchors at the usual stances. This works very well on Devil's Tower. I am not passionate either way in the bolting argument, but it doesn't seem that Yosemite is the place for multiple, short, all-bolt sport routes. There are less crowded places of equal quality. But the use of bolts to fill a few gaps in a high quality multi-pitch climb makes plenty of sense.

I am not happy about the licensing of big private corporations for exclusive in-park sales and service. I would prefer to see the park kept non-commercial, the services done by Park Service and paid for by admission fees and taxes (yes, I'd like to see taxes raised for National Parks, among other things). "Free enterprise" will find a way to re-invent Estes Park or Gatlinburg on one of the park boundaries to provide all the goods and services that visitors need.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 147     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Love, Jay  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,06,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** As both an ardent conservationist and climber, I see the Merced River Wild and Scenic River Plan to be very important. The Merced is a beautiful river, and should be protected from increased development in the future. However, it is imperative that access to rock climbing as a form of recreation in Yosemite Valley not be limited due to this plan. Rock climbing is my way of experiencing this beautiful river, and many others share my opinion. The history behind rock climbing in Yosemite is incredible and is a point of national pride. Climbing is inherently low-impact, as are climbers in general. We need to be able to have access to the valley, as well as low-impact style primitive camping - the kind currently available in Camp 4, a National Historic Place. We are not the type of people who detract from the wild beauty of the Merced, and will do everything to continue enjoying the rock and the river and to conserve them both. Sustainable use is the key here.

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**Correspondence ID:** 148     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Liljenwall, Robert  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I want to add my voice to the the need to restore previously lost campgrounds to Yosemite Valley. As a camper at Yosemite since the mid-1940s, I regard this Valley as "sacred ground" for campers everywhere. The flood-damaged campgrounds should be immediately returned to their original use and quality. I cannot believe or understand how the Park Service can mis-appropriate funds allocated for this restoration?? How dare the Park Service and its management dis-regard the citizens' right to what they are entitled. The tradition of "family auto-based drive-in camping" should always have a place in Yosemite -- after all, this gave the Valley its historic foundation iin the first place. How else can one thoroughly enjoy the pristine beauty of camping outdoors without this access? Impossible. Listen to your constituents -- they have a right to be not only heard but to gain back what you have stolen from them....put back our camp sites!

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**Correspondence ID:** 149     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bentley, Ms. J. E.  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** 1/28/10 Dear? I received your postcard (copy enclosed) however, there is not a date of identity of sender.

It seems to be a request for my comments although I'm not sure about what you wish me to comment.

Last month I did send you the original of the attached "Comment Form."

Below you will find a few comments in response to the information I read in the "Participant Guide - Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan."

- 1) I understand that it may not be feasible to swimming in certain parts of the Merced River. However, it is of great importance that biking, hiking, and picture taking be allowed else enjoyment of this part of Yosemite's Outstanding Wild and Scenic River will be diminished.
- 2) Regarding the number of people who may visit the river: Does this refer to the part of the river in Yosemite Valley or in the whole of Yosemite park?
- 3) It is fruitless to assess "protection and enhancement of the Outstanding Remarkable Value conditions in the Merced River and South Fork Merced River corridors" unless ways are available for it to be enjoyed "up close and personal."

Thank you for communicating with me. Cordially

1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The overwhelming feelings and memories that grow each year when I visit. I need to be able to drive along the Merced, swim, rate, wade, hike, and photograph. Walk, bike and hike in the Valley. Be near the beautiful and historic buildings and bridge at Wawona.

I have been visiting the Yosemite area since 1983 with various friends and family. It's a tradition. My children and grandchildren have come to love this place. I am still introducing friends to this new experience for them.

2. What do you want to see protected? I am very upset to read the the old, sturdy, historic, beautiful bridges may be destroyed for who knows what purpose. They need to NOT be destroyed. We need to be able to bike, hike, walk, photograph and enjoy these bridges. Some of the lost campgrounds and accommodations should be reinstated so anyone who wants to experience this place many doe so.

3. What needs to be fixed? Install more small informational stands and maps along all trails and trunouts, but do not buld nay new educational buildings. People want to be out there getting the experience, not inside reading about it.

4. What would you like to see kept the same? The level of access to the actual natrual wonders and the preservation of some.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	150	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Weggel, Bob				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Jan,29,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	In your proposed plans for the future of Yosemite Valley, please give highest priority to the preservation of the resource for future generations. As a member of the American Alpine Club it embarrasses me that in AAC's solicitation for comments concerning proposed plans for Yosemite Valley they used the words "their playground". No one should be allowed to treat Yosemite Valley as his playground. It is the paramount responsibility of the Park Service to preserve the national treasures that We the People have entrusted to its care. Only if we preserve these treasures will these treasures remain for future generation to admire.				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	151	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Archer, Brett				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the MRP. I would like to make comments regarding the following things:				

- 1) I think it imperative to re-think and re-evaluate the one quarter mile boundary on each side of the river. It doesn't make sense when the Valley itself is only one mile wide to have one half of it "affected." 2) I believe that all people should be able to enjoy the recreation that the river affords. A big aspect of being able to experience Yosemite includes being able to stay and "play" there. There can be balance. 3) Accommodations in the valley have already been affected and greatly reduced by floods and rockfalls. Reducing accommodations further yet due to the MRP is unacceptable.



Thank you

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**Correspondence ID:** 152    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Dierksen, Brian and Robin  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,12,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** This is in regards to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Plan, I have been going to Yosemite for 35+ years and have seen significant changes during that time period. One of the most notable changes happened during the flood of 1997 in which several of the campgrounds got flooded. I was there just last year and over ten years later there has been zero progress at re-opening the campground, instead it has become a dumping ground for the park service. I realize there is a "Plan" that needs to be developed but as is the case with most government agencies that means absolutely nothing and in many cases just a money grab for certain groups. If this was a "private" company this would have been done many years ago and for probably half the cost. I guess what I am trying to say is I firmly believe Yosemite and everything surrounding it including the Merced River needs to be protected but at the same time they need to remain completely open to the public to enjoy and use. There is absolutely no point in protecting something if knowone can enjoy it. Also please remember that the majority of the people going into the valley want and do the right thing to protect it and there is only a very small percentage of the population that chooses to do the wrong thing. Please don't base any of your decisions of the small minority of people but the majority who love to recreate in our national parks.

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**Correspondence ID:** 153    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Oliver, Stuart  
**Outside Organization:** National Parks Conservation Association Conservation/Preservation  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** A few suggestions- Watched films recently on our public television station by Ken Burns, KIXE. It wouldn't hurt if the park showed these films to campers about the history of Yosemite Park from its inception.

Suggestions: 1. Limit campers in park all year 2. No campers iwthing 1/4 mile of river (ever) 3. Plant fish in the river 4. Improve sewage/garbage disposal if needed 5. NO alcohol in the park/ever 6. Soft drink containers have a 25 cent refundable deposit 7. Rent fishing equipment with deposit required. 8. No parties within 1/4 mile of the river

I love Yosemite Valley and want others to develop a love for the park through their stay.

Sincerely

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**Correspondence ID:** 154    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ouzounian, Brian H  
**Outside Organization:** Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition Recreational Groups  
**Received:** Feb,06,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Supplemental Comments for the New Merced River Plan Failed to be received due to computer overload on February 4, 2010 Please add the following YVCC comments to the previously mailed package that you have received: . A. Prohibit dogs from all campgrounds using concession run kennels for boarding. This would mitigate the noise pollution that disrupts the natural solace and serenity of the visitor experience, which will enhance the ORV's. This mitigates the animal waste (urine and feces) pollution into the river and land banks. This also frees up law enforcement for noise (barking) complaints. B. Remove all split-rail fencing along the river that forces higher impact and concentration of bank traffic at the ends of the fence for visitors and, by the nature of their installation, damages tree and other root systems of vegetation C. Install a campground east of the Ahwahnee Hotel, currently used for equestrian activities and commercial laydown area to the Sugar Pine Bridge. Sewer access currently exists for restrooms. Road access could be gained via the Ahwahnee parking lot. D. Add affordable family based drive-in auto based campsites in the stables area of North Pines Campground and move the stables to another area. In the relocation, configure service only for park management, whereby removing similar impacts such as the prohibition of dogs in Section A. above. Install the campsites on the north near as possible to Tenaya Creek, south to the North Pines entrance road, and east to Clark's Apple Orchard. E. Re-visit the tenants of Frederick Law Olmstead's letter/book, Yosemite And The Mariposa Grove: A Preliminary Report, 1865, commissioning the State of California for the care, custody, and control of the Park as envisioned by President Abraham Lincoln. Specifically setting a goal as to the visitors' experience for refreshment of mind and spirit: to participate in activities that refresh them through recreation, those that renew the visitors' health and spirits through enjoyment and relaxation; all this regardless of economic status. Through this environment, the visitor can absorb more fully the relationships of ORV's in the Parks esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific values in the Merced River corridor. F. Recognize affordable family auto based drive-in camping as a cultural ORV as well as recreational ORV. The culture of family camping is more than an activity and recreation. It has family values that are constantly

expounded upon by respondents to the YVCC and to the YNPS. It is the "silent majority" of Park visitors. Refer to those comments on the YVCC Petition previously submitted in writing by U.S. Mail. G. The 1980 GMP called for improvement of the Gas Station that was located near Camp 4. The YNPS violated that agreement when it removed it. This is to request re-installation of it per the 1980 agreement and a minor auto repair facility for public use. The location of the Valley and long distances to other facilities demand this installation as a practical and public safety installation. Many families are rushed to get out of town to get to the Park and sometimes their cars break or need just minor repairs. It is impractical to think that having no services is in conformance with anything! Until all cars are prohibited from the Valley, this common sense facility is needed. Imagine brakes going out coming into the Valley and the logistics of driving out with bad breaks. Talk about wrecking the visitor experience! H. To reiterate that which YVCC has repeatedly advised and recommended to Project Staff, notices should rightly be given to all those in the camping database for solicitation of comments. It has come to our attention that only a small fraction of those, by some undisclosed filtration system, have been sent postcard notices. Such notices did not include the deadline for comment on the scoping process, which sets up the perception that the YNPS is up to its old tricks of tokenism and manipulating an open process. The disenfranchised campers want to be contacted and weigh-in on this process all the way back to 1979 when the GMP excluded them. How has the YNPS reached out to those campers who did not get a reservation and want to comment? I. Stop the process of reserving campsites for volunteers, whereby allowing the public to reserve these sites. Volunteers could be bussed in from remote or high country sites. The YNPS has increased the quantity of reserving sites for their volunteers annually. This has not gone unnoticed. Last year, 2009, most of Lower Pines Campground was withheld from the public reservation system.

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**Correspondence ID:** 155      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Peggy, Smith J  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Mr. Superintendent, You have done away with so many camping sites in the last few years. It is impossible to book a camping site. We would love to see more camping sites. We would love to come and enjoy the beautiful sites in Yosemite.

Please make more camping sites to RV Campers. Sincerely P.S. R.V. Campers are friendly to the environment.

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**Correspondence ID:** 156      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Spence, Brian C  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent: I am writing to comment on the Merced River Plan that is currently in development (again!). I write as someone who has been visiting Yosemite for almost 50 years now. When I was a young boy in the 1960s, my parents took us on car-camping trips to Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, and other parts of the Park. I can even recall walking out into the meadows in the evening to watch the firefalls off of Glacier Point. When I was in my teens, I took up backpacking and have since walked hundred of miles in the backcountry of Yosemite, both on trails and cross country into some of the most remote areas of the Park. Now, having children of my own, I have in recent years been re-exploring the art of car camping and doing shorter backpacking trips in and around Tuolumne Meadows. Thus, I write as someone who has a deep love for this magnificent place and a keen hope that it will be managed in such a way that my children will be able to enjoy experiences even better than those I have had myself.

Yosemite Valley My vision of Yosemite Valley is that it be a place where someone can truly make a connection to the beauty that surrounds them. On my last trip to the Valley, a number of years ago on Thanksgiving, that was difficult to achieve. Within every campground, dozens of recreational vehicles ran generators at all hours of the day and night to heat their "traveling homes" and power their televisions. It was noisy and a pall of diesel smoke hung in the air, trapped by an inversion layer. Instead of walking outdoors and taking in the moon's glow on the snow that carpeted the valley floor, these "campers" were in their RVs watching Seinfeld reruns! Go figure.

Now, I don't expect everyone to want exactly the same kind of experience I am looking for in the Valley. But there are clearly some steps that could be taken to improve the quality of the experience for those of us who are looking for peace and quiet and clean air without denying others of their ability to enjoy this incredible place. So?make some progress here for goodness sake! The principles are simple: (1) fewer cars and more options for public transportation; (2) move as many of the unneeded developments as possible out of the valley; and (3) ban the diesel generator.

Backcountry Management and High Sierra Camps in the Merced River Corridor I confess that I was more than a little irked when I saw your "Comment Form" requesting input from the public, particularly the first question, which asks "What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?" What a strange notion that you would mention the developed areas in the Park in the same breath that you would list its natural wonders? This document you are preparing is supposed to be a management plan for a Wild and Scenic River. And yet from the get-go, you ask a leading question that can't help but support a conclusion that the public "loves" the developments at Wawona, El Portal, and the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp.

If you were truly serious about learning how people want to the Merced River and its surrounding environment managed, you could have at least asked the question in a neutral manner, such as "What do you like or dislike about the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?" Or better yet, "Do you feel that the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp is an appropriate use of wilderness or a wild and scenic river?" By asking these questions in a more neutral fashion, you would get a far more realistic appraisal of how the public feels about the high Sierra camps and other developments in the Merced River corridor. As written, your question leaves the public feeling (1) that you really have little interest in how the public really feels about management of the Merced watershed, and (2) that entire EIS process is just a sham designed to justify a pre-determined outcome while appearing to satisfy NEPA requirement for public involvement.

Additionally, why is the Vogelsang High Sierra Camp not mentioned in your scoping letter? It is part of the Merced River watershed as well and should be addressed in this plan.

Despite my misgivings about the legitimacy of this process, I'll try to answer your questions anyway. My focus will be on the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp (and Vogelsang and management of commercial livestock in the Merced River corridor, as I spend much more time in the backcountry than in the front country these days and these commercial activities are far and away the most serious impediment to my enjoyment of Yosemite's priceless wilderness. Moreover, this is an issue where the Park Service, if it truly wanted to, could do something of enormous and enduring value both for the preservation of the park and the quality of experience for the vast majority of backcountry users.

1. What do I love about the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Not a darned thing!! It is, along with the other high Sierra camps (HSCs), an atrocity that violates the very principle of both wilderness and wild and scenic rivers. The Wilderness Act is very clearly defines wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain? retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation" What could be clearer than that? Likewise, the 1987 legislation that designated the Merced River as a wild and scenic river clearly stated that the management plan "shall assure that no development or use of park lands shall be undertaken that is inconsistent with the designation of such river segments" (16 USC 1274[a]). Given that the entire segment of the Merced River and its many headwater tributaries lies in designated wilderness, it is patently clear that there is only one Outstandingly Remarkable Value of this portion of the Merced River and that is as a "Wild River" with "watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted." To fail to acknowledge the nonconforming nature of the high Sierra camps is to scoff at the very laws you are entrusted to uphold!

The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, Vogelsang High Sierra Camp, and all the other high Sierra camps for that matter, are blights on the landscape. They are places to be hurried through on the way to the "real wilderness" that lies outside of their sphere of influence.

Unfortunately, that sphere is far larger than the immediate footprint of the camps. The high concentration of people means that the surrounding areas within day-hiking distance of the camps are overcrowded and overused. They look tired and they need a long rest.

The enormous amount of waste that is generated at the camps has created water quality issues in the surrounding streams and lakes, which is being used to justify further inappropriate developments (composting toilets and other sewage treatment facilities) in the wilderness and the wild and scenic river. Even worse, resupplying the camps requires a relentless stream of horses and mules on trails leading to and from the camps throughout the summer. The results are disastrous. The trails are pulverized into dust. They are strewn with one pile of manure after another such that the very air reeks of the barnyard. On two recent trips to the Vogelsang and Glen Aulin camps, I literally could not take more than three or four steps without stepping in or over a pile of manure, some fresh and reeking, others pulverized into the dust. Within an hour of hiking on these trails, my legs were coated with this unpleasant dust/manure combination and I was compelled to go down to the creek on numerous occasions to rinse the filth off of my body.

And all of this devastation exists simply to allow a privileged few the opportunity for a "comfortable" and extravagant camping experience in the backcountry. It is an exploitation of a national treasure that borders on criminal.

Now I understand that you will undoubtedly get many letters from visitors who "love" the high sierra camps. To that I reply that there may indeed be a place for such recreational activities, but that place is not in the heart of National Park wilderness lands that are supposed to be afforded greater protection from development than any lands on this earth! Shut the camps down, and do it fast, please!

2. What do I want to see protected? This is rather a strange question, considering that what needs to be protected is clearly stated in the laws that established Yosemite Park and that designated wilderness and wild and scenic rivers within its boundaries. I want to see the backcountry protected from exploitative uses of all kinds. What I want to see in the backcountry is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain? retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation and a Merced River that shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. Anything that is inconsistent with these protective mandates (e.g., polluting and visually intrusive high Sierra camps, commercial stock enterprises) should be ceased. Enough said.

3. What needs to be fixed? For starters, see my response to question 1. Next, what needs to be fixed is the vast inequity between regulations on hikers versus the commercial outfitters who profit from their exploitation of wilderness at great expense to the environment and the experience of those of use low-impact users who travel on foot. This inequity is evident in numerous ways. Let me start with grazing by livestock in the backcountry of Yosemite. From the time I was 5 years old, I've been listening to rangers explain to me and other visitors how fragile the wilderness ecosystem is and that for me to collect even a single wildflower could cause irreparable harm and so is against Park Service regulations. And yet, stock parties are allowed to take as many as 15 animals

into the backcountry at a time, and can release these animals into the meadows where they are welcome browse freely on the grasses and forbs (affecting habitat for terrestrial invertebrates), to trample meadow vegetation (habitat for yellow-legged frogs and Yosemite toads), and to deposit seeds of alien plants into natural ecosystem. How can the Park Service reconcile this disparity? It is simply unconscionable that the destructive practice of grazing is still allowed in Yosemite, and it ought to be ceased immediately. If stock are to be allowed in the Park, they should be required to carry their own feed (certified weed free).

And what about animal waste? Frankly, it takes a considerable amount of gall for the Park Service to require backpackers to pack out their soiled toilet paper when horses and mules freely excrete 30-50 lbs of solid and liquid wastes every single day that they are out there on the trail! It is no wonder that recent research has clearly linked stock use in the backcountry with elevated levels of bacteria in streams and lakes. How can you possibly expect a hiker take your request to pack out their used toilet paper seriously when you apparently consider the tons of manure that are deposited by the horses and mules that service the HSCs and clients of commercial packstock outfits to be insignificant? And how can you ignore the mounting evidence that demonstrating that wastes from horses and mules is resulting in elevated levels of coliform bacteria in backcountry areas frequented by stock? If horses and mules are to be allowed on backcountry trails, they should be outfitted with "manure catchers" so that hikers don't have to constantly step through horse poop on trails, especially those that lead to and from the high Sierra camps.

4. What would I like to kept the same? The prohibition on cross-country travel by stock?with added enforcement to ensure that stock users do not violate this regulation. Several years ago, I took a backpacking trip into the Lyell Fork of the Merced River. Near the end of our second day, we left the trail where it crosses the Lyell Fork and began hiking up what ostensibly is a cross-country route into the lake basin at the headwaters of the river. Our plan was to camp below tree line and then hike into the upper basin the next day. To our dismay, we found that the "cross-country" route we had chosen consisted of a well-used horse trail, replete with all the damage previously described in this letter. A good 1.5 miles from the established trail, we found a large packer camp, fully equipped with large car-camping tents, lanterns hanging from the trees, chairs, tables, and other luxury items. This urban-like eyesore sat at the edge of a stunningly beautiful meadow, through which meandered the Lyell Fork, with Electra Peak towering in the background. Had the packer camp not been there, this would have been a glorious place to spend the evening. But the prospect of camping near this large and noisy group, lanterns and bonfire blazing while their stock trampled through the meadow, with cowbells clanging and disrupting what should have been a sublime evening was too unpleasant, and we were forced use to hike onward despite our exhaustion and the fading daylight.

The bottom line is that these sorts of liberties are taken all the time by commercial packers, and the Park Service has done little to discourage it. It's time to crack down on the offenders. If stock are to be allowed, they should be allowed no farther than 100 yards off designated trails. Well, I think that about covers it. I realize that you will probably consider my letter to be crabby and perhaps a little too pointed for your comfort. I apologize for that. I've been hiking this wilderness, observing this damage, and writing you letters about problems in the backcountry for a long, long time now. Yet to date, the only increase in backcountry regulations I have seen have involved increased restrictions on what I can do?shrinking trailhead quotas (I've been turned away twice in the last five years because the quotas were filled at Tuolumne Meadows...both times as a solo hiker), prohibitions on camping within 6 miles of Tuolumne Meadows, and now the requirement that I pack out my soiled toilet paper. And yet the endless stream of horses and mules servicing the high Sierra camps and the pampered clients of commercial packers simply goes on and on unabated, despite the fact the damage they cause to the wilderness ecosystem and the experience of other wilderness visitors is order of magnitude greater than my tiny footprint and the miniscule pile of ash that is left after I burn my toilet paper. That incongruity has strained my patience and as a result, my letters are less cordial than they once were.

But I promise?if the Park Service takes bold and decisive action in adopting those protective measures that this magical place most certainly deserves, I will be among the first to write congratulate you on a job well done. More importantly, you will have done something of enduring and immeasurable value for my children and grandchildren in that they will experience a wilderness that truly lives up to the ideals of the Park's mandate, the Wilderness Act, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	157	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Anthes, David				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Dec,07,2009 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Letter				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Superintendent, I am writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. Whenever a chance to comment on any of California's parks comes up, I try to take the opportunity to weigh in, as I am concerned about the park's immediate (for myself and friends) and long term (for the citizens that win follow me) future. From the time I have lived in California I have been enjoying the natural beauty protected by the park system, in parks from the San Diego area (Cleveland wilderness) to up north and east (Warner Mountains). California is a wildly diverse state, and like all wonderful natural parks needs protection. The most damaging effects I have seen at these parks are all attributable to one source: Horses. These immense non-native animals and their riders cause terrible damage with their consumption, defecation and steel-shod shoes. My four-day trip to the Warner Mountains this summer reinforced this: Straight from the trailhead, the trail was ground doV'm an average of 4 inches in to the soil, pulverizing rocks and soil so t.~at it all was a fine powder. When combined with the dry spell fhe area was weathering, it made for an unhealthy, dusty hike, especially considering aU the manure that was mixed in - there was no way to avoid kicking up a cloud of dust with every footfall. Further up the trail, every water source had piles of manure around it, and small creeks were trampled into sodden, muddy holes limiting water access to wildlife and hikers alike. Insects, too, were there attracted to the animal waste scattered in camp areas and in piles along the trail. The Sierra needs protection from invaders like these, and I'm sorry for those who would not be able to access the mountains atop their steeds, but we have recognized the effects of motorized travel, logging, and bear feeding as problematic and acted to curtail them. Please recognize that equestrian and pack-stock activity is a real threat to the quality of the park and act to restrict, not promote, such activities on our public lands. I know I speak for others when I say I would like to see the commercial stock camps at				

Sunrise, Vogelsang, May Lake and others to be closed. They are polluting, old, ugly and serve a very narrow range of influence within the park, making everything and everyone downstream suffer. Domestic livestock belongs on ranches, not our public parks. Please count this as one vote (though I speak for others) to close the afore-mentioned camps and limit the use of stock animals along the Merced River corridor.

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**Correspondence ID:** 158    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** K, Kuper  
**Outside:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** To Whom It May Concern, This letter is written to address the recent proposals concerning the Merced River Plan, and the need to reinstate both river campgrounds and lodging last since the flood of 1997. Visitors bring both interest and revenue, and the loss of visitor accomodations are determental to our national parks and wilderness areas.

One would hope that the overall goal is to protect our prks and wilderness areas so that the public an enjoy them. However, it seems that the recent emphasis i not only to reduce facilities for people but to bar people, period.

The crown jewel of osemite are the high sierra camps, which were created for all people, regardless of age or wilderness experience ,to be able to enjoy the wilderness. These camps provide a true wilderness experience for the majority, not just hardy and experienced backpackers.

Manhy of the people who take adbantage and access to these high sierra camps are some of the strongest supporters of our parks - aesthetically and financially. These people are also wilderness lovers and progtectors, inspiring future generations to support and protect our wildness heritage.

When accomodations are eliminated from our parks, in essence so are the people are removed from the few wild areas we have, the support, financial, and fight to protect the wilderness is also removed, creating a scenario with a negative outcome. Please, for the sake of our parks, and the people who love them, do not place limits on people or lodgings.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Sincerely,

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**Correspondence ID:** 159    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Marfice, Virginal and Dennis  
**Outside:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**  
**Received:** Feb,18,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, Just a comment on your management plan. Please do not reduce the number of camping sites that you have available in the valley. If you could increase the number of sites that would be great.

For the past 2 years, we have tried to get reservations for the summer months (on the first day they becom available), but have been unable to because of the high demand. This is very frustrating. There are less sites now than there used to be and more people thrying to get there.

We lovet he beauty of the Yosemite so much and would like to come more often. Please don't make it more difficult for that to happen.

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**Correspondence ID:** 160    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Powell, Nancy  
**Outside:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**  
**Received:** Jan,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** To Whom It May Concern: My only concern for Yosemite National Park is there are not enough campgrounds. This is TORTURE. I try to get a site, it should be hard but not impossible.

Americans want to enjoy this magnificent park. If theirs. I'm sure you can build new campgrounds in an esthetically pleasing manner. Thank you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 161      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hoffman, Debbie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite VaHey, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Merced River: ? free flowing ? outstanding (year around) waterfalls & cascades with established trails to their tops ? surrounding canyon sides of granite or slate CD the length of miles through Yosemite Wilderness 48 closeness to meadows or woodland forest ? the beautiful riparian vegetation (I'm a wildflower nut and there are so many spots to find beautiful displays) @II the access (by trail)-one of my favorite hikes is from the valley to Merced Lake being close to river or its tributary creeks almost all the way III the ease in observing wildlife throughout the corridor. ? Drinking water tastes good (while backpacking & sterilizing) Yosemite Valley: @II the first views of El Capitan, Half Dome, Cathedral Rocks & Bridalveil Fans .. riding my bike as transportation & exercise @II hiking!walking! snowshoeing @II all the trails starting in the valley (Happy Isles, Yosemite Falls, Snow Creek, 4 mile) and leading up to the high country @II being a resident I enjoy watching the kids experience nature ? I enjoy watching people pursue the variety of outdoor activities available (rock climbing, backpacking, walking, jogging, biking, skateboarding, outside yoga or

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**Correspondence ID:** 162      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Eward, Dick  
**Outside Organization:** NPS Employee  
**Received:** Feb,17,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Our national parks founder, Stephen Mather, knew what he was doing. He knew that people needed access to the wilderness, so he helped purchase the Tioga Road and opened the high country to the public. He knew that not everyone enjoyed rustic accommodations so he had the Ahwahnee Hotel built. He realized that rangers needed to have decent quarters close to where they work, so he build the Ranger Club. He knew that not everyone enjoys or is capable of backpacking, so he had the High Sierra Camps built, so that the backcountry could be experienced by more than just the elite few. People can better understand, experience and appreciate the park, and can ultimately protect the park if they can stay in the park.

We need to bring back the lodgint and campgrounds that we lost during the flood. We need to bring back more employee housing in the park (like Camp 6), so that rangers and managers can walk to work instead of commuting up to 100 mile a day. Rangers and managers need to live in the environment which they manage and regulate in order to know and understand what is going on. We need to maintain the High Sierra Camps as they have been for almost a centruy. They allow the opportunity for a diverse group of people to experience the wilderness who would not otherwise experience it. Once experienced, these folks become some of the most important lovers and protectors of the parks.

I hope that in our effort to protect the park, we Don't forget why we are protecting it - for the enjoyment of the people, all people, not just a select few.

Mather's ideas are just as important now as they were when he founded the NPS. Let us continue to honor them. Thank you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 163      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Jones, Chuck  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,07,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** These comments specifically and solely address the South Fork of the Merced River in the area of Forest Drive and Section 35 in Wawona. There are several safety and aesthetic issues. 1. STUDHORSE ROAD UTILIZATIOn With the NPS-endorsed expansion of Camp Wawona's physical plant to three-times its current size, the Camp will have many more visitor days - perhaps as many as triple the present number. This will cause greatly increased traffic on Forest Drive. With the many large buses and sometimes streams of 30 cars or more going to the Camp on an 11'wide road, Forest Drive is already a dangerous place for bikers, walkers and visitors pushing baby carriages. This danger and the noise/asthetic pollution caused by this traffic (sometimes less than 100' from the Merced River) should be alleviated by changing the primary Camp Wawona access to the existing StudhorSA ro~d This is ~n Axisting. wAil-defined r08d that has existed for decades, appears on maps and is often used by motorized YNP fire crews. Although this existing road was previously and unfortunately included in a "wilderness" designated area, Congressman Radanovich previously said he could help us fix that problem. Improving the Studhorse access to an all-weather road would: a. Greatly relieve the noise, pollution and danger caused by Camp Wawona traffic along the Merced River on Forest Drive: This would not only provide a short, direct access for the camp, but prevent Camp traffic from having to wander through the community. See Addendum. b. Provide an emergency (fire) exit that South Wawona does not presently have. c. Provide greatly improved YNP fire-crew access to that area. 2.

WAWONA SWINGING BRIDGE AREA OVERUSE The Wawona Swinging Bridge area just East of Section 35 is normally a peaceful place with large flat rocks for enjoying nature and quiet contemplation. In the summer months, there are a nominal number of swimmers and families having picnics. This changes dramatically when Camp Wawona (population 338+) decides to send a significant percentage of their guests to the river en-mass for recreational activities. The following changes need to be made: a. A maximum group size should be established for the Swinging Bridge area. b. Camp Wawona guests enjoying YNP-lands should pay the entrance fee - just like other visitors. c. Permanent trash and restroom facilities need to be installed for all YNP guests. 3. POWER UTILITIES ALONG FOREST DRIVE Most of the utilities along Forest Drive and within sight of the Merced River are underground. This presently includes water, sewer and telephone. Only the electric utilities are above ground. PG&E is presently planning to double the number of (unsightly) power poles in Section 35 along Forest Drive. YNP should require that ANY FUTURE CHANGES to the electric system in this area, on or over Park Lands, be put underground. This would: a. Greatly improve the aesthetics along Forest Drive within sight of the Merced River. b. Improve safety by eliminating the likelihood of fire from downed power lines. c. Totally eliminate the YEARLY mutilation and killing of trees by PG&E. Sincerely yours,

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**Correspondence ID:** 164      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hamm, Kelly  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,01,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** To whom it may concern, We just wanted to say we have been coming to Yosemite for many years and just had an incredible summer trip again last week. I wanted to send this letter making a few suggestions . 1. I would love to see the bike path extended to the west side of the park. I think the existing bike path is an amazing journey through one of the most beautiful locations in the world. I would love to see it extended so that families could spend the whole day biking around the park. I recommend making it 5' - 0" in width for two way traffic and putting it 25 to 50 feet away from the road in the forest. Make it asphalt and it will blend right into the environment. 2. I would like to see all rangers at park entrances encouraging any smokers to properly dispose of their cigarettes. I believe education could greatly reduce the amount of cigarette butts in the park. I don't want prohibition, just education. Having the rangers at the front entrance say something like" Welcome to Yosemite, Are there any smokers in the car? Yes? We ask for your support in placing your cigarette butts in trash cans after properly extinguishing them. They take 100 years or so to decompose if you place them on the ground. Thank you for your help." 3. I would like to see Yosemite retain it's architectural vernacular by keeping the rustic American log cabin style for all tents, huts, and buildings. 4. I would like to see the Merced rafting experience extended another 3 to 5 miles if possible. Maybe have two stops, one intermediate and one for an all day excursion. This is another amazing journey that should be extended. 5. I think a great id" L would be to have an annual firefall weekend. On this weekend, admission to the park would be \$100.00 which would all go to the park directly. During the weekend, there would be 2 to 4 reenactments of the classic firefall at Yosemite. Thanks and keep Yosemite beautiful.

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**Correspondence ID:** 165      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Jordan, Peter A  
**Outside Organization:** University/Professional Society  
**Received:** Dec,14,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** I wish to express a couple of serious concerns related to visitor activities within Yosemite: but first a word about my own association with Yosemite and the Park Service. I had a wonderful but rather short visit to Yosemite this summer, memorable from long-ago recollections of working at Camp Curry during my four summers in high-school {1944-47}, followed by hiking and skiing in the Park, then later yet from family trips, even after we were living back east. During 1955-63, for my PhD thesis in zoology, under A Starker Leopold, I studied the ecology and management of migratory mule deer immediately south of Yosemite in the San Joaquin River drainage. In addition, for over 40 years ,ve pursued wildlife research at Isle Royale National Park. Finally, among Park Service folks, I number some of my closest and oldest friends. From my visit this summer I felt impelled to express concern over a couple observations, but, as with so many good intentions, I put it off. However, after Ken Burns' magnificent tiThe National Parks: America's Greatest Idea"-- particularly the first two episodes, my impulse to express these concerns has returned. In Burns' history of parks, we learn that long before our National Parks were established, citizens had expressed disgust over the blatant commercialization surrounding Niagara Falls, at that time the most scenic natl!ra! feature accessible for most of our citizens. In contrast, Burns stressed that starting with the earliest parks in the west, even before the National Park Service was established, potential esthetic impacts from commercial activities were minimized. And that commitment continues today almost universally throughout our National Parks. Nevertheless, I feel strongly that two very critical problems stemming from visitor impacts do exist in Yosemite today; and I strongly suggest that these are much in need of Park Service consideration. The first should be relatively easy to correct; while the second, stemming from the ever increasing popularity of Yosemite Valley, presents a severe threat to the public's ability to fully experience its unmatched beauty. First, within the valley those large, bright-green rafts that swarm down tht=> rivpr-!! S2!#!-e; ~::~ ~ cl,i;adfuli ;y~-SV~i d.:i.<=ding from the river's beauty, ..... hethel viewed from dose-by or even from Glacier Point. I appreciate that some visitors enjoy the rafting experience, and, while there seems no problem with public swimming in the river or sitting on its beaches, those rafts that are serving but a small portion of summer visitors provide an experience found more typically in a highly commercialized site such as the Wisconsin Dells. To me there seems no convincing argument for continuing this visual blight in the heart of Yosemite Valley-for even so much as one more summer. Although the concessionaire would no doubt strongly disagree, this rafting really should be terminated. My second concern has led, I suspect, to much deliberation by the Service plus many suggestions from conservationists: namely the possibility of eliminating private autos from Yosemite Valley-- at the very least during the crowded season. Sixty years ago I never recall feeling that the relatively light traffic in the Valley then interfered with our absorbing the full grandeur of the surroundings. Today, however, the jammed roads at least in

summer truly distract from one's experiencing the totality of Yosemite's unmatched beauty. And I suspect you may feel the same way. Years ago, visitors came to Yosemite via train to El Portal, then into the valley by bus. Today we desperately need a similar arrangement. It should include adequate parking outside the Park, plus a couple of lesser sites inside, and a bus system for getting folks to wherever they might have otherwise driven. A good miniature example today is your commendable bussing within the valley, plus service to Badger Pass in winter. I'm sure over the years various strategies for reducing the Valley's auto traffic have been proposed, from both inside and outside the Park Service. As a peripheral observer, I'm no doubt unaware of many constraints for accomplishing this. Nevertheless, I can't hold back from offering my own suggestions, and therefore have appended them below. Thank you for considering these comments, realizing how preoccupied you must be with the overwhelming responsibility for managing and protecting such a unique piece of land-- held in such high regard throughout the World. [But then, how could it be otherwise?] A SUGGESTED STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS TO YOSEMITE VALLEY WITHOUT USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES There is need for a system wherein visitors now entering Yosemite Valley by car would in the future arrive by bus, having first parked at one of several new sites. Buses could be run by the Park Service or a concessionaire. Bus hours should be generous, but not for all 24-hours. These buses, incidentally, would best have convertible tops, open as weather permits, for direct, overhead viewing, not possible from most cars today. Also, in line with national sustainability efforts, the new busses ought to be the most fuelefficient available, and smaller-size busses might be used on lightly used routes. Concerning park and bus arrangements, those who drive in and out by the same hi-way, be it 41, 140, or 120, would park in NPS lots outside or just inside the Park, such as near Fish Camp, Mariposa, or Crane Flat respectively. Visitors who both enter and leave via Tioga Pass, if going no farther than Tuolumne Mdw, would park there, but if visiting other parts, should drive to and park at Crane Flat for bussing from there. Once in the Valley, those parking outside could access Glacier Point, Wawona, Tenaya Lake, and Tuolumne Mdw plus roadside trail heads by bus. For cars not exiting at their entry point, each would receive a permit specifying one of the options below. To assure they stayed on their prescribed route, they would be monitored at key intersections. The options below are not offered as an optimum solution, but simply a suggestion towards how visitors could readily reach any site they now can reach by car. --Coming from Merced, but continuing on to-- a) Fresno: permitted to drive into the Valley and turn onto Hiway 41 to a parking site well outside the valley. These visitors would still have auto access to Glacier Pt, Badger Pass, and Wawona, but could reach the Valley or Tuolumne Mdw only by bus; b) Tioga Pass: Would be permitted to drive into valley but only to park at Crane Flat, from where they access the Valley and other areas by bus and then return to their car; c) the Big Oak Flat Rd: Drive to Crane Flat, park and bus from there. -- Entering by Tioga but leaving by 41, 140, or Big Oak Flat: After visiting Tuolumne while parked there, drive to parking near Crane Flat or the Hiway 41 site, and bus from there; Entering via 41 but leaving via any of the other three routes. Leave car at the Highway 41 site or at Crane Flat, and bus from there -- Entering via Big Oak Flat Rd and leaving by another route: Park at Crane Flat or Hiway 41 depending on where they are exiting the Park, and bus from there. It would also be advantageous were many visitors to use commercial bus lines from Merced (140) or from Fresno, Oakhurst, or Madera (41), having parked at those sites. They would then transfer to Park busses at the parking sites for private vehicles. It is unlikely such commercial service would be available via 120, but such might develop in the future. As for those coming in via Tioga Pass, NPS might eventually consider a bus service from Lee Vining. Efficiency would no doubt dictate that most of the longer bus rides and most parking would be by reservation only. This could be handled by a commercial firm as now used for lodging and camping, because accommodation on a first-come, first-serve basis would surely lead to unacceptable disruption of visitors' travel plans. I write not as a Minnesotan, but rather as a life-long Californian, native of Alameda and Santa Cruz, and lover of San Francisco. Busy as you of course are, particularly right now, I do hope you have had time to watch the Ken Burns' public television documentary, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea,"-- at least first two episodes. The greatest focus in those is Yosemite and the historic role of John Muir. As one who is professionally and personally devoted to the study and conservation of natural resources, whose high school summers were spent working at Camp Curry in Yosemite Valley, whose PhD at UC Berkeley involved ecological studies of deer just south of Yosemite, and whose younger son's middle name is "Muir," I was enthralled by Burn's presentation, and atypically moved to tears. [In fact it makes me personally regret not having been more deeply engaged in the conservation struggle] Dear Chairwoman Pelosi I write you as a Californian and most importantly as a true San Franciscan. Burns has done a magnificent job of laying out Muir's extraordinary contributions, as an activist (founder of the Sierra Club) and as author defining the critical importance of setting aside our country's most scenic natural areas. For him, this all started with Yosemite. He was among the prominent of conservation pioneers who championed the idea of the U.S. establishing national parks--essentially a totally new idea. In Burn's second episode, he focuses on perhaps the most heart-wrenching conservation controversy in our nation's history--the building of Hetch Hetchy Dam within Yosemite National Park. Passage by congress in 1914 of that violation of the fundamental purpose of national parks was not only devastating to Muir but also still viewed as perhaps the worst setback in our nation's progress towards conservation and respect for its spectacular natural landscapes. Some years back-- in the 1980s as I recall-- there was a short discussion among administrators in Washington and conservationists nation-wide about removing the Hetch Hetchy Dam and creating a substitute reservoir for supplying San Francisco's water further down the Tuolumne River but outside so was shelved indefinitely. The country needed, and still does, the case to be made through the power of a Ken Burns' documentary. Well, we now have that! I therefore pose to you, as a Californian, as a San Franciscan, and as a liberally conscientious political leader, to seriously consider reopening this initiative. I feel certain that support would be wide and strong, while of course there would be a parallel degree of opposition (though arguments for that side today would not be nearly as convincing as in the original battle). I totally appreciate that for you it would be a very tough challenge, while also competing for time from the many critical issues challenging you. With your support however, the effort might be taken up by other like-minded members of the House (with perhaps major advisement from the Sierra Club). If successful, however, it would reverse the saddest loss in over 100 years' efforts to save California's spectacular natural features. Humanity's appreciation for such an accomplishment would resound for centuries to come. Many no doubt would argue that the scars of the dam site and the water marks on canyon walls would prevent ever restoring the original beauty of the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Yes, disappearance of the scars would take far longer than our life-times or that of our children, but within a century or two essentially disappear. Moreover, it's worth realizing that, while eons ago Yosemite Valley itself was a lake, no sign of that remains except for the relatively level valley floor which in fact greatly enhances its spectacular landscape today.

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**Correspondence ID:** 166      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ross, Michael E  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** Letter



**Type:**  
**Correspondence:** February 1, 2010

Superintendent Uberuaga, Merced River Plan Comments

**Hydrology:** During this planning process we now have the opportunity to examine the impact of current roads, development, historical sites, and responses to past flood and erosion events as part of development of a plan that focuses on not the current state of management, but the best practice for river protection. The Merced like all rivers is dynamic. Seasonal weather patterns, climatic changes, and geologic events have affected the river in the past and will continue to in the future.

**Floods:** During the past 160 years of recorded weather patterns in the park there have been at least 8 major floods in the Merced Drainage. As tourist development commenced in Yosemite Valley in the 1850s the impact of these high water events became more significant in terms of "damage to infrastructure." One of the significant responses to floods was river channelization. As banks were armored with rock and concrete to protect roads and prevent river meandering, the river simply overflowed or eroded banks further down river from these "protective structures." Over millennia the river has meandered from one side to another in Yosemite Valley as well as the lower Merced Canyon. This natural process is not conducive to fixed developments such as roads and buildings.

Preventing these movements has changed riparian vegetation and aquatic communities in general, by not allowing floodwaters to enter historic overflow channels. Yosemite Valley is very narrow, approximately one mile or less wide. At the base of cliffs are talus slopes created by constant rock fall. Bordering these rock fall zones, and often within them, are two roads. There are very few sections of Northside and Southside Drives that are not in either the rock fall zones or flood zones. These roads and others along the river corridor have had impacts on the delicate life found in the riparian zones of the Merced River. There have been impacts due to run off and soil compaction to the subsurface water flow, not to mention pollution from vehicles that use the roads and park next to them. There are some important questions to consider in relation to impacts of future floods and current road and other development.

Is there another way to transport visitors to the park that would have a smaller footprint in the river corridor? An examination of alternatives to automobile transport is needed to determine if people can reach with the valley on a mode of transport that would not only a smaller footprint, but could be rerouted in response to hydrologic and geologic events.

Are the sections of current road that go through rock fall areas safe? There have been rock falls along Northside Drive numerous times during the past 107 years (1873, 1921, 1923, 1962, and 1987). Many times the road has been closed in this area. A larger volume rockfall could potentially dam the Merced River and cause a lake in Leidig Meadow and Yosemite Lodge. I believe it is important to consider the magnitude of such an entirely natural event like this and establish a response to such a possible event. In past years park managers would likely have considered removing the dam to protect road and lodging development. This is no longer an appropriate reaction based on the current National Park Service mandate to allow natural processes to occur.

There are sections of Southside Drive between Bridalveil Falls and El Capitan crossover that could have significant rockfall events and similar potential impacts on the river. It seems prudent to anticipate that there will be more rock falls in zones where they have previously occurred and that development should be moved out of these areas.

**River Bank Erosion:** River banks naturally erode and there are currently numerous areas in Yosemite Valley and along highway 140, Foresta Rd, and Incline Road along in the lower Merced Canyon where roads are being undermined. The continued practice of bank armoring will only cause erosion elsewhere. As the river cuts new channels it will continue to erode road beds, trails, and impact bridges. The practice of preventing these natural river channel shifts through bank armoring will result eventually in a river that resembles an irrigation ditch. Investigations should be made into the possibility of re-engineering roads to allow the river to discharge into historic overflow channels during periods of high flow. One of these channels exists behind the current El Portal Market, Motor Inn cabins, old hotel, community hall and post office. The old channel continues on the other side of El Portal Road continues in between Odgers Petroleum plant and the telephone office.

**Restoring terminal El Capitan Moraine:** The 1995 report, Prediction of Effects of Restoration of the El Capitan Moraine (Smillie, Jackson and Martin) concludes that such a project would result in a moderate (0-4 feet) increase in riparian water tables in the west end of the Valley. This could be enough to restore some wetland habitat for birds such as rails that have bred in Yosemite in the past, but haven't been seen there for years. At any rate, a more detailed study using current hydrological techniques might reveal more important beneficial effects of such a restoration.

**Toxic Spill and Leaching Threats:** For the past 25 years the danger of having a petroleum storage site in the middle of El Portal and on the edge a riparian area has been noted as a serious fire and possible toxic spill issue. In the case of a wildfire sweeping through that area it is hard to imagine there not being a major conflagration due to the petroleum products in the tanks catching on fire. In addition, in the event of a flood of major proportions, it is possible that these tanks would be damaged and the petroleum would spill into the river. A study of these potential hazards should be done before this facility is "grandfathered" under the river plan. Additionally other potential toxic spill hazards inside the river corridor, such as, gas stations in the Valley and El Portal, should be examined.

There are several known toxic mine tailing sites in the river corridor. These include waste material from the old barium mines at Rancheria and Cold Canyon. In Yosemite Valley there are remnants of old dumpsites that need to be fully cleaned up before toxic materials get into the river.

Riparian plant restoration: Removal of invasive Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus discolor*) should be part of a bigger plan to restore the original native riparian vegetation that existed before the disturbances that created the opportunity for alien plant species to invade. For example, at the El Portal trailer park there are specimens of native blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) that could be a source of re-establishing this species.

Camp 6- Current overflow parking: The current overflow parking near Yosemite Village is typical of much haphazard development in Yosemite Valley. When I first started working in the Park in the 1970's it was a seasonal NPS housing area. In the mid-seventies it was identified as having a large number of conifers seriously infected with root rot (*Heterobasidion annosum*.) By the early 1980's these and other trees began falling in the Yosemite Valley. One employee was killed in his residence by a falling tree before housing was removed. The area was slated for restoration, but became a staging area for construction and then morphed into a parking lot that contains trailers, bathrooms, and a yurt used as an information center.

This all happened in absence of a Merced River Plan, which I believe would not have allowed such a use so close to the river and in the flood plain. This area needs restoration, Merced Lake High Sierra Camp: As a past leader for high Sierra Loop trips I have stayed at Merced Lake High Sierra Camp many times. It is a lovely, relaxing place, but its existence needs to be re-examined in terms of impacts to the Merced River. Like all high camps it not only hosts paid guests to the camp and the camp employees, but large numbers of backpackers who are attracted to the amenities of the camp (store, gear lockers, treated water, etc). Merced Lake High Sierra Camp has the highest visitor user capacity of any high camp. This in itself is a concern. Added to this is the fact that it is in the river flood plain, including toilet facilities and a leach field.

Heritage Trees Many communities in the United States have programs to identify significant individual tree or even groves of trees in an effort to protect them from impacts of development. Within the Yosemite Park boundary trees are under the protection of the park service, but is there a program to identify significant trees and groves for protection and restoration.

At the present time there are numerous black oak groves in Yosemite Valley which are over shaded by conifers that has grown there due to past fire suppression. Without intervention, specifically, selective logging of these conifers these grove will be gone and with them the seed source and nursery site for future black oaks. The state of California recognized the significance of protecting oaks when they enacted the oak woodlands conservation act of 2001. Oaks woodlands are significant habitat for a wide array of wildlife and flora. Developers in California must now inventory oaks on raw land that is slated for development and preferably avoid, or at the minimum mitigate damage to oak woodlands. The oak woodland of the Merced River Corridor are a significant resource that need more monitoring and restoration, where needed.

On the El Portal Administrative Site, which is federal land outside of the park, there exist some of the few groves valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) in the entire river corridor. Throughout the state of California there are numerous restoration projects to restore valley oak woodlands. The small number of these oaks in the Merced River corridor are a rare resource and worthy of protection and restoration.

There is grove of mature heritage valley oaks across from the Yosemite Association office, bordered by the Foresta Road and Odgers Petroleum plant. The grove itself is used for employee and community parking. This parking area needs to be removed to ensure that this grove can continue to exist through propagation of new seedlings. It is a rare resource that is being ignored and abused.

Below this area in the old river channel where the telephone company office and more of the petroleum plant is located, another grove with magnificent mature trees This grove and the valley oak grove across from the El Portal community hall is also a significant resource that needs to be inventoried, monitored for reproductive health, and set aside for permanent protection.

El Portal Historic District: El Portal has significant historic structures and values that should be documented for designation of the area as an historic district. Railroad era houses, the old school house, rock walls, the motor in cabins, hotel, and old restaurant, the Standard Oil buildings and remnants of the historic Hennessey Ranch are some of the features that deserve preservation as well as restoration.

Placing of temporary structures by NPS, such as fiscal office (which has been there over 25 years), trailers, and metal buildings, diminishes the historic values of the El Portal Community. The random storing of new and old materials, bone yards, through El Portal and Yosemite Valley are not only unsightly, but are apt to swept into the river during high flood stages. Likewise, construction staging areas have caused considerable damage to many areas in the river corridor.

Largely due to the existence of private employee owned homes in Old El Portal and the Abby Road area, El Portal has had the opportunity to flourish as a community. This community is exceptional for its support of the town's children, of elders, social events, fundraisers, history. It includes visual artists, such as well-known painters and photographers, writers, rock climbers, and long time employees of the concession, NPS, and other park partners. Many park employees transient, moving from one park to the next, but El Portal has a community that attracts people to stay and invest their love and skills in the park. During the effort to designate the Merced River as a Wild and Scenic River, the El Portal Community plays a major role. Community members raised funds, talked to thousand of park visitor, and coordinated much of the efforts that led to the protection of the Merced. Without that community this plan never would have been required. The El Portal community is has outstanding values.

Comprehensive Aquatic, Riparian, and Terrestrial Invertebrate Inventory: Our knowledge of invertebrates within the river corridor is spotty at best. Unlike flora and fauna in most vertebrates groups, invertebrate species have not been fully inventoried. A thorough invertebrate inventory in the Merced River corridor would likely turn up new species of insects, arachnids, or other invertebrate species. Similar comprehensive surveys in smaller geographic areas in California have discovered range extensions or even species

new to science. A combined National Park Service/Nature Conservancy completed a biological survey of the Potomac River Gorge, a 15-mile river corridor from Great Falls to Key Bridge that includes parts of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park and George Washington Memorial Parkway. The survey made by 135 scientists over a 30 hour period revealed many species not previously known from the area and others that had not been seen for decades.

It is imperative to know what species exist before any management decisions are made which could have adverse effects on yet to be known species.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment during the scoping process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 167    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,02,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 168    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Calkins, Travis  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:**

I have read this letter and feel that it is a well considered representation of concerns I share. Please take into account my full endorsement of the ideas stated within. Dear Yosemite National Park planners: Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities. Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan. Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address: ? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program. Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities: ? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code. Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels. \* \* In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 169    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hornwood, Edy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent: I am troubled by the negative effects of ommercial ventures in the national parks in eneral, and in Yosemite in particular. I am specially bothered by pack animals used near the river. I'd like to see no public horse stables in the valley. Horses and mules pollute and destroy vegetation... they have no place in fragile areas already too heavily used.

It's time to get rid of the High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, Sunrise and May Lake. These "motels" have no place in our wilderness and neither does the trash,sewage and noise. Just because they have been there for a long time does not make it appropriate for them to be there now. Their users degrade the wilderness.

Horses and mules pollute and destroy... there's just no way around this fact. It's just no fun meeting a group of them while one is hiking, then having to drink the water they have polluted, walk through their feces and watch as their hooves erode the trails.

Please end commercial trips in the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Please, please don't allow such large groups of horses to go through. I've watched as pack operators try to turn around long strings of animals... the more animals, the more peripheral vegetation gets trampled. Operators seem oblivious to the destruction.

Pack operators need to find some way to remove we don't have to walk through it, camp near it and see it polluting the creeks. Please, please quarantine the animals so they don't spread more alien weeds in the park.

It's time to do something about pack animals. I'm really tired of seeing a few pack operators get rich by destroying our most precious park. Sincerely,

**Correspondence ID:** 170      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bentley, J E  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The overwhelming feelings and memories that grow each year when I visit. I need to be able to drive along the Merced, swin raft, wade, hike and photograph. Walk, bike and hike in the Valley. Be near the beautifuland historic buildings and bridge at Wawona. I have been visiting the Yosemite area since 1983 with various friends and family. It's a tradition. My children and grandchildren have to come to love this place. I am still introducing friends to this new experience for them. 2. What do you want to see protected? I am very upset to read that the old, sturdy, historic, beautiful bridges may destroyed for who knows what purpose. They need to not be destroyed. We need to be able to bike, hike, walk, photograph and enjoy these bridges. Some of the lost campgrounds and accomodations should be reinstated so anyone who wnatns experience this place may do so. 3. What needs to be fixed? Install more small informational stands and maps along all trails and turnouts but do not build any new educational buildings. People want to be out there getting the experience, not the side reading about it. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The level of access to the actual natural wonders and preservation of same.

**Correspondence ID:** 171      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Wheeler, Jennie E  
**Outside Organization:** NPS Employee  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love that most of the river is in the wilderness and that the headwaters are protected. I also love that millions of people have access to explore this rive and be inspired by its power, beauty and waterfalls. 2. What do you want to see protected? Riparrian vegatation and habifest in most impacted areas Yosemite Valley and along hwy 140 and Roads. 3. What needs to be fixed? Less cars on roads and more public transportation options, buses in from Groveland and Oakhurst. Limits on # of cars allowed in - esp. those only driving through. More encouragement for visitors to be outside vehicles - ex. less access - close N Side drive from camp 4 west to car traffic - remove Rd in El Cap Meadow - replace w/bike path Limit stock use in backcounty to 15 head group Permit only accdss to half dome More enforcement of restoration areas in riparian zone More education about river ecology and meadow use. More partnership w/DNC to provide eco friendly services and encourage O waste More \$ spent on restoration than on roads Reopen campgronds but require them to be walk in like camp 4 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Keep the same.... Trail access and continued maintenance to control erosion. Partnerships w/Yosemite insstitute to promote education (increased even) monitoring to assess impact Restoration projects

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**Correspondence ID:** 172      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Public Scoping, Yosemite Valley Auditorium  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct.28,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Transcript

**Correspondence:** What do you want to see protected? Glacier Point Road. Love being able to drive up there and see the view ? Like the boardwalks across the meadows, protecting them. Seeing the river ? Bothers me to see the concessioner rafts; OK for private floats ? Freedom for climber access to cliff faces ? Bring back the firefall; why was it discontinued? It is a historical attraction; bring it back as a traditional experience ? The freedom to take in views and get away from the crowds throughout the Valley ? Don't want to see a regimented "group think" atmosphere, large parking lots. Protect my freedom to explore and contemplate with my Yosemite "spiritual soulmate" ? Visitor safety by relocating raft rental function to other side of the river CD In the analysis, distinctions needed between day and overnight use ? Concerned about 1) how we may limit use in the park (raise fees?) 2) limiting facilities or opportunities for families' experiences - Who are you going to leave out? ? Corporate retreats: as an individual user, object to corporations or conferences taking up blocks of rooms ? There's a sense of us vs. them; wanting to shut people out ? YARTS: sense that it is for hotels in and out of park, not individual users (hotel tax collected) ? Others: feel it's of benefit to hotel operations, but maybe it's not as well known or publicized to other users ? Want freedom to visit park by car, but don't want to be forced to take bus. Want choice ? Current Valley shuttle stops at "profit centers" want to see stops at West Valley going all the way to Pohono Bridge, year round ? There is no way to get from Valley to Wawona without paying a big charge ? Scheduling of Wawona shuttle not good ? More shuttles to: Glacier Pt, Chinquapin, M Grove, Bridalveil ? In 1970s - spent many hours on comments that were submitted, but not considered [drive in, leave car, take shuttle or public transportation] ? Kudos for the new hybrid buses (less noise, pollution) ? Rivers Campgrounds: if it gets washed away, have money in an escrow account to address repairs. Bring back the campgrounds ? Classes of people are left out. There are people who want to come, but can't. Fear that there will be fewer facilities to serve working class. Worried that less people like me will be able to come here. It's too expensive as it is ? In the past, NPS said that because there was a shift in addressing day use, there is less of a demand for overnight ? Will balance of day vs. overnight use be addressed? ? Campsites in other national parks (Zion, YStone, Tetons) are much better. Yosemite campgrounds are "like a slum" Fix whole thing ? Online campground reservation system is impossible, hard to use "user hostile" . Is it a cost cutting measure? ? Want more showers at campground ? Shuttle service: if taking shuttle to go to shower facilities, you can sometimes have to wait for numerous buses until there is one that can take you to shower. Too much competition at Curry/Housekeeping for showers due to campers ? It was a zoo in the 50s (campgrounds) ? Campground campfire monitors are rude; make people put out campfires. Sell appropriate wood and monitor it ? Over the years seen changes through restoration. Like oak groves - don't have the freedom to wander everywhere but it is protecting groves and other natural spaces ? Bus service: free in Valley, but can't get to other park areas without paying \$\$\$ . Want to see smaller buses used ? Mt Room Bar: Sports bar atmosphere has no place in national park. Want to have it more like it was with fireplace for families ? Need more turnouts; signs stating Turnout Ahead, Please Use Turnouts What do you Love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, E/ Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? ? Views, beautiful scenery, ability to walk anywhere, get away from crowds ? Campgrounds, naturalist programs ? Spiritual renewal, ability to connect with surroundings and soulmate ? Freedom to do what I want without being told what to do (remote parking, ride buses, etc) ? Bear storage should be reconsidered - poles with hooks used in Tuolumne area ? Change evident thru park restoration efforts over the years ? "Range of Light" extends from sunrise thru the day ? Any changes intended to accommodate or enhance visitor use are opposed to keep us out, the people who love the park ? Visual effect of a "free-flowing" river, natural vegetation and boardwalks that protect resources ? Half Dome cables should remain What needs to be Fixed? ? Distinguish between day use visitors and overnight visitors ? Expand public transportation options into park ? YARTS seems to be for hotel users and not backpackers and other users ? Myth exists that you can't get into the park ? Busses need to go to other locations (i.e. west end of Yosemite Valley) and Wawona (from Valley) - free shuttle service ? Tent cabin rates are too expensive ? Park campgrounds are virtual slums - too filthy ? Need group camping in Yosemite Valley ? Online camping reservation system is a user hostile system ? Clean up restrooms and showers ? Add showers to campgrounds ? Fix campgrounds over all ? Separate EV camping vs. walkin camping ? Too many vehicles in individual campsites ? Campfire monitoring too strong - sell good firewood and monitor for smoke and not time of day ? Restore/reinstate Ledge trail It Stop hang gliding ? No place to get sit down meal that is moderately priced. Mt Room restaurant too expensive ? Additional "meaty" interpretive programs - more information, NPS rangers not concessioner ? Carry rafts from Curry to River is too heavy and dangerous to cross intersection and down slippery slope ? Bring back bear poles as a means of food storage in wilderness ? Use smaller buses ? Use Facebook to engage youth ? Mt Room B~r nOf:" not ."f:f:m to Cmrf:"POnn to p~rk ~ctivitif:" (if: "port" on tv) ? More sheltered places for day users (esp public transit users) ? too much decorations (i.e. strings of lights) at Housekeeping ? Powerline by Y ose Lodge/Falls crosswalk disrupts view of falls ? Enforce existing camping limits (i.e. length of stay) ? Build underground parking garage in west end of Yose Valley - with bike rental and shuttle stop What would you like to see kept the same? ? The use of quieterhybrid buses ? Northside and Southside Drive ? Keep current one-way road system in Yosemite Valley (many agree) ? Keep rock climbing routes accessible ? Keep Half Dome cables Diversity of Naturalist programs ? Enjoy the Tunnel View. Keep the trees cleared ? Continue to allow vehicle access especially for families

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**Correspondence ID:** 173      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Nickas, George  
**Outside Organization:** Wilderness Watch Conservation/Preservation  
**Received:** Feb.04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Wilderness Watch is providing these scoping comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. We're pleased that the NPS is moving forward with a new plan for this remarkable area. We sincerely hope that this effort will result in a plan that is worthy of the Park's

extraordinary natural and scenic values, and that will protect and restore those values that have been lost from what may have seemed at the time to be appropriate developments and activities, but are now recognized as detracting from and harmful to Yosemite's wilderness and natural values.

Wilderness Watch is particularly concerned with those aspects of the plan that involve the wild segments of the Merced River and the Yosemite Wilderness. We recognize, however, that activities originating within the more developed areas of the Park can and do affect these areas. The plan needs to address the impacts on the Wilderness from these other activities.

Wilderness Watch believes the plan needs to give serious consideration to removing the High Sierra Camps and restoring the sites. The camps are incompatible with the Yosemite Wilderness. They significantly detract from the natural setting. The number of people, noise and structures coupled with the overly commercialized provision of goods and services exceed any reasonable interpretation of a wilderness setting. The amount of sewage, trash and other pollutants produced from such concentrated use impairs the area's natural conditions. The amount of pack stock needed to maintain the camps pulverizes the trails into dust and manure, and the use of helicopters to service the camps violates the Park Service's responsibility to preserve the wilderness character of the surrounding area.

The camps may have had their time and place, but like many other "historic" practices in the parks (bear feeding at garbage dumps, zoos, the "firefall" at Yosemite, etc.) it is time to implement a more enlightened ethic in the backcountry and Wilderness of Yosemite.

When establishing the Yosemite Wilderness, Congress recognized the incompatibility of these camps with the surrounding Wilderness. It recognized a number of resource concerns with the camps and delineated a process by which they could be removed and the areas designated as wilderness. The time has come to bring this direction to fruition.

Should NPS decide to allow camps to remain at any of these locations, the camps should conform with all wilderness rules and policies including group size limits, leave-no-trace practices, temporary structures only, and no motorized (helicopter use). The services provided should be consistent with a wilderness camp, not a front country, or resort experience. The camps are also incompatible with direction in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. A wild river area is defined as having "watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America." Webster's defines primitive as "original, primeval." These camps are neither primitive nor nonpolluting. Instead, they hearken to the expanding settlement and growing mechanization to which wilderness and wild rivers serve as an antidote.

Stock use is an appropriate use of the Yosemite Wilderness and the Merced River corridor. The use must be controlled, however, in a manner that preserves the wilderness character of the area and the experience of other wilderness visitors. NPS has long recognized the need to limit visitor use to protect that character. Stock are a wilderness-compatible means for allowing to enjoy the wilderness, yet, all other things ethics) being equal, each stock user has a disproportionately greater impact on the resource. That additional impact must be limited to only what is essential to enjoy it: stock-supported trip. Group size should be limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats," with a limit of no more than one packhorse or mule to three persons. This is more than adequate to haul necessary supplies, while at the same time keeping the impacts per visitor to a minimum. Given the additional impact that stock animals have on trails, water quality and campsites, it simply makes no sense and is unfair to other visitors to allow any individual to utilize more stock than is necessary.

To prevent the introduction or spread of weeds stock should be must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park and only pellitized, weed-seed-free feed should be allowed in the park.

Because the Park Service has already limited visitor use in many of these areas, and may have to further limit it to protect the river and surrounding area, we urge you to phase out all commercial developments in and near the Merced River corridor, and to phase-out commercial services in the wilderness. They are no longer necessary for the public to enjoy the area to the limit of the area's capacity.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. We look forward to continued involvement in the planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 174    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Open

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**Correspondence ID:** 175    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Gunter, Clyde P  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,09,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** IDEAS FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY IMPROVEMENT TABLE OF CONTENTS CHAPTERS TITLE 1 HANG GLIDING/ IP ARACHUTING 2 CIGARET BUTTS 3 FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY 4 CAMPGROUND SHOWERS 5 FIREFALL 6 LEDGE TRAIL 7 MERCED RIVERBED CLEANOUT 8 CURRY CAMPFIRE 9 FLOODS V. VISITORS 10 NIGHTLY ENTERTAINMENT 11 VISITOR FACILITY MAINTENANCE 12 TOBOGGAN SLIDE 13 APPLE ORCHARDS 14 234 CLOSED CABINS 15 BASKET WEAVING HANG GLIDING/ IP ARACHUTING Nowhere in nature does hang gliding and parachuting occur. When in flight, its swishing noise, though not a loud roar, is disconcerting, to say the least, to park visitors. This I specifically remember from my own camping experience. By definition, these thrill seekers must land in a clearing, not in the trees. This leaves landing only in the lush, trying to be restored, meadows, auto parking lots, or roads, all of which are totally unacceptable, if not dangerous to themselves and others on the ground. The NPS issuing permits limiting said operating hours does not change this distracting and dangerous activity. Most Yosemite visitors come to get away from the noise and fast pace of city life. Why not give them the break they seek from civilization, even for a little while. CHAPTER 2 CIGARET BUTTS Cigarette butts are all over the place, distracting, smelly, unsightly, etc. The military has a simple solution to this problem on military bases: FIELD STRIP YOUR BUTTS. Simply stated it means that the cigarette must be put out on the sole of the shoe (boot), the paper wrapper must be split in half, the loose tobacco thrown to the winds, the paper rolled up into a little ball and discarded, the filter tip placed in the pocket and later dumped in a trash can. Can the NPS figure out a way to instruct park visitors of this practice? CHAPTER 3 FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Each NPS division, department and group, where applicable, should be made financially self sufficient. For example, all campgrounds as a group should charge sufficient camping fees to completely cover the cost of: rangers at the kiosk, janitors to clean the bathrooms and its supplies of TP, electricity, soap, etc, ranger nightly patrols in campgrounds, yearly maintenance costs, etc. If this is not a practical idea, a look at the auto fees charged at the park entrance is certainly in order. Question: How does one determine the actual cost to the provider (NPS and concessionaire) of services made available to visitors? Answer: To help Yosemite be more properly in tune with being self sufficient, this issue must be seriously addressed. For a point of reference, a computer research for Disneyland in Southern California reveals the price of a 2009 one day park ticket as follows: AGES 3-9 \$62 Ages 10+( adults)\$72 And this is just to get into the park Now add the cost of rides, food, and souvenirs. What a shock!!! For a typical family of four (2 adults and 2 small children) the one day entrance cost to Disneyland is \$268. The same family in a car will pay only \$20 to enter Yosemite for many days stay. Where is the logic? It is not suggested that Yosemite compete with Disneyland prices, but it does point out that \$20 per car into Yosemite is ridiculously low, not even close to being reasonable, for all the enjoyment visitors receive while basking in Yosemite's wonders. CHAPTER 4 CAMPGROUND SHOWERS As in other state campgrounds, install one or more individual self-service shower booth, adjacent to all existing bathrooms, which are coin operated, and provide hot water for a limited time, one adult at a time. Customers provide the coin, soap, towel and clean clothes. Operating instructions should be prominently posted. This procedure will insure a minimum amount of trash being left in the booth for others to clean up. Being coin operated, the unit will be financially self sufficient. This will also significantly reduce the existing congestion in other current shower facilities. CHAPTER 5 FIREFALL The firefall was, in its heyday, one of the most important ORVs in all Yosemite. For almost 75 years, the firefall was known throughout the world as one of its many wonders. Even today, some 40 years after its demise, its post cards and its many other items are still for sale. Several reasons for its demise are no longer valid or are at least significantly reduced. One can go to many places throughout the world to see snow, mountain grandeur, winding rivers, granite wonders, big trees but there is only one firefall, the one and only FIREFALL. And that is in Yosemite. Why not bring back one of Yosemite's greatest memories. But only during the three summer months and the Christmas holiday season. Also include the famous "call" and the "The Indian Love call".song. To quote a famous movie line: "If you build it, they will come". CHAPTER 6 LEDGE TRAIL The ledge trail has been closed for about 40 years. Its closing was the result of, if memory serves, a young boy who, by himself, started up the trail late in the day, was caught in the dark, and fell off a ledge to his death. This trail is one of the most strenuous hikes in all of Yosemite to which I can attest. Like Half Dome, this trail had cables to help pull a climber up during the last half of the climb, on its reverse slope, yet the trail was always well marked by orange stripes painted on the rocks. Climbing the face of Half Dome and El Capitan are certainly difficult and dangerous yet are allowed by the NPS. These climbers have to register for a permit before starting, which is a wise precaution. The Ledge Trail should be reopened with similar requirements as follows: 1. The trail is a one way trail, up only, but not down 2. At the trail head at the Curry cabins, build a large, wide, restricted trail entrance with a door that is opened only by the ranger headquarters. This entrance should have a big warning sign with all the rules, etc. as well as a dedicated phone connected with the ranger HQ. The trail should be open only until 1 PM. Hikers should be instructed to use the phone and register. After proper verbal registration, the ranger in charge will electronically open the spring loaded gate, which automatically closes. 3. At the top of the trail is another dedicated phone and a warning sign. The climber, upon reaching this point must call the ranger HQ and confirm his safe arrival. It may even be necessary to construct a large exit gate with phone to insure that hikers call in their safe arrival at the top. CHAPTER 7 MERCED RIVERBED CLEANOUT For many years the concessionaire and the NPS jointly each year formed a riverbed cleaning crew to annually clean/clear the Merced Riverbed of dead logs, brush, trash or anything else which might impede, block, clog-up or seriously impact the natural flow of the river. This policy had been in effect for many years prior to 1993, but has been inactive since October 1993. The results of discontinuing this policy are, sadly, obvious. Just as the NPS clears underbrush and other flammable fuel from the surrounding forest floors so as to reduce the chance of major fires, so should it also revive the Merced River cleanout policy to reduce the chance of major river flooding. CHAPTER 8 CURRY CAMPFIRE For many years the summer evening nightly campfire at Curry was a great way to end a glorious day. The concessionaire should revive this practice. An evening campfire while on vacation in the mountains is probably one of the oldest traditions for vacationing campers. CHAPTER 9 FLOODS V. VISITORS Yosemite valley's "natural disasters" such as rock slides, river overflowing, road washouts, bridge water damage, building flooding, etc. will always periodically occur, but this occurrence is completely independent of visitors. There may be some who, either through ignorance, or worse, through a hidden agenda, want to revert Yosemite valley back to its original wilderness by reducing visitors' foot print on the environment through arbitrarily reducing the number of visitors to the bare minimum. This assumed cause and effect relationship is totally and completely disingenuous. The consideration of limiting future visitors to Yosemite Valley, an idea totally at odds with the primary purpose of the national park system, must not be put into specific rules and regulations of exclusion. NIGHTLY ENTERTAINMENT Instead of ranger talks, slides and film, or at least in conjunction with same, have local Indians, dressed in native costumes, perform skills of language, dance, food habits, basket weaving, building lodges, hunting, etc. This would be more entertaining, and also more memorably educational. CHAPTER 11 VISITOR FACILITY MAINTENANCE Over my many years of experience at Yosemite, there has always been one constant: poor maintenance of facilities, mostly in the bathrooms and showers, but also in cabin and tent accommodations. It could be a loose toilet seat, missing door locks or coat hooks, a leaky faucet, a missing sink stopper, a faulty lamp shade, a loose door hinge screw, the list is almost endless. Fixing/repairing of these minor items is probably not included in the job description for maids and janitors. What quite often happens in these cases is that the problem grows, unattended, until the toilet seat must be replaced, the door pulls away from the door jamb, which costs more to replace than the cost of fixing a small problem in the first place. The bottom line is that lack of preventive maintenance is more expensive, plus the frustration of guests who have to put up with the inconvenience. I suggest a new small group of all purpose handymen with experience in light carpentry, plumbing,

and electrical, be formed with a management job classification to avoid union labor troubles. These few handymen would visit every public building on their route simply to tighten up every loose screw, fix every leaky faucet, replace broken or stolen locks, etc. They would have a cart of most small parts that would be required. One visit to each public building per year would probably be sufficient, yet require only several of these handymen. I estimate that the concessionaire would need two and the NPS would need one. A small price to pay for insuring visitor satisfaction and saving on major repairs.

**CHAPTER 12 TOBOGGAN SLIDE** In the winter time, there is only two major physical activities available in Yosemite: skiing and ice skating. Years ago there was a major toboggan slide and fire pit due west of Curry Village. Why not revive this sport with a new slide area, near Curry or the Lodge, where visitors can rent a toboggan sled and enjoy a relatively safe winter sport and keep warm at the same time. Adults as well as kids can participate in this sport.

**CHAPTER 13 APPLE ORCHARDS** There are two apple orchards in Yosemite Valley, probably near 100 years old, as I recall. One at Curry Village and the other near the stables. To my knowledge, the Curry orchard (in the parking lot) has never been pruned and is therefore a complete mess of dead limbs, etc. The NPS prunes nature's trees beside the roadways for safety, so why not give the same consideration to the apple orchards?

**CHAPTER 14 234 CLOSED CABINS** At Curry Village in the fall of 2008, a major rock slide occurred which caused the permanent closure of 234 cabins and tents plus 92 employee bedspaces, a serious financial loss to the concessionaire, with apparently no redress (insurance?) In fairness to all parties concerned, the concessionaire and potential overnight visitors to Curry Village, why not let the concessionaire rebuild the lost visitor bed spaces in the old closed Upper River Campground and rename it something like "Quiet Forest Lodge" .. I'm sure many overnight visitors would like to get away from the relative fast pace of Curry Village, but still be close enough to walk to its cafeteria and other amenities.

**CHAPTER 15 BASKET WEAVING** When my family visited Yosemite in the late 1930's, an old Indian lady named Tabusee demonstrated the art of basket weaving. I can still see her. Years later a much younger Indian lady continued in the same role, who is now probably too old to continue, if she is even still alive. One of the things that the Indian nation can hand down to Yosemite visitors is the ancient art of basket weaving. Some of these antique baskets can still be seen in the museum. Is it possible to find a relatively young Yosemite Indian who has been trained in the old traditions? If so, set up a daily summer demonstration show, as well as selling simple basket weaving instruction kits to visitors, young and old, to enjoy back home. What a great way to pass on their great traditional heritage.

**Draft Yosemite Valley Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact statement YVP/SEIS Operation Traffic Sweep and other suggestions proposal NEW INTRODUCTION** November 2009 I. 2000 YVP/SEIS TIME LINE SEQUENCE 1. NPS prepared 1980 General Management Plan 2. NPS prepared draft YVP/SEIS Plan 3. NPS issued draft plan to public for comments 4. Public submitted its comments to NPS 5. NPS reviewed public comments 6. NPS prepared formal YVP/SEIS Plan 7. NPS conducted public meetings to discuss final plan 8. Final plan rescinded 09/29/2009 II. As part of no. 4 above, I submitted a report titled "Operation Traffic Sweep" dated April 2000. The legal "SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT" dated 09/29/2009 rescinded the no. 6 above plan. Therefore, the April 2000 report is still valid, current, and worthy of consideration by the NPS.

**FORWARD** The cornerstone of this plan focuses on the controlling of traffic, which is probably the single most critical problem facing Yosemite Valley today. This plan meets one of the key goals of the 1980 General Management Plan, "to reduce traffic congestion". This plan is based on the concept that, often, objectives can be accomplished with highly creative and imaginative, if not unorthodox, yet inexpensive, ideas, such as opening up the Valley west end to RV type "campers". The first eight chapters of this plan address the "traffic congestion" problem and should be considered as a package. It is possible that if the traffic congestion problems are addressed along the lines outlined in this plan, the resultant improvements might cause some of the other problems and alternatives covered in the draft YVP/SEIS to be viewed in a different light. Subsequent chapters deal with a host of less critical items which the author feels competent to address and make suggestions. This plan is a blueprint for success in the 21st century. It is innovative, inexpensive, conservative, logical, reasonable and, most important, conforms to the 1980 GMP. Read it with an open mind. Other items covered in the draft YVP/SEIS are probably of little or no interest or consequence to the typical visitor, although they need to be addressed, i. e. relocation of the YNP stables to Foresta. These items are more than adequately covered in the draft plan and are therefore not covered here.

**INTRODUCTION** This plan is based on my Yosemite experiences that have spanned almost sixty years. As both a child and adult camper, Curry kiddy camp user, concessionaire employee (3 summer seasons and two Christmas seasons), groom (I was married in the Old Village Chapel), lodger, hiker, bicyclist, back packer, horseback rider, river rafter, swimmer and fisherman, I have covered many, many bases. All this experience I bring to this report. When reviewing the Draft YVP/SEIS, I agree with some of its recommendations in all five alternatives. I also have some original ideas. Based on this review, I have prepared this plan, which covers only a portion of the total number of issues covered in the draft YVP/SEIS; primarily those which would be of interest to, or have a direct and immediate impact on the typical park visitor. This plan is in harmony with the GMP of 1980. Looking out from Glacier Point, I, like everyone else, see the grandeur of nature 360 degrees round about. There are literally hundreds, even thousands of individual sights which are wonders to behold, and I marvel at their natural breathtaking beauty. When looking down into the Valley, I see also hundreds, even thousands, of individual sights of nature's beauty. I see also three, perhaps four signs of man's presence: the NPS maintenance yard, the road through Stoneman Meadow, the Curry Pool, and the Curry parking lot. With field glasses others may be spotted. In all my years of Yosemite experience, I have never heard anyone say "my trip to Glacier Point and seeing all the beautiful sights at this "top of the world" was completely ruined because I saw the Curry Pool. And yet there are those who feel that because of the visibility of a handful of man made objects, all visitors' experiences are ruined to such an extent that many, if not most of these man made objects should be removed from the Valley so that visitors can see the Valley in its original pristine beauty. YNP offers something for all visitors. The high country offers the challenge to those seeking solitude and the wilderness experience. Judging from the relatively small number of visitors, the wilderness permits, the overwhelming majority of visitors appear to want a more "civilized" Yosemite experience as found in the Valley. The provisions of the 1980 GMP state four goals: 1. Removal of unnecessary structures 2. Restoration and protection of recovered land 3. Relocation of facilities out of sensitive or hazardous areas 4. Reduction of traffic congestion in Yosemite Valley Some of the proposals based on the 1980 GMP may no longer be valid, or should be reviewed again in light of current conditions. Perhaps this is why, 20 years later, few GMP goals have been fully realized. The GMP provision to "remove unnecessary structures" sounds good in theory but determining what is "unnecessary" can be a very subjective judgment. These same structures were once thought to be necessary at a time when park visitors were only half of today's count. Extreme caution should be the approach to the removal of any structure. The stated goal to "to restore the natural systems in Yosemite Valley by restoration of extensive areas, thereby markedly enhancing the visitor experience" is an interesting theme and in theory has merit. However, one must keep in mind that the "creature comforts" now offered represents only a minimum level of offerings to the weary traveler, not the Las Vegas type of hype attractions some feel Yosemite Valley offers. Ironically, it is just these minimum level of "creature comforts" that make the visitors' experience of enjoying the beauty of Yosemite Falls (which can never be diminished) even more enjoyable, perhaps by eating an ice cream cone. This "restoration of extensive areas" in acreage, as stated in the draft YVP/SEIS, is as follows: Alternate 2 is 180 acres, Alternate 3 is 200 acres, Alternate 4 is 190 acres and Alternate 5 is 120 acres. The total number of acres in the Valley is 4,480 (NPS Library data). The above "restoration" represents only 4%, 4.46%, 4.2% and 2.67% respectively of the 4,480 acres. Realistically, this extremely small % of restoration would not "markedly enhance the visitor experience". Actually, this small amount of restoration would hardly be noticed in the "grand scheme of things". The "bottom line" for any plan should be based on the following: 1. All the natural



beauty in the Valley is useless unless everybody is permitted to see and enjoy it in a reasonable, organized, and common sense manner. 2. As all prior NPS and concessionaire policies and facilities were not created arbitrarily, extreme caution should be exercised in their removal. 3. A series of small, highly creative and imaginative yet inexpensive steps can be as effective as big costly steps to achieve the GMP goals. This plan is based on these three themes. The cornerstone of this plan is the controlling of traffic and pedestrians, not restricting the number of park visitors. If these proposed small and conservative steps do not succeed, then, and only then, should other more severe and costly steps be taken. TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE OPERATION TRAFFIC SWEEP ROAD SYSTEM SHUTTLE BUS SYSTEM DAY USE PARKING LOT RIVER RAFT RIDE THREE BRIDGES STONEMAN MEADOW ROAD NEW ROAD TO CAMPGROUNDS WEST VALLEY CAMPGROUND CAMPGROUND FIREWOOD CAMPERS/GROCERYSTORE NEW PICNIC AREAS CURRY ORCHARD & PARKING LOT GAS STATION YOSEMITE LODGE YNP SUPERINTENDENT'S HOME KIDS DAY CARE CAMP YNP AND CONCESSIONAIRE HQ. TO EL PORTAL EMPLOYEE HOUSING TO EL PORTAL CAMPGROUND CAMPSITE DENSITY LODGING UNITS DENSITY HOUSEKEEPING CAMP TAFT TOE STABLES TO CURRY DUMP TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE OPERATION TRAFFIC SWEEP ROAD SYSTEM SHUTTLE BUS SYSTEM DAY USE PARKING LOT RIVER RAFT RIDE THREE BRIDGES STONEMAN MEADOW ROAD NEW ROAD TO CAMPGROUNDS WEST VALLEY CAMPGROUND CAMPGROUND FIREWOOD CAMPERS/GROCERYSTORE NEW PICNIC AREAS CURRY ORCHARD & PARKING LOT GAS STATION YOSEMITE LODGE YNP SUPERINTENDENT'S HOME KIDS DAY CARE CAMP YNP AND CONCESSIONAIRE HQ. TO EL PORTAL EMPLOYEE HOUSING TO EL PORTAL CAMPGROUND CAMPSITE DENSITY LODGING UNITS DENSITY HOUSEKEEPING CAMP TAFT TOE STABLES TO CURRY DUMP

#### CHAPTER 1 OPERATION TRAFFIC SWEEP VEHICLE RELATED PROBLEMS-CONGESTION, NOISE & POLLUTION

Vehicle related problems represent the biggest single problem facing YNP in general, and Yosemite Valley in particular and yet the solution to this problem is, in my opinion, relatively simple, cost effective and immediately available. At first reading this plan may sound confusing or complicated, but in reality it is straight forward, logical and easily implemented. This plan is called OPERATION TRAFFIC SWEEP and is described as follows: A. All visitors driving private cars entering Yosemite through one of the four park entrances will be given a color coded plastic 3x5 inch car pass with a loop string attached that will be looped around the rear view mirror so as to be easily visible from the outside. (Tour buses are exempt from these passes, with the understanding that they may not be used for touring in the valley) Drivers will also receive a single page, 8 1/2 x 11 red colored information sheet outlining the color coded car pass system, its rules and consequences of being cited and fined. A posted fine of \$100 would be sufficient to discourage violators. B. Overnight Visitors with lodging/campground reservations will receive a color code one car pass at the park entrance and will immediately proceed to their place of lodging for check in. Upon registering, the clerk will collect the color code one car pass and immediately exchange it for a color code two car pass which must be mounted immediately on the car rear view mirror. This particular car pass will have a night reflector visible from the outside of the vehicle. After moving into the accommodations, the car must be immediately and permanently parked for the duration of the visitor's stay. Any car with a color code two car pass found driving outside the parking lot will be immediately cited and fined. When checking out, the returned room key and the color two car pass will be exchanged by the clerk for a color code three car pass which will allow the car to exit the Valley, westbound only. Eastbound cars will be cited and fined. Only color code 1 DRSS CARS allowed on the road. west bound on Iv.

C. Day use visitors will be given a color code one car pass at the park entrance which will be good for a day use parking space. Any car with a color code four car pass touring outside the day use parking lot will be immediately cited and fined. All cars with the color code four car pass must clear the park by ten PM (?) or be cited and fined. (a simple midnight patrol by park rangers will confirm the proper color code two car pass of full parked cars.) When exiting the day use parking lot, the attendant will exchange the color code one car pass for a color code, car pass. D. Day use visitors who hope to find night lodging via vacancies or cancellations will also be given a color code 4 car pass at the park entrance. Upon successful room registration, the clerk will give the visitor a color code two car pass. E. Drivers motoring through Yosemite NP on their way to another outside destination will be given a color code 3 car pass at the park entrance which will be good only for through traffic via Tioga Pass or the three western exits. These drivers may not enter the Valley east of the Pohono Bridge cross Valley road, or they may be given a color code 4 day use pass.

F. NPS and concessionaire employees will be given a special color code car pass for their private cars. Their cars must be permanently parked in the employee parking lot. Their car movement will be allowed only on the westbound North Side Drive to exit the park. Any east bound movement along South Side Drive may be cause for citation and fine except in extenuating circumstances, or if returning home from outside the park. G. All visitor and employee movement within the Valley must be by Shuttle bus, bike, skating or walking. All inter-valley car travel may be cited. H. Visitors wishing to visit Glacier Point, Wawona Historic Village, the big trees, or Tuolumne Meadows will use newly created shuttle bus extensions (see chapter 3). Visitors wishing to visit these places on their way out of the park may do so with their color code three car pass. I. Upon exiting the park, all color code car passes must be turned in at the park exit ranger station to get a \$1.00 refund. J. Special driving needs may be accommodated by park rangers at the four park entrances, any registration clerk or equivalent, as the need arises. K. All employee movement in the Valley by motor bikes, motorcycles, or equivalent, may be authorized on an individual basis. L. During the off peak seasons of fall, winter and spring, this system could be lifted as visitor volume decreases, and be reinstated during the summer peak. M. All NPS and concessionaire vehicles will be given an unlimited usage car pass if vehicles are unmarked. N. No private cars will be allowed to stop or park at any road turnout for sightseeing. All cars must be kept moving directly to their destination of overnight lodging/camping or day use parking lot. Only shuttle or sight seeing buses may stop for sightseeing. There may be other categories of car trafficking not covered by the above, but these can be handled as the need arises within the framework as outlined above. II Implementation of Operation Traffic Sweep Personnel All personnel required to activate and maintain this plan are already in place. (No cost) Personnel Training A one hour briefing session for all lodging registration clerks, park entrance and campground rangers and ranger patrol officers would suffice for indoctrination. (Cost negligible) Literature A small two or three page booklet detailing the above for reference by applicable personnel would be helpful. (Several thousand dollars cost) Color Coded Car Passes Prune These plastic color coded car passes can be in the thousands and distributed to the appropriate locations with minimum effort (5-10 thousand dollars printing cost per year which will probably be offset by income generated from fines) CHAPTER 3 SHUTTLE BUS SYSTEM In order to make Operation Traffic Sweep a complete success and ensure visitors are not tempted to use their private cars for sightseeing, the shuttle system must be expanded to cover the following: In the Valley, the shuttle system must extend from Happy Isles/Mirror Lake on the east (which it does) to Pohono Bridge and Bridal Veil Falls on the west (new). By extending this service, visitors are drawn to the west end of the Valley, which will help reduce crowding in the east Valley. Swimming, sightseeing and other visitor attractions along the North and South Side Drive corridors and the Valley west end should be encouraged and expanded. This expansion will also give

visitors a better view of the entire Valley, thereby increasing their appreciation of the Valley's natural beauty per the GMP goals. This will require several more buses added to the fleet. Tuolumne Meadows A new connector shuttle route from Pohono Bridge to Tuolumne Meadows will be required, possibly extended to Tioga Pass. With a bus leaving at each end every half hour, four shuttle buses would probably be required. In the high country, shuttle stops at Lake Tenaya, etc. would be in order. Glacier Point A new connector shuttle route from Bridalveil Falls to Glacier Point will be required. With a shuttle leaving every half hour at each end, four shuttle buses would probably be required. Shuttle stops at Inspiration Point, Chinquipin, Badger Pass, high country camp sites, Sentinel Rock, trail heads, etc., would be in order. Wawona Historic Village and Big Trees A new connector shuttle route from Chinquipin to the Big Trees will be required. With a shuttle leaving every half hour at each end, four shuttle buses would probably be required. Shuttle stops at the Wawona stables, Historic Village, Hotel and golf course, campgrounds, etc, would be in order. The Glacier Point, Wawona/Big Trees, and Tioga Pass shuttle schedules would be coordinated to provide immediate connections to avoid long waits. Shuttle bus routes in the Valley would continue to be free. However, for the three new high country shuttle bus routes, a per capita fare of \$1.50 round trip would be in order. For a typical family of four, a \$6 round trip fare would probably be about the same cost as private car gas for the same distance, a reasonable trade-off. This income would offset the operating expenses. As these new shuttle bus routes would operate outside the Valley, it is probable that diesel powered buses would be acceptable and therefore more economical to purchase and operate. At least 4 additional natural gas/electric powered shuttle buses would be required for the Valley expansion routes, and twelve additional diesel shuttle buses needed for the three high country routes. These high country shuttle buses would be required only during the peak summer months, and therefore could either be purchased or leased. If purchased, in the off season, perhaps the buses could be used for school field trips, Valley /Badger Red Colored 81/2X11 Visitor Information Sheets These information sheets can be printed by the thousands and distributed at the four park entrances with minimum effort (\$2-3,000 printing cost per year will probably be offset by income generated from fines) III ADVANTAGES OF OPERATION TRAFFIC SWEEP 1. This plan will immediately, simply, and efficiently resolve one of the main goals of the 1980 GMP: Reduce Traffic Congestion including traffic noise and traffic emissions. 2. The cost of printing plastic color coded car passes, visitor information sheets and booklets is negligible, probably less than ten thousand dollars total per year. This plan's costs will be self-sustaining due to the generation of income from citation fines. This plan has all the personnel and facilities already in place (at no added cost). This plan will ensure that all cars will be permanently parked during the visitor's stay in the Valley, and allows for a simple visual monitoring system by park rangers for compliance. This plan will ensure a stable load capacity of the valley shuttle system. This plan will reduce traffic not only in the Valley, but also at Glacier Point, Wawona, and Tuolumne Meadows centers of activity, and the roads to and from. (see chapter 3) To meet the intent of the 1980 GMP goal of reduced traffic congestion, which implies reduced vehicle noise and emissions, all NPS and Concessionaire cars, shuttle buses and other vehicles must be converted to electric or natural gas power by the year 2002 for Yosemite Valley use. In the short or mid term, the NPS also should start a policy of allowing only those tour buses and coaches that have natural gas power into Yosemite Valley. This policy should also extend to all the commercial supply trucks that arrive daily, and nightly, year around. These two categories, tour buses and commercial supply trucks, currently represent the single biggest source of smog emissions due to the use of diesel fuel which is unrestricted. These diesel emissions (compared to California car gasoline which starting in early 1997 is the cleanest burning fuel in the nation, and therefore a minimum source of Valley air pollution) must stop. To continue to penalize private car travel by restriction while allowing the major polluters, tour buses and commercial trucks, to go unrestricted, is unconscionable, not to mention not solving of the Valley smog problem. CHAPTER 2 ROAD SYSTEM The current road system in the Valley is a good sound system, which accomplishes two fundamental missions: (1) the mass movement of vehicles in an efficient manner and (2) doing same in a safe manner. It must be kept, totally, in place. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 proposed changes in traffic patterns is to revert back to the former system of two way roads plus an elimination of some portions of the current roadways. This will unfortunately result in several severe consequences. It will again clog up the roads considerably over the current load by doubling the amount of cars in the same lane moving in the same direction. This is the result of reducing the number of car lanes in one direction from two to one (a reduction in efficiency). This increase of traffic in either direction will periodically and inevitably slow down the flow of traffic and cause traffic jams. Worse, it will increase the amount of car pollutant emissions, due to stop and go traffic, into the Valley atmosphere, which will impact air quality. Probably the most serious consequence of this proposed system will be the increase in serious, if not deadly, car accidents. It is impossible to quantify the number and type of accidents that will be increased by this new plan, but there will be an increase. Common sense tells us that on a two lane, two way road, head-on car accidents will occur. On a two lane, one way road, the chances of a head-on collision are almost impossible. However, on a two lane, one way road, side swipe accidents do occur. One, therefore, must ask the following question: If given the choice, would a car driver rather be in a head-on collision or in a side swipe accident? The answer is obvious. The choice, based on safety, seems quite clear between a two lane, two way road and a two lane, one way road. Safety from near elimination of head-on collisions, increased/improved car movement, reduced traffic jams, and improved air quality would dictate in favor of maintaining the current road system. Visitor safety must always be uppermost in any decision making process. All vehicles entering or leaving the Park would not be allowed to stop and sightsee. All visitors must sightsee via the shuttle or sightseeing buses. Violators would be cited and fined. All of the current Valley roads and directions, except the Stoneman Meadow Road, must be kept in place (see chapter 7). None of the proposed changes to the existing one way circular valley road system, including the side by side car lane/multi-use trail-can be justified as a trade-off for the injury or death of even one visitor from a head on car accident. Pass shuttles, El Portal/Valley shuttles, etc, to capitalize on their utilization. A new location for the east Valley shuttle bus connector stop at Curry Village is necessary. The current location, in the Curry Village parking lot, puts the bus stop in the middle of a highly congested vehicle and pedestrian area, which congests the parking lot even more. To help spread out vehicles and pedestrians to other Valley areas thereby reducing congestion, a goal of the GMP, the parking lot at the existing Curry Ice Rink! river raft ride site would be a logical (and existing) place for the Curry shuttle bus stop. The establishment of single use traffic areas in separate locations would significantly reduce the congestion which many visitors complain about today. "Freeing up" the Curry parking lot by relocating the Curry shuttle bus stop would reduce traffic congestion, traffic noise, traffic smog emissions and pedestrian traffic, all a GMP goal. This plan will eliminate the number of sightseer private car accidents off the Valley floor (except those entering or leaving YNP). This reason alone should be sufficient for its acceptance. CHAPTER 4 DAY USE PARKING LOT The current practice of using the Curry Village parking lot as the primary day use parking lot has created a parking lot that is too crowded and congested, not only with cars, and shuttle buses, but also with pedestrians. A simple resolution to this dilemma is to take all the day use parking areas for the entire Valley, and place them into the Lower River Campground, which is already in place, level and under tree cover so as not to be visible from Glacier Point. This is a natural location as it is within walking distance to almost all of the east Valley areas of interest, and would not require the creation of a new day use parking lot at either Taft Toe or Pohono Quarry. Restroom are already on site. The money saved by not creating a Taft Toe parking lot now, or possible ever, could well be spent on other more important items that are needed now. This is an excellent trade-off. This plan would eliminate traffic and pedestrian congestion at Curry, the Village, and elsewhere, which is a goal of the GMP. Tour buses could also use this area for their overnight holding area. CHAPTER 5 RIVER RAFT RIDE This activity, one of the more enjoyable in the entire park, should move from its current location by the Curry Ice Rink, and be relocated to the south end

of the Lower River Campground area adjacent to the river, just below the north west corner of Stoneman Bridge. The problem with the current location is threefold: (1) It is too far from the river, requiring its participants to carry a heavy bulky load too far (2) participants have to carry the load across a busy traffic intersection, which makes it potentially dangerous and (3) participants have to traverse a dusty, gravelly and therefore slippery downhill slope from the Stoneman Bridge cement walkway to the river bank. People do slide and fall while going down this embankment. This proposed new location is immediately adjacent to the river launch area, and has no steep downhill slopes to negotiate. It is, therefore, closer to the river with a safer access. It also will help spread the visitors out and away from the busy Curry area, which is a goal of the GMP. The related deli store and other facilities should also be moved with the River Raft Ride. All these facilities can be mounted on skids for removal during the off season, or placed on elevated platforms.

**CHAPTER 6 THREE BRIDGES Stoneman, Ahwahnee & Sugarpine** The removal of these three bridges represents an unusual situation. Most visitors, when viewing or using them, usually either have no thoughts about them at all, or they may think how lovely they blend in with the surrounding scenery, just like the visitors to Madison County, who enjoy the beauty and historic value of the old covered bridges. These bridges must not be destroyed, just as Le Conte Lodge must not be destroyed. As these three bridges are protected under the National Historic Preservation Act, they should not be tampered with, at least in terms of complete removal. However, if they were so poorly designed initially, which is questionable, they could be modified to allow for improved hydrological processes (see chapter 8 regarding a new proposed road to campgrounds using these three bridges).

**QUESTION:** What impact, if any, did these three bridges have on the major floods of 1937, 1950, 1955, and 1999?

**CHAPTER 7 STONEMAN MEADOW ROAD** The Stoneman Meadow Road east from the Curry/Stoneman intersection, perhaps the busiest in the Valley, to its junction at the next left turnoff to the Pines Campgrounds, does cut across a lovely meadow and can be seen from Glacier Point. This section of road could be eliminated and the meadow returned to its original pristine beauty, but only if the other recommendations are implemented, which would make the Curry Village and its parking lot a single use area for Curry lodgers only. It should be noted, however, that by making the road to, and through, the Curry parking lot a road for Curry lodgers, plus a thoroughway for shuttle buses going to Happy Isles and for campers going to their campgrounds, the Curry parking lot area, and its access, will still be a "zoo", even with the day use parking lot relocated to the Lower River Campground. The ultimate solution to this last Curry congestion problem is to create a new road to the campgrounds and Happy Isles so as to eliminate the Curry congestion altogether. See chapter 8 for this new road ...

**CHAPTER 8 NEW ROAD TO CAMPGROUNDS** The final piece of the plan for resolving the traffic related problems in the Valley is to create a new road to the campgrounds in the east end of the Valley, thereby allowing campers to completely bypass the Curry parking lot area. This proposed road would be on an existing roadbed, and reestablishes the road which was eliminated many years ago. This road would start at the north/west corner of the Upper River Campground (off the existing major one way loop Valley road), cross the Ahwahnee and Sugarpine bridges, past the Indian Caves, south at the foot of the Mirror Lake road, on to the stables area, past the Upper and Lower Pines Campgrounds and rejoin the existing road to Happy Isles. This entire road section would be almost entirely in wooded areas so as not to be seen from Glacier Point, which is another factor in its favor. The campground registration kiosks should be located on this road. The campground reservation office, currently located at the Curry parking lot could be relocated at the new proposed day use parking lot at the Lower River Campground, where its access to day use visitors would be better served.

**CHAPTER 9 WEST VALLEY CAMPGROUND** It would be a good idea to spread out some of the campers into other Valley areas that are currently not so popular as is the east Valley area. It is recommended that a new campground in the area of Pohono Quarry/Taft Toe be established. This would help decentralize the east Valley campers into the west end, and also reduce/ decentralize camper vehicular traffic, which is extremely important. River swimming areas, as a minimum, would have to be developed to draw the campers to this new camper area. An amphitheater would also be in order for nightly campfire programs, etc., etc. RV's, motor homes and the like would be a good candidate for this new campground which would be dedicated. This would eliminate these large vehicles from the central and east end Valley roads which would be a definite plus. These slab sided vehicles are so large that they block out much of the view of others in the vicinity. A camper in a small pup tent, if camped next to an RV, has at least 25% (or more) of his view of nature blocked. This is a bad mix. As tents are usually smaller than RV's, keep them separated. Also, because of the nature of RV's, their density could be higher, thereby allowing a few more RV'ers to enjoy the Valley scenery without appreciably increasing the traffic jams. Shuttle bus stops would include this new campground location. In recent years RVer's have become a larger percent of vacationers and have become a social group unto themselves, if not a clique. It is very likely that these RVer's would prefer to have their own campground, away from tent campers. This is a "win/win" situation for all parties concerned.

**CHAPTER 10 CAMPGROUND FIREWOOD** Two significant problems have existed for many years: the burning of unseasoned wood in campground campfires which creates too much smoke in the Valley, and campers who pick up wood off the ground, or worse, tear off branches from live trees/shrubs for use as firewood. To resolve both problems, create a NPS or Concessionaire team whose job it would be to gather seasoned firewood from the high country (similar to the firefall days) and sell it at each campground. The sale of this firewood would more than offset the cost, thereby creating a positive cash flow for this operation. This idea probably goes against the grain of those who think that campers should be self sufficient. Fifty years ago campers probably were more self sufficient and responsible. Not so today. In order to help reduce the smoke/smog/haze in the Valley which is helping to destroy some vegetation, this plan, unpopular though it may be, may just be the only way to help preserve the natural beauty of Yosemite Valley. This plan would be required only during the summer peak months. In the off season, this plan could be suspended. Although the primary purpose of this plan is obvious, a byproduct benefit is not. By using seasoned dead fall trees from the ground in the high country for this plan, a major fuel source for natural forest fires would be considerably reduced.

**CHAPTER 11 CAMPERS'GROCERYSTORE** The idea of establishing a grocery store primarily for campers is a great idea and goes a long way in reducing the distance campers have to travel to get groceries. Unfortunately the proposed new location, Curry Village, is not a good idea, because there are no campers at Curry Village. As almost all the campgrounds will be in the same general region, it makes sense to have the grocery store centrally located in the same region. This is not a new idea, for years ago there was just such a store (though small) in the Lower Pines Campgrounds (formerly Camp 14). There was even a mobile truck "store" which made the rounds of each campground daily, selling food staples. This old reality should be reconsidered.

**CHAPTER 12 NEW PICNIC AREAS** Two new picnic areas could be established. One would be located in the Upper River Campground, so as to be immediately accessible from the new proposed day use parking lot in the Lower River Campground. Portable toilets and picnic tables could be temporarily placed during the peak summer season, and then stored during the winter. The other location should be in the Curry Orchard area which would be blocked off from any vehicular use. Again, portable toilets and picnic tables could be brought in during the summer peak months and removed during the winter. See Chapter 13 for comments on the Curry Orchard and parking lot.

**CHAPTER 13 CURRY ORCHARD AND PARKING LOT** As this orchard has historical significance, it should not be uprooted, just to be replanted with another type of apple tree. By eliminating the apples which animals eat each year, "civilization provided" though they may be, their removal may cause the bears to be more aggressive regarding the food in cars, tents and elsewhere. This is a bad trade-off. The Curry parking lot is one of the most visible landmarks from Glacier Point, but is going to be left in place for obvious

reasons: its use for Curry lodgers and the new location for the ice rink. Therefore it is important to improve its looks, which at first, sounds silly, but is really possible, practical, relatively simple, and necessary. First, the lot should be repaved, along with the south side pedestrian walkway, which is long overdue. It should then be painted green so as to blend in with the Stoneman Meadow green. The parking stripes would be painted a darker color green. This would not only improve its looks, but it would be cooler in the summer which would be an added plus. It would also be less noticeable, if not invisible, from Glacier Point. Second, the first row of parked cars running east/west along the north side of the lot should be placed as close under the apple trees as possible so as to be hidden from above. The double row of cars in the center of the lot should have a closely spaced row of local shade trees planted between them. Again; this would make the cars less visible. The single row of cars along the south side of the lot should also have a row of closely spaced local shade trees planted along the front bumper line, making the cars less visible. What an improvement this would make, and it is relatively inexpensive. n CHAPTER 14 GAS STATION There is one alternative for the placement of a new gas station in the Village. The need for a public commercial gas station is obvious. Its use would be continuous and heavy. To set its location adjacent to an existing concentration of tourists would complicate the entire area. Its location should be in an isolated area on the outbound valley exit road, perhaps in the west valley. At least this potential location would reduce the exhaust from the tankers who supply the fuel. 17 CHAPTER 15 YOSEMITE LODGE The plan to relocate the Lodge guest lodging out of the floodplain is sound. It is unfortunate, however, that any part of a Frank Lloyd Wright designed building complex is to be relocated/changed. Mr. Wright refused to allow his name to be associated with the Yosemite Lodge complex if any change was made to his proposed design. Some architectural changes were made and he withdrew the use of his name. CHAPTER 16 YNP SUPERINTENDENT'S HOME The overwhelming number of visitors see the Valley sights from either a shuttle bus, tour bus, bicycle, by foot on paved paths, or by car when entering or leaving the Valley. Not often do they get off the beaten path and head off across the meadow on foot. The NPS superintendent's home is situated so as to be barely visible from North Side Drive by anybody, even those who know it is there. To assume that this residence is a visual intrusion on the enjoyment of Valley visitors is absurd. Not to allow the YNP superintendent the privilege of living unobtrusively in the Valley is an insult to common sense and his position. He has earned the right to this home and its location, and it should remain where it is. nCHAPTER 17 KIDS DAY CARE CAMP When my brother and I were kids, we went to the Curry kids day camp so mom and dad could take the day off from us and hike to the top of Yosemite Falls. We kids had a ball, and so did they. This type of facility should be reinstated to allow parents to have time to themselves for enjoyment of the quiet scenery without being distracted by their noisy kids. Interpretative nature activities could be tailored to kids who would enjoy it more than riding a shuttle or tour bus with mom and dad. The Upper River Campground might be a good location for this facility. This is a must. 20 CHAPTER 18 YNP & CONCESSIONAIRE HQ. TO EL PORTAL The draft YNP/SEIS calls for the eventual relocation of both headquarters out of the Valley to EI Portal. From a logical corporate management standpoint, this move is unacceptable. In the operation of any business location, lower and middle management personnel can usually take care of routine problems on the spot as they occur daily. However, top level corporate management is required to make decisions involving critical actions, such as the 1997 flood, the Happy Isles rock slide, visitor rescues, loss of life, etc. Usually these extreme actions require on the spot decisions, with timing often being a critical factor. This immediate critical response cannot be made effectively when corporate management is physically located at a remote location. Responsible corporate management demands a more appropriate physical presence as near to "where the action is" as possible. A single human life which may be hanging in the balance is certainly worth more than a very small restored spot of natural terrain. This is a bad trade-off. Where is the common sense? These corporate headquarters must remain in the Valley. 21 CHAPTER 19 EMPLOYEE HOUSING TO EL PORTEL "To protect the rights, safety and security of all visitors and employees". Doesn't this mean that YNP & Concessionaire employees are not second class citizens, to be moved about at will, with apparent little or no concern for their rights, safety and security? As stated above, employees have the same rights and privileges as any other Yosemite visitor, specifically to enjoy the beauty, grandeur and solitude of the Valley 24 hours a day, not just when they are at work. Most, if not all, who come to Yosemite seeking employment do so with but one thought in mind: to live and work in the Valley, and get away from the city. These same people could probably find better paying jobs, better housing, and other perks in any big city. So coming to seek employment in Yosemite must be for some other reason than pure materialism; simply stated, it is to enjoy being in the Valley on a full time, permanent basis. Unfortunately, prospective employees may soon find out that this dream place to live and work no longer exists as a package. Just one of the many consequences of this proposed housing move may well be that qualified future employees may no longer be interested in a work situation which involves splitting their place of employment and housing. If all the candidate employees were questioned, their wish would probably be to work and live in the Valley. If visitors can live in the Valley during their stay, shouldn't employees have the same right? The personal safety of an employee must always be of prime importance to management. Willfully forcing employees to drive round trips daily many miles from EI Portal to the Valley is putting these employees in harms way. This represents a complete abdication of management responsibility and cannot be condoned. During the winter season when roads are icy and very treacherous, a two way road yet, it is intolerable to expect employees to commute, either in their own car or by any other vehicular means. No one can quantify how many accidents will occur resulting in injury or death, but there will be at least one each season, but even one is too many, and certainly avoidable. It is possible that there might even be a serious legal problem resulting from some future accident which is bound to occur. One can just imagine a court room in which the family of a deceased employee killed in a winter storm accident is suing the NPS about a policy of forcing employees to drive dangerous distances to work. There is no doubt that existing Valley employee housing is antiquated and must be updated to comply with the latest building codes, appropriate materials, etc, etc. But to relocate housing to EI Portal, or any other remote location, is too draconian, and certainly unreasonable. Needless to say, EI Portal is not the garden spot of the central Sierras by any stretch of the imagination. Who in their right mind would want to live there on a permanent basis? Employees who work at White Wolf or Tuolumne Meadows or Wawona expect and enjoy living where they work, or at least living close by. Why should Valley employees be treated differently? Of course the number of employees differ, but the principle is the same, and shouldn't the same principle apply to all? It is recommended that employee housing for both the NPS and concessionaire be retained in the Valley and upgraded. CHAPTER 20 CAMPGROUND CAMPSITE DENSITY The belief has long been held as "conventional wisdom" that the only way to reduce the traffic congestion and related problems in the valley was to reduce the number of Valley visitors and their vehicles, by reducing the number of campsite and lodging units. This view, promoted in part by those who would like to see the Valley almost completely devoid of any "modern civilization", is not necessarily true. It may in fact be true, but this will not be proven until all other less radical plans for reducing vehicular traffic and crowd concentrations are put to the test, and their results analyzed. Control of traffic in the Valley is the key, and OPERATION TRAFFIC SWEEP (and related plans) will satisfactorily resolve these congestion problems. It is always easy to make sweeping changes, but if some changes are later shown to have been unnecessary or unworkable, the original is seldom, if ever, restored, which results in an irretrievable loss. It is usually a sound business practice, that applies here, to take a conservative approach for the accomplishment of an action or change, and not to do things that cannot later be reinstated. The purpose of the campground system in the Valley is to provide a campsite to accommodate campers with a minimum of convenience and space, without unreasonably infringing upon the privacy (if this is possible in a camping situation) of other campers, but certainly not to provide a completely isolated wilderness camping experience for meditation and contemplation, which can be found in any high country area campground. Of course, the size of these campsites is very

subjective. The current size of campsites is probably too spacious. To put this thought into proper perspective, let's examine the spacing of tent cabins at Curry. The current spacing between tent cabins is about 24 inches. If the plans for reducing traffic and crowding, addressed elsewhere in this report, are successful, campsite size can be reduced somewhat, to allow a few more campers the right and privilege to enjoy the Yosemite experience, without significantly increasing either traffic and crowd jams or interfere with other campers. It is recommended that no campsite reductions take place until the results of the related portions of this plan are implemented and analyzed. If this plan does not achieve its desired results, then would be the time to consider reducing campsites, or other considerations.

24 CHAPTER 21 LODGING UNITS DENSITY Lodging unit density at Curry and elsewhere has always been a strong issue for discussion. It has always seemed odd that the ample spacing between wood cabins was overly generous, especially considering that transmission of sound is hardly worth mentioning (WAB's on the other hand were built later to accommodate the larger demand and are spaced more reasonably). This ample spacing was probably the result of the planning required to meet the lodging needs of much smaller groups of visitors which used to visit Camp Curry in the first half of the 20th century. Conversely, the spacing between tent cabins is a disgrace by any standard. By and large, the spacing between tent cabins is just enough to allow the carpenters minimum work space to erect the units each spring, and is usually about 24 inches which is ridiculous. This closeness results in embarrassing and senseless situations which are a constant insult to lodgers. The solution in arriving at a happy medium for lodging density is as follows:

1. A few more wood cabins could be built in the wood cabin area to accommodate a few more lodgers, without overloading the area.
2. Tent cabins should be spaced out more to allow for more privacy between units. The space for item 1. above is already available. The space for item 2. above, however, is another matter, for at first glance, there seems to be no more room in the Curry Village tent cabin area. However, if the employee housing at Boys Town and the Terrace are to be relocated elsewhere, these two areas could be used to expand Curry's tent cabin area. The Terrace area is a little known place outside of the employees who live there, so the appropriation of this area for guest lodging would pose no threat to the ecology, etc. The Boys Town setting will always be what it is, a dense forest area that is a logical space for lodging, so why not use it as such? With careful planning and design, the following is possible: replace the concessionaire housing in Boys Town and the Terrace (320 units) with visitor lodging, but at only half the density, thereby providing for much needed privacy between tent cabins. This would provide 160 new lodging units.

25 CHAPTER 22 HOUSEKEEPING CAMP The Draft YVP/SEIS calls for the reduction of housekeeping lodging units in order to improve/restore the natural beauty of the river banks. However, this improvement can be done within reason without reducing lodging units. From a philosophical standpoint, the idea of repairing riparian areas may sound like a good idea, but from a practical point of view, it may not be. The 1997 flood, a 100 year flood, statistically speaking, can happen again next year, and the next, not just every 100 years. The riparian improvements made this year may well be washed away naturally one year later, so one could reasonably argue "what's the point?" It may be that riprap is the only reasonable and logical solution. This lodging reduction plan should be placed on hold.

26 CHAPTER 23 TAFT TOE A day use parking area at Taft Toe may be a possibility in the future, but should not be an immediate concern. It is recommended that all the traffic plans as outlined in this report become implemented for at least one full year, results analyzed, and then see if a new Taft Toe facility would be needed. If this plan works as planned, all the traffic congestion and related issues will be resolved without the need for a Taft Toe day use parking lot. Since Taft Toe already fits the bill as a location for vehicles, it is possible that Taft Toe might be a good location for a west end VaHey RV campground. If this plan's choice of the Lower River Campground as a day use parking lot eventually turns out to be less than satisfactory, the Taft Toe Campground could then be expanded to include the Taft Toe usage as a day use parking lot also. This would allow Taft Toe to be developed incrementally, as the need arises.

27 CHAPTER 24 STABLES TO CURRY DUMP The Draft YVP/SEIS calls for the removal of the stables because the concessionaire wants to discontinue the horse rental business. This seems unfortunate because horseback riding is so much a part of our cultural history and pastime. Even the first white men to set eyes on Yosemite Valley were mounted militiamen. If the current concessionaire does not want to maintain a rent string of horses, the NPS should try to find a subcontractor who would be willing to accept the job. The Draft also calls for the relocation of stables to the old Curry dump. This is a very bad idea for three reasons; (1) The old Curry dump, though covered over with dirt for many years, still has the subtle smells as of old. Although humans probably can't recognize or catch the smell, a bear, whose sense of smell is many times more sensitive than humans, can. Even in recent years, bears at night still prowl the area. To place horses and mules in the same location as a known bear "habitat" is dangerous and therefore unacceptable. (2) The odor of horse manure, and other typically unpleasant stable smells to be placed next door to all the east end Curry tent cabin lodgers is totally unacceptable. (3) The nightly, and daily noises of horses and mules fighting, kicking up dust, braying or whinnying will definitely disturb Curry tent cabin lodgers' sleep and relaxation not to mention the sound of the smith's forge hammer as it strikes the anvil while fitting horse shoes. This is also completely unacceptable. The stables must stay where they are currently located. If the NPS is unable to find another commercial stable operator, then, and only then, should the concessionaire stable be torn down. But if this happens, where will the visitor's private horses be boarded?

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**Correspondence ID:** 176      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hubbard, Dave  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb.02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** I'm writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of business activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows: Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley. This is not a radical idea. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of the concession stables from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley. Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored. Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage -- but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps. Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules,

etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically: 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor; 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group); 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See, for example, the websites: Bunbag-com and Equisan.com.au); and 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

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**Correspondence ID:** 177      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Armon, David  
**Outside Organization:** Non-NPS Employee in the Park  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Use recreation. Being able to swim in the river. The history of families growing up visiting the Park and creating memories in and around the river. 2. What do you want to see protected? Visitor use and access. I believe the resources are adequately protected but the visitor is being neglected. I would like to see river side camping resolved and housekeeping camp maintained. 3. What needs to be fixed? I resent that you assume something is broken while visitation is down significantly from previous planning time periods (camp 1980, 1st MRP 1990?) access and lodging /camping options, and parking have been reduced as well. I would like to see more camping and more parking opened up to get people off the roads. The loss of accommodations in the park has increased day visitation thus more cars on roads. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Visitor services - people are going to continue to come (hopefully) and want to get water and snacks, etc.

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**Correspondence ID:** 178      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec,02,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 179      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Canapary, Andrea  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I would like to focus on a few overall issues to reduce the impact on the Merced River Corridor. One is the numbers of commuters and truckers supplying the park on the whole corridor from Bryceburg to Yosemite Valley. I am interested in creative ways of reducing this impact by reducing the type of retail shops allowed in Yosemite Valley which would then naturally reduce the number of employees either commuting or living in the park and also lessen the amount of suppliers needed to accommodate these shops. Another related issue is El Portal. In order to maintain a solid community of long term residents in El Portal, the infrastructure of the town and housing options need to be looked at in a way that promotes longevity. I believe that the Park overlooks, or underestimates the value that long term El Portal residents have on the park and the river corridor. Plans should actively look at ways to improve the living situation in El Portal to encourage long term residents to continue living here and working in the park. Many of the shops in Yosemite Valley sell items which in no way increase the visitor experience in the park. T-shirts, postcards, stuffed animals and other trinkets could easily be sold in the gateway communities rather than inside the park itself. If the concessionaire needs to profit from these items sold, perhaps the park could even purchase some land in the gateway communities and this could still be a part of their profit margin. If not, I am sure that these local communities would appreciate having the ability to sell these items without the competition of the concessionaire selling them within the park. The gateway communities are always struggling and if this could help them and help the park as well, then we are looking at a win-win situation. On the other hand, there are items sold in the park which greatly enhance the visitor experience. It is good to have some food available books related to the park and some necessary outdoor gear that may have been forgotten so that people are not driving all the way out of the park to the gateway communities because they need a resupply on their camping food. It would be great, however, to come up with an agreed upon list of items that are appropriate to sell within the park and which would lend themselves better to the gateway communities. Some of the other activities that the concession offers should also be evaluated on the basis of whether that activity is enhancing the visitor experience, or if it could also be located in the gateway communities. Horseback riding, for example, could potentially be a more pleasurable visitor experience in Mariposa. If it was not available in Yosemite Valley, perhaps more people would seek it out in the gateway communities, thus providing more business for the struggling gateway and less impact on the river corridor and the visitor experience in the National Park. All positions within the park should be evaluated to see whether it is necessary for these people to be working within the park. Most of the park and concession employees either commute from Midpines or Mariposa, or live in the National Park. Neither

situation is ideal for the impact on the river corridor or the Park itself (or the commuting employee for that matter!). If there are concession or park offices that could be relocated to Midpines or Mariposa, that would potentially significantly reduce commuters. I am no expert in what these positions would be, but I imagine that there are quite a few jobs that do not need to be located within the Park or even in El Portal. Again, reducing commuters on the Merced River Corridor would have a big positive impact on the river without any negative impact to park visitors. Employees whose jobs necessitate frequent interaction with the park itself should certainly maintain offices in the park, but those that don't need that interaction on a regular basis could potentially be moved. El Portal is a thriving community which supports Yosemite National Park tremendously. Having employees living in El Portal makes them available to help the park when unforeseen issues arise which require immediate and skilled responders. It is great to have long term residents who know how to be helpful in these emergency situations when needed. People stay in El Portal for the long term because it is currently a community which encourages long term residents. Because the community is geographically isolated (and can easily become completely cut off in the case of fire, flood or rock slide), it is imperative that certain infrastructure remain in place in the town. The store, post office, school, day care center, county swimming pool and active community hall, are all essential to a town in this geographic position. In order to attract employees to stay in El Portal for the long haul (rather than having a very transient community here), we need to keep it attractive to these types of people. Although "user capacity" is a big issue on the table for the MRP, I believe that being overly restrictive to residents of El Portal and what they are allowed to do to make their homes able to accommodate changes to their family size or the desire to add a few closets to their old mining shack that doesn't have a single closet, certainly does not encourage people to want to make this their long term home. Family situations change and, within reason, homeowners should be able to accommodate those changes as long as it doesn't adversely impact their neighbors or the historic or biological nature of the area. Homeowners need a clear and REASONABLE policy of how to go about making improvements to their homes and what they are able to do. In the context of the MRP, El Portal should be looked at in a manner which will preserve and even improve the integrity of the community rather than over regulating and, thereby, discouraging long term residents and employees. In making these plans, a variety of long term residents of El Portal need to be included in the planning and discussions as someone new to the area or living elsewhere would certainly not bring the insight of those that have lived in this community for a long period of time. Organizations such as the Town Planning and Advisory Committee and the Homeowners Association keep a pulse on the needs of the community and the homeowners and are valuable resources in this process. They should be consulted during the process rather than merely presented with the result for comment. I've heard others refer to the community of El Portal as an ORV in itself. If these are the terms that are being used, I have to agree that it be noted as such. The value of retaining people in this park who have lived their lives here, or a good portion of it, should not be underestimated. These people are the ones who understand the true complexities of this place, love it passionately and will be the stewards who come up with and implement the ideas to preserve and protect it into the future.

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**Correspondence ID:** 180      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Organization:** Ramirez, Carlos  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Type:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** My family had been to Yosemite a number of times over the course of 60 years. We have used the camping and lodging facilities in the Valley. We have hiked in and around the Valley. We have thoroughly enjoyed the Yosemite experience. We realize the Merced River is an important component of the Yosemite Valley, supporting flora and fauna, as well as giving comfort to the mind, body and soul of the human visitors. While not fully understanding the nuances of the requirements of the Plan, I hope the day visitor, camping and lodging experience and capacity is not adversely affected by the contents or intent of the final Plan. Thank you for soliciting and allowing me to make my comments known. Sincerely, Carlos Ramirez

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**Correspondence ID:** 181      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Organization:** Blaney, Carol  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Type:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent Uberuaga:

The "Incomparable Valley" created by the Merced River is mecca to families who come generation after generation to experience its wonders; to hikers who seek beauty in its soaring cliffs and tumbling waterfalls; to climbers who scale its walls; and to city dwellers who find the solace in the wild places left, even in this densely populated and heavily visited place.

In developing the new plan for the Merced Wild and Scenic River, the National Park Service and the American people have an opportunity to protect this treasure with the dignity and care it deserves, not just for ourselves, but for the future. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act parallels the Organic Act, seminal legislation for the National Park Service; the WSRA calls for the protection of Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the river corridor, and for allowing public use in a way that does not adversely impact those values. To do justice to Yosemite and the powerful hold it has on millions of people, we need to take the broadest view of our stewardship responsibility.

What needs concerted protection and restoration in the Merced River corridor is this: the beauty of the Valley's walls and natural environments; the long historic record of its native peoples; the rich and diverse communities existing along the river; and access to Yosemite that allows an experience of this unique place without damaging it for future generations. Determining how to balance this

access according to the NPS mission and the WSRA will be a tough and contentious decision, and it must take into account not just current economic, social and environmental pressures, but the future need for wild places to heal the human spirit and to serve as remnants of the earth as it has existed for eons.

These features should be addressed in the new Merced River Plan:

1. Remove unnecessary development and housing from Yosemite Valley to protect the Merced's biological, scenic, cultural, recreational and other ORVs.

Yosemite is unique ? one of Earth's great treasures. It is incongruous for this glacier-scoured valley with granite walls and tumbling river to also contain tennis courts, swimming pools, and other unnecessary development more reminiscent of a resort than a national park with a wild and scenic river.

Besides these and other amenities provided for a small subset of visitors, the Valley has too much housing ? the carrying capacity is set too high for employees. In addition, housing is skewed toward the park concession, with hundreds of concession employees housed in dorms and tent cabins, along Ahwahnee Meadow and elsewhere in the Valley. This approach does not lend itself to effective stewardship: The concession's mission is understandably focused on making a profit, not protecting the park, and the unique Valley has scores of buildings that could be located elsewhere.

Some housing should be moved outside the Valley. The housing that remains should be located in geologically stable areas and occupied by resource managers, safety staff, interpreters, and top park managers, whose effective work depends on intimate contact with the park they are striving to protect.

2. The park needs to lead partners, interest groups, and outlying communities in understanding what a national park and a wild and scenic river are.

Because of its beauty, fame, and size, and its location near major population centers, Yosemite has many partners and millions of constituents, each with their own agenda for the place and for the river. Yosemite won't likely become irrelevant, as so many national parks' administrations fear; but it also faces political realities that could tear it apart.

Park partners ? including the park concession and the newly merged Yosemite Association/Yosemite Fund ? offer many benefits to the park and the river, including providing services to visitors, paying for projects that would not otherwise be funded, and educating the public. They're also increasingly powerful influences on how Yosemite is managed. The National Park Service in Yosemite needs to lead these partners, guiding and making with a firm hand linked to the NPS mission and the WSRA. Such decisions include what projects are funded, who the next concessionaire is, and how the concession is managed.

With the new Merced River Plan, Yosemite has a responsibility to model how to manage a Wild and Scenic River effectively and wisely. Agencies around the world look to this park to decide how they're going to manage their own resources; if Yosemite lives by the spirit and letter of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and of the Organic Act, the park will influence conservation efforts for the better worldwide.

3. Assess realistically how many people can use the river corridor on a daily, monthly and yearly basis without degrading the natural and cultural environment; manage the river wisely based on that assessment; and educate the public about this approach.

Over my years working in Yosemite, I have heard scores of visitors say that they do not venture into Yosemite Valley, especially during the summer, because it is far too crowded. These comments indicate that the current approach to managing the river's user capacity isn't working, at least for a substantial portion of visitors seeking a natural national park experience.

Too-heavy use of the river corridor leads to damage: of the riverbank, of the attendant plants and animals, of the cultural past, and ultimately of visitors' experience of and love for the place.

Assessing user capacity is a complex challenge. To meet it, the park should continue inviting the nation's top thinkers to address it, and work with the world's top river managers to hammer out ways to implement it. When this plan is made, the park should develop a world-class communication approach to educate the public about this approach and how it will help protect their Yosemite.

4. Consider and protect the rich and diverse communities ? past and present ? in the river corridor.

The Merced River corridor has been home to people for nearly 10,000 years, and it still contains vibrant communities. The Valley and El Portal's ancient cultural histories should be clarified and protected by doing extensive archeological study; delineating where settlements and other areas of significance exist; and by protecting and interpreting these effectively.

Many park and concession employees live in El Portal, and this place has a deep sense of community. Six years ago, my husband, our 11-year-old daughter, and I moved to the Yosemite area, so I could volunteer in Yosemite. As a newcomer to El Portal, I was immediately taken with the warmth of the community. To be surrounded by people who work on behalf of Yosemite provides an unparalleled sense of camaraderie and stewardship. Although El Portal is an administrative site, it also clearly links to the



surrounding ecosystem, to the wilderness, and as such, it should be treated with respect.

Living near a national park is a privilege and understandably requires some sacrifice. Homeowners here can't own land, and they must follow several sets of regulations on how to address repairs and other house-related issues, including NEPA regulations, county building codes, Merced River settlement agreement rules, and house-insurance requirements made more stringent by the Big Meadow fire. The current system can unintentionally trap even those who want to follow the rules. Developing a set of clear, fair procedures (with extensive community input) for buying and working on homes in old El Portal would allow park employees to focus on what brought them here: serving on behalf of Yosemite.

5. Discovering and determining how to work with new communities of park visitors.

Part of determining user capacity is finding out who uses the river corridor and how, and how that changes over time. With ever-growing and extremely diverse population in California, Yosemite needs become a leader in studying diverse communities of river users, and how to help them become environmentally literate visitors to the river and the park.

In making this plan, the NPS and the public have a huge responsibility. In several generations, our world will have changed immeasurably, with huge population growth and with climate change. If we make this plan well, we leave the best of what we have now to the future: a healthy river, vibrant communities, intact ecosystems, and the ethereal beauty of Yosemite Valley, undamaged.

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**Correspondence ID:** 182      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Cole, Cheryl  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** COMMENT FORM information: 3. What needs to be fixed? The pedestrian bridge @ The Falls and Camp 6 AND The campsites damaged by the flood put back, including the group campgrounds. It is the only affordable way for families to experience Yosemite ....generation after generation. Thank you :-)

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**Correspondence ID:** 183      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Strum, Chadwick  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Please consider the speed limit of hwy 140 in El Portal. Many people walk and ride bicycles along this stretch of road and there is no shoulder or walkway in most places. The most notable is between the gas station and El Portal Rd. Anything would be an improvement.  
  
Thank you very much.

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**Correspondence ID:** 184      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** McNamara, Chris  
**Received:** Feb,10,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Park Planners, My name is Chris McNamara and I am co-owner of SuperTopo. We publish climbing books for Yosemite and 8 other destinations in the West. We also maintain the most active climbing discussion board on the web. Monthly we have 70,000-100,000 users that use the site. I feel that most of the main climbing concerns have been addressed in previous letters from the Access Fund and American Alpine Club. I only wish to raise two issues for you to consider: 1) The climber "carabiner post" trail signage should be maintained and expanded when necessary. I was part of the Climb4Yosemite group that initially raised the money and supplied the volunteers for these posts a decade ago. The Park Service was great in getting the posts made at your sign shop and in organizing the implementation of the posts. These posts steered climbers to use one trail rather than many. They reduce erosion and make it easier for people to stay on route. In the last 5-8 years there has not been a need for these posts so they have fallen off the radar. I just want to mention them here so that they will be considered in future plans as way to reduce erosion while enhancing the visitor experience. 2) Please reduce the amount of lodging units in the Valley and increase the number of camp sites. There is plenty of lodging in the park and outside the park. There is not enough camping. Lodging units are expensive and thereby limit the type of user who can afford them. More importantly, every room of lodging requires additional employees to clean the units, maintain the units, power and service the units. Those employees then need services and their own housing. The result if you have way more development in the park than if there were more campsites instead of lodging units. There are plenty of lodging units in the

surrounding park communities where the infrastructure is better suited to handling user and employee needs. There is not nearly enough camping in Yosemite. I urge you in future plans to look for ways to reduce lodging and the development infrastructure that is needed to support it. Thank you very much for listening to these comments. I look forward to participating in the project going forward and letting my online community know how they can become engaged with planning Yosemite's future.

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**Correspondence ID:** 185      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Harjes, Chris  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,06,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I would first like to thank you for your decision to allow access to the South Merced as one of California's finest early-season multiday whitewater runs. I was fortunate enough to enjoy three days in there a few years ago and was phenomenally impressed by the quality of the experience. By using the river as the trail and camping only on newly-exposed sandbars, we were able to traverse the gorge with minimal impact, leaving its pristine beauty to the trout and river otters as we left. The main Merced, Yosemite and Tenaya Creek watersheds also offer amazingly beautiful potential for whitewater enjoyment. These streams are technically and logistically difficult, and could only be opened to recreation with adequate warning, preferably through a mandatory check-in to discuss the danger of these rivers, including current water levels and log hazards. These dangers will prevent large numbers of river runners from overcrowding or damaging these fragile resources. Please consider lifting the general park boating ban in favor of emphatic education of dangers and mandatory use of a few environmentally friendly access points. Thank you for your consideration.

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**Correspondence ID:** 186      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Other  
**Correspondence:** Open

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**Correspondence ID:** 187      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Modin, Chris  
**Outside Organization:** Sierra Club's Yosemite Committee Conservation/Preservation  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Sir:

Following years of litigation Friends of Yosemite Valley the NPS and Dept. of Interior have entered into a Settlement Agreement that will grant protection to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV'S) of the Merced River. This agreement requires the defendants to comply with their obligations under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and other applicable federal environmental statutes to protect these resources from continued degradation and over use. Under the Settlement Agreement the NPS will develop a User Capacity Program designed to protect the Merced River and other Park resources from the excessive visitation that has seriously impacted these values for decades.

Following Court directives and the Settlement Agreement a User Capacity Program will be developed that will be the fundamental component of a new Merced River Plan (MRP). On summer weekends current and past levels of day use result in unacceptable traffic gridlock, human congestion and near chaos as many long time Yosemite visitors can attest. During these events Park resources are seriously compromised and the visitor experience is enormously reduced.

In order to avoid these recurring episodes of gridlock and congestion a number of alternatives must be considered to resolve this decades old problem. A restriction on unregulated day use is a fundamental component in the Park's effort to protect the Merced River and other Park resources and will allow a quality visitor experience not realized during current periods of gridlock. Any system regulating day use will benefit commercial interests and stakeholders in the gateway communities where they can provide, to their advantage, increased levels of food, lodging and other visitor services during these periods when visitation pressure within the Valley exceeds capacity. A day use reservation system would be an advantage to visitors, guaranteeing a date for future access to Yosemite Valley and should not be construed as a restriction of entry as many now fear. The adaptive management strategies preferred by many in the NPS to regulate use can then tier off the user capacity mandate and can be used to complement the many additional alternative actions needed to further enhance and protect the ORV'S of the Merced River. Reducing day use visitation in Yosemite Valley east of the El Cap crossover is only a first step in the multiple actions required to reduce the human impacts on Yosemite Valley resources.

Transportation is a key issue in addressing user capacity. How people get to the Valley (and get around while they are there) is a significant part of the per-visitor impact, and no successful visitor capacity program can be developed without addressing transportation comprehensively. If a majority of day-use visitors were to enter the Valley from gateway communities by shuttle,

rather than their own personal vehicles, it is possible that more individual visitors could enjoy the Valley with less impact on resources. Less space would need to be devoted to car parking and the perception of congestion, and resulting visitor experience, improved. With global warming becoming a major environmental concern the NPS must consider the effects of transportation options and proposals and how increased reliance on public transit might be developed to significantly reduce this looming environmental threat.

The following scoping comments suggest actions that could or should be considered that will address many long standing issues that have seriously impacted Yosemite's resources and the visitor experience for decades. Our comments are intended to present ideas, suggestions and possible solutions to the many complex issues we would like the NPS to consider in this planning process and are not to be interpreted as an official position during this scoping period. The committee's official position on these and other issues will come during a later phase in the planning process. Our comments are intended to reflect a desire for the NPS to consider actions that will increase resource protections, improve the visitor experience and limit visitor activities to those appropriate in a National Park.

1. A day use electronic system to regulate day use parking could be used at Park entrances to monitor visitors with east Valley destinations beyond the El Cap cross over during heavy use periods. Bar code technology could be used to guarantee advanced day use parking reservations, avoiding the restrictions to entry that visitors often encounter during holidays and other popular summer periods.
2. Activities and infrastructure not relevant to the National Park experience should be eliminated and areas occupied by those activities and infrastructure should be restored to as natural a condition as possible. Restoration efforts could include many previously developed areas that were destroyed in the '97 flood.
3. Reduce non essential visitor amenities unrelated to experiencing the natural qualities of Yosemite. Apparel and souvenir shops, a golf course and tennis courts, energy consuming artificial ice rink, concessionaire stables and stock use in a confined valley, and a large screen TV pavilion are some examples of visitor services and activities that are not appropriate in Yosemite. In Wawona the golf course could be restored to a wetland and the tennis courts near the Wawona hotel could be removed.
4. Consider closure of the one-way road between Stoneman Bridge and Yosemite Village, and restore it and former Upper and Lower River campgrounds and flood plain to as natural condition as possible.
5. Consider maintaining the current Valley loop road prisms including Segment D, the section 900 feet east of the 120/140 intersection to Pohono Bridge, and maintain the one way traffic pattern currently in use except for the section between Sentinel Bridge and Curry which would then require two-way traffic if the road west of Stoneman bridge is closed. Widening valley roads, only encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles, RV's and tour busses.
6. Two other actions to consider that would further reduce impacts to meadows and view shed vistas would be to restore Chapel and El Cap Straights to their original alignments. The old SSD alignment at Chapel Straight was south of the meadow in tree cover near south side cliffs and the present alignment of NSD at El Cap was on the original stage route north of the meadow and view shed and away from sensitive wetland resources. A return to these historic alignments could be considered to both restore sensitive wetland meadows and iconic view sheds. These realignments were recommended by a former superintendent.
7. Consider retaining the current alignment of North Side Drive (NSD) at Yosemite Lodge and address the pedestrian/traffic conflict at the Yosemite Falls intersection with regulated day use or another on site pedestrian/traffic solution. Rerouting NSD south of the Lodge complex to resolve this issue would seriously impact wetland resources and the aesthetic values of the area, and would not be consistent with current efforts to protect the ORV's of the Merced River. Some existing lodge units could be relocated farther away from the River possibly into the area presently occupied by employee housing and amenities.
8. Eliminate roadside parking at El Cap meadow. The Cathedral Rocks/Spires view shed is one of the most iconic in the Park and it is permanently debased with a solid line of vehicles and visitors trampling El Cap meadow to dust trying to get a look at rock climbers on near by cliffs. There is a suitable non sensitive area north of NSD on an old road alignment that could accommodate vehicles and observers where they would be out of sight of the meadows and view shed and not impact sensitive meadow wetlands. Additional restrooms and increased shuttle service should be included in this restoration effort. See comment under # six.
9. Maximize shuttle service throughout the Valley including to West Valley destinations to reduce private vehicle use and restrict limited term roadside parking to only designate turnouts. High priority should be given to secluding any new or relocated parking to tree covered areas. Landscaping with native plants would further mitigate parking lot impacts. Avoid proposals presenting new "open air" parking lots and eliminate or upgrade them where they now occur.
10. The size and number of tour buses and the under regulated emissions emanating from those vehicles greatly impact the ORV's of the Merced. Public transportation is an important objective to relieve congestion along the Merced, but their numbers, size, emissions and parking venues need to be addressed.
11. Encourage visitor activities directed toward natural and cultural park qualities over non ecocentric activities like golf and tennis that would be appropriate outside a National Park.
12. Valley rafting in the Merced River impacts resource and aesthetic values. Consider reducing or eliminating this activity.
13. Consider reducing visitor impacts along sensitive riparian shorelines and direct river access to non sensitive sand and gravel bars.
14. Reduce the incredible inventory of obsolete "stuff" in Yosemite Village. Unnecessary buildings, warehouses, corporate offices, a vehicle repair facility, junked equipment, and an unserviceable helicopter that is no longer necessary for current operations should be reduced or eliminated from Yosemite Village and Valley. Removing much of this outdated and obsolete infrastructure and clutter would allow relocating much of the day use parking in Camp Six to more appropriate locations closer to visitor services in the Village area. Wetland areas in Camp Six nearest the river could then be restored to natural conditions. Similar reductions in non relevant visitor amenities and infrastructure should be considered at Curry as well.
15. Consider reducing NPS stock use to minimum essential levels and eliminate concession stock and stables to reduce stock waste and pollution and to minimize other stock related impacts to Valley resources.
16. Increase the number of walk-in and group campsites and consider placing them in presently occupied areas including the concessionaire stables area, or the area east of the Ahwahnee currently being used as a NPS storage area. Landscaping existing campgrounds with appropriate native vegetation would greatly improve the camping experience in Yosemite Valley. Additional out of Valley campgrounds emphasizing youth groups and walk-in sites should be developed in appropriate locations with shuttle service provided to the Valley. The former Upper and Lower River campgrounds destroyed in the '97 flood should be restored to as natural a condition as possible.
17. Consider whether a limited number of hookups for RV's should be provided and whether to restrict them to a single campground located away from other camp units. The size and number of RV's for both day and overnight use should have defined limits.
18. Many visitors have expressed opposition to the smoke and air pollution generated in Valley campgrounds for both environmental and health related reasons. Campfire smoke is especially detrimental to visitors with chronic respiratory problems and can significantly impact their health and the quality of their camping experience. With health concerns in mind, consideration should be given as to whether campfires are appropriate, for aesthetics, for cooking, for heat or not at all. Perhaps they could be restricted to designated campgrounds, or eliminated entirely or only during the summer season.
19. Prescribed burns are needed for fuels management and healthy forests. New management criteria should be reviewed and revised to prevent prescribed burns from getting out of control.
20. Efforts to restore and maintain iconic view sheds should continue along with efforts to eradicate invasive exotic species.
21. Consider reducing the total number of accommodations in

the Valley at Curry and the Lodge. Reduced to the maximum level possible the number and density of tent cabins at Curry and replace them with low cost architecturally appropriate units. An affordable price range for overnight accommodations between Yosemite Lodge and Housekeeping rates could be considered without increasing the number of overnight units or pillows. 22. The current employee housing situation and infrastructure at Curry, the Village, and the Yosemite Lodge area is abominable and must be resolved. Relocations to Foresta or other out of Park locations should be considered. Essential in-Park NPS and concession employee housing should be razed and rebuilt to architectural standards appropriate in a National Park.

The Yosemite Committee is looking forward to working with you and your staff on these and other issues, during this precedent setting planning effort. Reducing impacts by regulating day use when demand exceeds capacity will be a key factor in our efforts to protect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River. Policies and actions developed and taken in this planning process could be incorporated into the planning process of other units of the National Park system where resources and the visitor experience are impacted by over use.

Thanks for listening

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**Correspondence ID:** 188      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Bass, Elizabeth E  
 Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors County Government  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent Neubacher: Alicia L. Jamar Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Elizabeth Logan Assistant Clerk Teri A Murrison, Third District Richard H. Pland, Fifth District Thank you for this opportunity to offer scoping comments on preparation of the New Merced River Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It is the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors understanding that this new plan will include: 1) a wild and scenic river corridor encompassing a quarter-mile on either side of the Merced River; 2) site-specific planning for developed areas in the Merced River drainage; and 3) park-wide elements including the overall transportation system. We also understand that the new plan will address: 1) resource protection; 2) existing and potential development of lands and facilities; and 3) an updated park user capacities analysis. With the above in mind, the Board of Supervisors would offer the following scoping comments for consideration as Yosemite National Park begins preparation of alternatives for inclusion in a new plan and EIS: Site-Specific Planning ? Consider how access can be improved and thereby controlled to points of visitor interest along the river corridor as a way to allow enjoyment of such sites and yet minimize damage caused by uncontrolled access to same. Transportation ? Embrace the use of tour buses and public transportation to/within and within the Park while still allowing individuals the choice to enjoy the Park using private vehicles. ? Consider financial incentives (e.g. reduced entrance fees) to lure visitors into using public transportation to/from and within the Park. ? Consider how all major access roads to the Park can be improved to encourage balanced use of entry/exit points and thus: 1) improve the level of service on roadways; 2) reduce accident rates; and 3) reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT's) thereby reducing environmental impacts associated with vehicles. For example, improvements on the Highway 120 Priest Grade would encourage use of the Highway 120 entrance to the Park by visitors from northern California thus reducing overall VMT's by Park visitors. ? Expand visitor day-use parking in the valley floor. This will require priority consideration of such uses over others (see comments below), will reduce environmental impacts from vehicles circling and idling in search of spaces and improve the visitor experience of the Park. Facilities ? Planning for facilities should place priority for use of limited space (capacity) in the valley on visitor uses versus that of Park administrative, staffhousing and concessionaire ancillary uses. ? Planning for overnight visitor accommodations should be balanced between lodging and camping opportunities. It is recognized that both types of accommodations have been provided for and need to be continued in the Park while appreciating how the relative cost of same may limit access to the Park by those of more modest economic means. ? Consider placing Park administrative, staff housing, concessionaire ancillary buildings and expanded lodging in the surrounding gateway communities. This would need to be coupled with a good supporting transportation system. ? Consider developing visitor centers (perhaps shared with area visitor bureaus and others) in each of the gateway communities as a way to relieve some service needs within the Park. These centers would also offer an opportunity to better inform and direct visitors thereby better managing uses and impacts within the Park. ? Consider utilizing all existing structures (e.g. concessionaire employee housing) as assets that can be managed for the overall benefit of the Park. User Capacity Analysis ? The analysis should distinguish between overnight versus day use visitation capacities. ? The analysis should be specific to the different areas of the Park thereby appreciating that different areas of the Park have unique capacity characteristics. ? The analysis should acknowledge that some summer visitors are simply using Park highways to travel between destinations on the eastern and western sides of the Sierra. ? The analysis should consider how impacts can be best managed by prioritizing Park visitor uses versus those of Park employees and concessionaires both during work and non-work activities. Impacts on Gateway Communities ? Acknowledge and study impacts of all alternatives developed on gateway communities. Any changes in the Park can have direct land use, environmental, and economic impacts on the surrounding gateway communities. ? Consider how all alternatives can be developed to have a positive economic impact on all gateway communities, Tuolumne County specifically. ? Consider using public meetings and gateway advisory groups to develop plan alternatives and analyze their impacts on the gateway communities. Thanks again for the opportunity to offer these scoping comments as the Park embarks on the ambitious endeavor of preparing a new Merced River Plan and associated EIS. The County desires to serve as a good neighbor and partner in managing the Ilrecious resource of Yosemite National Park. Please feel free to contact County Administrator Craig Pedro at (209) 533-5511 should you have any questions regarding the Board's scoping comments.

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**Correspondence ID:** 189      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Aborn, Bradford  
 Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** I want to address the continued use of horses and allowing equestrians to have great access not only to the Merced River areas, but also throughout Yosemite National Park. There are many of us, including riding groups such as but not limited to, the Mariposa Mountain Riders, that are really concerned about limitations that more and more have been placed on the ability to ride reasonably within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. I've talked with a number of people in regard to this matter, both as a concerned citizen and as the Mariposa County Supervisor for District 1 which includes a large portion of Yosemite National Park. I wish to go on record again to offer my concerns and to keep an open dialoge as we progress through the various stages and on to approval of the Merced River plan. Historically horses, mules, & donkeys have been ridden throughout the land that is now Yosemite National Park. In fact, equine transportation used to be the primary method of visiting the park. In the past twenty or so years we have seen and experienced a reduction of our ability to enjoy the park on horseback. I'll say time and again that if you haven't experienced the feeling of joy and freedom and closeness to nature that you enjoy on the back of your own horse, you have missed one of the greatest ways to experience Yosemite. Also think of people that are handicapped that can ride a horse, but can't hike all these trails. As I have gotten older, I would never be able to hike into many of the areas that I can easily ride my horse to. Believe me, there are many others that could take advantage of this opportunity and that's why it should be encouraged, not restricted. As I'm sure you are well aware, there are many riding groups within California and the western United States that should be taking part in the final development of this river plan. They should have the opportunity to offer their suggestions and opinions to be considered in the final draft of the Merced River plan. My point at this time is to keep the horse concept and not let it be lost in the ongoing discussions and to include equestrian use in the final implementation of the Merced River plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 190    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** McNeill, Willie

**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** I'd like to see white water kayaking promoted within the park boundaries. In the El Portal area I'd like to see more small to medium size gampong areas developed.

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**Correspondence ID:** 191    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Medina, Yesenia

**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**

**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** 1) What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Merced River: I love the free flowing sections. Yosemite Valley: I love Yosemite Falls, Vernal Falls, and Nevada Falls. I also love Tunnel View. Wawona: I love the history center and the stage coach. 2) What do you want to see protected? The river banks, rapid erosion due to human traffic changes the nearby ecosystem. The meadows and wildlife. 3) What needs to be fixed? Further education about not feeding wildlife. More information on proper backcountry procedure. Horse manure on the trails is detrimental to my wilderness experience, maybe DNC should be charged with picking up after themselves. Half Dome permit system: Have some permits set aside for first come first serve, and if bad weather occurs let the permit carryover to the next day. A Yose radio station that broadcasts all relevant park information: traffic, fires, accidents, lodging, tips on proper behavior. More buses between Wawona and Yosemite Valley 4) What would you like to see kept the same? Ranger led events, the upkeep of trails, Mariposa Grove, the buses that go around the valley and the ones used for the Mariposa Grove

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**Correspondence ID:** 192    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Snyder, Nathaniel

**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**

**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** February 3, 2010 Yosemite Planning Dear Yosemite Planning, To whom it may concern, As a climber with deep ties to Yosemite National Park in general, and Yosemite Valley in particular, I feel compelled to offer some input into the decision-making process. Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is definitely one of the most important climbing areas in the world, and Park planners would be wise to consider how the use of this plan can at least protect, and possibly enhance climbing opportunities. Climbing should be identified as one of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values, due to its long and varied history with regard to the area, as well as the low-impact nature of the climbing community. The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Climbing in Yosemite obviously meets these two criteria, particularly the latter, more so, in my opinion, than any other activity in the Valley. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the

planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. On another note, the river also plays an important aesthetic and even spiritual role to many climbers. The internationally famed climber and Yosemite fixture Ron Kauk should certainly be consulted as an adviser who can speak both for the climbing community, and for the land itself. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity, unparalleled in the world for its historical and contemporary value. It attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan. Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that at least preserve, and possibly enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code. Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. In addition, in general, it has been my experience that climbers in particular are often more environmentally conscientious than the general user community, and limit their impact through such practices as Leave No Trace. This is a generalization, and there are certainly exceptions, but this should definitely be considered when evaluating climber's impact on the Valley. The Merced River Plan must allow for access to areas outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels. In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process. I recognize that it is a difficult process to accommodate all interested parties, while also keeping the protection of natural resources as the foremost concern.

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**Correspondence ID:** 193      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Grogan, Tim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am writing to voice my opinion on future plans in the park. I have a bias because I am a rock climber. I don't think that climbing should be restricted to a 1/4 mile back from the Merced River as I have heard proposed. I would probably vote against allowing white water rafting trips inside the park but I guess that wouldn't be fair if I want to keep climbing. I would like it to be more convenient to camp in the park. If you are going to increase the number of visitors that can stay inside the park I would rather see more camp sites added than hotel or motel rooms. I think that the permit system on Half Dome is a good idea but I think that some permits should be made available on site, first come first served. I understand the difficulties in managing such a valuable and cherished resource. I hate to see the park commercialized any more than it already has been. Yosemite has a very rich history in the sport of rock climbing and I hope that we don't lose any access to the world class climbing that we now enjoy. Thank you for your consideration,

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**Correspondence ID:** 194      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 195      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Powers, Phil  
**Organization:** The American Alpine Club Recreational Groups  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:**

Dear Yosemite Planning Team: The American Alpine Club (AAC) is pleased to supply scoping comments on the Merced River Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Our goal is to help the planners meet the goals, stated in the Wild and Scenic River Act, to provide "for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." Our constituency, as we submit these comments, is well over 1.5 million climbers in the United States. As the US representative to the international climbing community (International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation), we also speak for millions of climbers worldwide. Climbing has a rich history in Yosemite Valley dating back to the likes of John Muir who was both a champion for the Park and a climber himself the American Alpine Club's second president. Indeed, Yosemite lies at the center of the universe for climbers here and abroad. It is an iconic destination for any aspiring climber and represents the apex of a lifelong passion for many. The cutting edge of worldwide climbing achievement which expands the envelope of what is possible for all people continues to happen on the Valley's walls. Those climbers who only dream of enjoying a trip to Yosemite find it to be an inspiration that infuses their enjoyment of the craft wherever they are. As we look at the contributions Americans have made to the climbing craft, they have their roots in Yosemite. During what we refer to as the Golden Age, climbers in Yosemite developed techniques that, when exported, expanded the exploratory abilities of climbers around the world. Entry into one of our last frontiers, the vertical frontier, is based on "Big Wall" techniques developed in Yosemite. It is clear to us, and I hope to you, that there is no other place more important to climbers than this stunning landscape. Therefore, with these comments, we hope to begin to support the planning process with information that can enhance the climbing experience in the place known by climbers around the world simply as "The Valley." Climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV) It is clear to us that recreational rock climbing is an ORV in the following ways:

Climbing is river related: Climbing takes place on walls that are within a quarter mile of the river or are accessed by roads and trails that are within that radius. The walls themselves owe their existence to the river. The valley walls on which we climb, including those outside the quarter mile radius, were sculpted by the Merced River glaciers. Indeed, climbing owes its very existence to the geologic history of the Merced River.

Climbing in Yosemite is unique regionally, nationally and internationally: The quality of the rock and the variety, and quality and length of the routes make the climbing in Yosemite the most challenging and coveted in the world. Climbing is also an outstandingly remarkable cultural and historical value: Its history is embedded in the history of human interaction with the land and climbers are an essential part of the culture of the valley. Even the non-climbing visitors to the Park are drawn to the concept of climbing as they wonder at their human capacity to scale and bivouac on the cliffs.

Enhancing the climbing experience. Climbing and the Merced are inextricably linked. In order to enhance and protect this outstandingly remarkable recreational, cultural and historic value, we make the following comments:

? Camping opportunities are essential to climbers. The unique challenge that the valley's walls present demand that climbers stay in the valley for extended periods of time. In order to meet Yosemite's challenge safely, they must spend time getting used to the unique characteristics of the rock and practice the techniques necessary for long routes. Therefore, climbers need more camping sites and extended stays (up to one month). Climbers generally prefer a primitive camping experience.

? Transportation options are essential for climbers. The length and difficulty of Yosemite's big walls necessitates a larger than normal quantity of safety equipment plus overnight bivouac gear. Climbers, therefore, benefit from the use of personal vehicles. Parking should be available at the majority of climbing destinations. Public transportation options should provide for stops at key cragging destinations.

? Trails to climbs are necessary. Maintained but primitive climbing access trails with minimal, climbing-specific or no trailhead markers to limit attracting non-climbers.

? Staging areas at the base of climbs are necessary to sort gear and belay the lead climber. Climbers also need spaces to network socially, share safety and condition information and prepare for climbs such as the Camp 4 parking lot and El Capitan Meadows. ? Descent trails. Maintained climbing descent trails are critical for safety reasons and to avoid unnecessary impacts that result from multiple unmaintained descent trails.

? Amenities like groceries and basic climbing safety gear are necessary to support climbing in the valley.

? Interpretive facilities for and about climbing to share condition and route information and to help all visitors understand the exceedingly interesting techniques and history of climbing are desirable. A climbing museum or exhibit is consistent with this goal. The AAC is willing to play a substantial role supporting such facilities.

? Climbing School and Guide Services are necessary to support the educational experience and the climbing experience for those who are not ready to climb without supervision.

? Climbing Rangers and Yosemite Search and Rescue Programs have been extraordinary successes that we would like to see

continue.

In addition to the specific methods for enhancing the climbing experience listed above, we feel the MRP presents a number of other opportunities for Park planners: ? Decrease the overall urbanization by removing administrative offices that do not need to be physically inside the Park. ? Enhance the pristine nature of the Park by making camping and lodging facilities more primitive ? Improve all visitors' ability to engage with the land by improving the Valley Loop Trail. This would provide visitors with an opportunity to get out of their cars and bike, hike or run. This would move people off the roads and away from the river.

Access to terrain outside the < mile radius: The MRP will affect all sorts of facilities that have a bearing on the land that is outside the river corridor. The roads, trails, transportation options and other facilities that will be governed by the MRP are essential for access to terrain that is outside the corridor and this must be taken into consideration. Any user capacity model adopted as part of the Merced River Plan should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values whether they be values inside or just outside the MRP boundaries. Climbing is unique in that access to the rock just outside the boundary depends on roads and trails inside that boundary.

Summary We at the American Alpine Club hope that these scoping comments are a helpful beginning to a process that will enhance the user experience for all Park visitors. We will work to supply greater detail on the needs we have addressed here as the planning process progresses.

Importantly, we believe climbing must be identified as an outstandingly remarkable recreational value in this, it's most iconic destination Climbing is intertwined with Yosemite's history and culture because for climbers, its walls are the most compelling on Earth. Thank you for understanding the importance of Yosemite to the climbing community.

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**Correspondence ID:** 196      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bellis, Tony B  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** This is a letter supporting the removal of all stock animals in Yosemite National Park. I have worked on trail crews in Yosemite and I have hiked there at least 150 times in the past half century. I am very aware of trail conditions in the park.

Horses and mules do more damage to the trail system than any other entity. Any plan for the Merced River Drainage must include banning horses and mules. Llamas are much softer on the riprap and should be allowed. The polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake and Sunrise must be closed.

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**Correspondence ID:** 197      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Cole, Gerald G  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** I presume that you have various pressures exerted to favor continued or enlarged commercial activities in the National Park. Certainly you have concerns about the long-term degradation of the natural resources by these activities. I plead with you to side with those who want to preserve our National Parks in as pristine state as possible. This will actually require diminution of the commercial activities that are present even today. I urge you to consider generations to come who will want, who will require, in a crowded world, the spiritual renewal that is achieved by the solace of a wilderness experience.

In this regard, I urge you to consider two important areas of concern:

1. The High Sierra Camps: I have hiked and back-packed in the Sierras, and I once stayed 2 nights in one of the 4 camps. These camps are not appropriate for preservation of the wilderness. The thought of "upgrading" and "modernizing their facilities" could only result in further disastrous effect on the environment. It is like trying to establish a commercial motel facility in a rustic environment. They should be dismantled and removed. Throughout the length of the Sierras are commercial pack stations which can transport the lazy or lame to a high mountain experience for a few nights. But these old camps are inappropriate vestiges of a time when a unique experience was offered to the public, with no consideration of environmental impact. The need to use pack animals, or, God forbid, powered vehicles to supply these camps, as well as extension of sewage facilities can only impact the river drainage in a negative fashion. It is time for these facilities to be dismantled and removed and for a true wilderness experience for campers in these areas to recur.

2. Beasts of burden in the high country: Horses, mules, etc, used to supply high country endeavors are a serious negative impact on wilderness. Their manure pollutes the environment, often the local water source. Their waste often transports seeds from harmful



invasive plants to the high country. Their grazing despoils the natural vegetation. These animals were never a part of the high country fauna, and their presence, through an ecologic chain, despoils the natural fauna and flora. Every attempt should be made to diminish their impact, and indeed, eliminate their presence as much as possible. Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinions. I hope in your decisions you will have an eye to restoring wilderness areas, and the Merced River corridor. Future generations should be able to look back and say of this time, that we started a program to preserve pristine wilderness as much as possible. It would be a telling achievement, as significant as was the establishment of the National Park system, and an achievement future generations would mark as the push-back against commercialization of a great public asset.

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**Correspondence ID:** 198      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Swenson, Steven  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am a rock climber and Yosemite is a world class destination for this activity. The restrictions on time spent and the poor quality of camping facilities in Camp IV make living conditions extremely undesirable. Yosemite should be viewed as an Olympic type training area for US and foreign climbers with attention paid to adequate accomodation so that long term training programs can be achieved without the need for illegal camping.

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**Correspondence ID:** 199      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Reynolds, Steve  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** NO to Half Dome day permits. YES to being able to decide to run/hike the HD trail and climb the cable route the SAME DAY.

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**Correspondence ID:** 200      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Evans, Steve & JoAnn  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Mar,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** As long as the boating in the Valley, itself, does not place unacceptable strain on the valley ecosystem and social environment I find it to be acceptable. I would be concerned about the risks of the boaters straying too far westward and dropping into the class VI section coming out of the valley. I am primarily concerned about the El Portal/Red Bud towards Briceberg section. It is fine as presently administered.

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**Correspondence ID:** 201      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Rud, Stefan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,27,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I have visited Yosemite NP in Fall 2008. As much as I was impressed by the parks nature I was disappointed and frustrated with some of the parks "manmade" features. Here are a few thing I would suggest to improve the situation:

1. Free Shuttle buses - no individual traffic - traffic to campsites only for an hour a day (for a similar concept take a look at Zion NP in UT)
2. Close every other campsite - the space per campsite is way too small and spoils the experience of everybody. Camping inside a NP should be an extraordinary experience in a positive way and not like it is right now.
3. NP bicycles available for everybody inside the park - since there is no individual traffic bicycles should be available to get to the main attractions of the park. Maybe a system where bicycles can be used for a deposit that gets refunded when the bike is returned may work well. There are automatic systems available so you can take a bike pay your deposit and return it at another place and get the deposit back. Some cities in Europe have such a automatic system and it seems to work just fine.
4. Lower camping rates - I have never understood why in an highly frequented NP the rates are much higher than at a national forest where the experience of camping is much better than in a crowded NP campground. I just hope the money gets used for a good cause.

Next time I visit the park it would be very nice to see that something has changed to the better. The park is a gem and needs to be protected without closing it for the public. I wish you all the best and success with the changes to be made. Thank you for letting people participate in the process of improvement.

**Correspondence ID:** 202      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hill, Steve  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,07,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Please consider retaining the Housekeeping units and the Housekeeping Bridge. Housekeeping is one of the few affordable accommodation areas for low and middle income families in the Valley. The bridge enables Housekeeping guests to walk and ride bikes to the Village store area. The Housekeeping riverbank restoration implemented a few years ago has taken hold, and Housekeeping residents are for the most part respecting the fencing. Most human activity is along the natural, sandy shores on the insides of river loops.

DO consider removing the Valley horse stables, for two reasons: 1) Horseback rides belong at a dude ranch and are not part of the natural setting. 2) Horse excrement pollutes the watershed and makes for a miserable hiking experience on shared trails. Besides having to carefully step around urine pools and feces, hikers have to contend with the multitude of flies gathered on the feces. I support the retention of horses and pack animals for use by rangers.

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**Correspondence ID:** 203      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Godar, Rosemarie & John  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Yosemite National Park is one of the most treasured natural wonders in the world, and to us about the most treasured. My husband and I regularly consider ourselves two of the most fortunate of valley visitors as part of the climbing community there. Quite frankly, Yosemite Valley is a climbing Mecca, and as such is a deeply honored sacred place by climbers. It is a kind of spiritual home to many climbers. We regularly see climbers in the valley from the farthest reaches of the world as well as those situated more locally. We urge the planners to please especially keep climbers in mind as the MRP develops, for we have every hope that the plan will change nothing for the worse as far as access for climbers and hopefully only for the better. As climbers, we enjoy the Merced River every time we visit. We recognize it as one of the world's natural wonders that contributes to the evolving landscape of the valley, and we simply enjoy its many beauties regularly. While climbing, we hear it rushing in the springtime or by the falls, and year-around we enjoy varying views of it sparkling as it curves through the valley. Climbing literature and history abound with stories involving it. All year long, after climbing, we often enjoy seeking out many readily accessible, and often quiet nooks from which to peruse the valley walls, see where we've gone, dream of where we may go. Whether we just rest beside the river, take a dip, break out the camera, fish, raft, or simply nap and listen to it flow, we always enjoy it. For the better part of the year, it is not our experience that the valley is over-crowded. Sure, peak season has its moments, notably some Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends, but for the most part, it is far more accessible than complaints convey. Perhaps it is so for us as climbers who are apt to steer clear of crowds just by the nature of where we most frequently go. Often we replenish food and drink in the Valley, too, though, and have reserved campsites, and travel the more congested areas. Given that the plan may address access issues, it is our hope that access be maintained and improved in particular for climbers. So here are some hopes we would like to express for the Valley plan: ? An increase in drive-in and walk-in primitive campgrounds requiring extremely low maintenance. ? Parking at climbing-access trailhead locations. ? Perhaps large parking facilities outside of the park entrances where people may park to carpool into the valley. ? Rental opportunities in these carpool parking lots for rent of quiet and small, low-emission buses or vehicles affording good views by all passengers with picture-window capability. ? Rental of smaller vehicles for day use. ? Rental or sales of Thule or other ways to bring in the baggage or packs such as car top carriers etc. ? More lookout points, additional small stores especially with a maybe a pellet woodstove fireplace and good window views and comfortable seating for a destination in its own right, possibly an additional climbing equipment shop that brings in more revenue, all with the aim at greater dispersion of crowds and automotive traffic in other areas, situated in places that might help decrease congestion in highly-congested areas. ? It would be wonderful for Yosemite to embrace its proud climbing history by the addition of a climbing museum and/or interpretive and educational facilities about climbing. ? Maintenance and future improvements of Search & Rescue. In particular, we hope that any parking areas and approach trails used to access climbing areas will be protected in the new plan, and that access will be more free, open and available to climbers if anything rather than less. We have experienced very little congestion problems when it comes to climbing because of the fact that we can freely and readily access another climbing area by jumping in our car and seeking out another area to climb, and we dearly hope to maintain that ability most of all. We hope that the plan recognizes climbers and climbing as of "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. If climbing is not recognized by people involved in the MRP process, we urge them try it. Climbing involves climbers not just physically, but in all aspects of our being: mentally, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. It is often inspiring and adventuresome, so it is a breeding ground for all that is good in us: challenges us, sets up winnable goals, is a means for learning something new, and is inspiring. Climbing helps fosters a deep appreciation of the environment and the will to take care of and enjoy it. Everyone I've ever met who enjoys climbing feel the same. We sincerely thank you for reading this and for your hard work. We hope that you understand for yourself how important Yosemite is to climbers worldwide.

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**Correspondence ID:** 204      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** NO More Development. Reduce or eliminate existing concessions and non essential services Reduce or eliminate existing hotel accommodations Increase camping

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**Correspondence ID:** 205      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Williams, Scott  
**Outside Organization:** University/Professional Society  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am a Earth Science student at UC Merced. A representative of your park came to class and was discussing issues for Yosemite and wanted our feedback. Below is what I have come up with.

I grew up in Stanislaus county, and regularly visited Yosemite since a child. After returning to the Valley after getting out of the military, I noticed that the area had grown, but there were plenty of vacant building just sitting around. It seems when anyone thinks of growth they think of new buildings, instead of using unused, or misused land instead.

When I visited Yosemite last August with my family, as we do every year, I noticed that it was increasingly difficult to park. My family prefers to stay out of the park at a nearby resort, and drive in for the day. Some of my friends have also complained about it being almost impossible to get a campsite. These are the two issues I find most important. I feel there are enough trails and places for people to visit, creating new trails and destroying more land to me would take away from the park, not add more to it. I say this in case people write in saying the opposite.

For the first issue of parking. I lived in England for 2 years while in the military, and found public transportation quiet efficient when done properly. It would be a huge project, but it would be great if something could be worked out where the park could acquire land outside what is designated as "park land" and turn it into a parking lot, or garage so multiple levels could make it even more efficient. An example to this is Disneyland, where they have a lot of visitors to their park, and most are families. Maybe set up a trolley system, where it goes around the park and people can get off, or get on a designated places, and when they want to leave they ride a trolley to the parking outside the park and to lot. With the trolley drivers taking tickets, the trolley would be able to pass through the front gate without the need to stop, helping create a lot less traffic at the gate, which could be used mainly for campers, elderly and disabled people.

For the second issue, camping, why not create more camping where the golf course it. Even a 9-hole course could provide a lot of additional campsites. I understand people love to golf, and I think it is awesome you were able to make it organic, but I don't feel it helps the purpose of the park. The purpose, and therefore the focus of the park should be to provide a place for the public to experience and appreciate nature. Providing more areas for families to come camp and enjoy nature as a family I think is worth more than Dad going to play nine holes while the rest of the family goes hiking. If a family wants a vacation like that, Hawaii would be more than willing to accommodate them. I know no one I know thinks of golf when they think of Yosemite, leaving me to believe that it primarily serves the upper class, and not all visitors like the focus of any activity at Yosemite should.

Combining the two ideas, couldn't it also serve the park well, as well as Mariposa County to perhaps create hotels, or additional campsite in the area, which could have their own busses/trolleys to travel back and forth to Yosemite? Not only would you help create more jobs, but would also help traffic issues, parking issues, and campsite issues. My family finds staying outside the park at a resort just as nice as when we stayed inside the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 206      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Keagy, Scott  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I understand that today is the last day to submit comments regarding the "brainstorming" or idea-gathering phase about the future of the Merced River Plan within Yosemite Valley. I recognize that there are many types of resource users in Yosemite Valley, and that each category of resource users will have a different set of concerns. My perspective is that of a father who wants to preserve the resources for future generations (including my own young children), and also to enjoy the resources today as a naturalist, hiker, and rock climber. I frequently travel 3-4 hours from San Francisco bay area to Yosemite to connect with nature and recharge my spirit, to share the wonder with my children, and for the many benefits that rock-climbing brings as my primary hobby: physical conditioning, emotional and spiritual recharging, wonderful friendships, and wonderful memories filled with moments of sublime peace, exhilaration, and marveling at what has been created by forces I cannot comprehend. I think any long-term plan for the region must balance the responsibilities that all must bear for preserving the resources for future generations, along with maintaining the flexibility and freedom of individuals to explore and enjoy nature in whatever way they see fit. Of course, individual freedoms must

be tempered with boundaries to be respectful of others. The primary areas where I think individual freedoms must be curtailed are: - noise pollution (loud motorcycles that instantly break the spell of nature and recall an urban wasteland) - trash and litter (people not using bear-proof trashcans) - reckless vegetation damage... I would not go so far as to say that all hiking was outlawed except on officially approved trails, because the majesty and freedoms of nature would be buried in a bureaucratic nightmare of new trail proposals and votes, etc. It just would not scale well as a plan. High-use problem areas can be regulated as a case-by-case basis (such as the approach to Cathedral Peak in Tuolumne Meadows), but I think it would be a mistake to have a blanket regulation regarding off-trail hiking or exploring. There are many areas along the Merced valley where I have explored from sunrise to sunset without encountering another human, and I have left little or no trace of my presence, and it would be a shame to outlaw this type of minimal impact use. There are areas right next to roads with very high usage density, and there are areas within a quarter of a mile that almost never see people. I would like to see quotas introduced selectively for trouble areas on a case-by-case basis, and not applied in a clumsy way such as "only 100 user permits from El Cap Bridge to the Rostrum." I would like to see any permits/quotas applied down to the level of specific turn-outs and regulate parking as the primary means of informal quota enforcement (since realistically the park won't be able to afford to have rangers patrolling all the regions to enforce quotas effectively). In any user community there is a spectrum of folks who go from very respectful of the environment and those around them, to people who are downright inconsiderate. I would like to see that any regulations target this issue (i.e. people being disrespectful toward the environment and to other people) and not single out specific user communities or activities. Well, if there are specific activities that cannot be conducted in a way that is respectful to nature and other people, then I believe those activities should be banned or greatly regulated. But I would hesitate to demonize any specific activity like rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, swimming, fishing, sunbathing, etc. when these activities can clearly be conducted in a way that does not adversely impact the environment or reasonable people. Thank you for your consideration, and good luck sorting through the immense amount of information and different perspectives from so many people.

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**Correspondence ID:** 207      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Manchester, Sean  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** The S.Merced is a great river, we need it and the help from NPS is greatly appreciated. Yos, provides us with some of the best rivers in Cali and being able to kayak in the park is awesome.....

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**Correspondence ID:** 208      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Leach, Scott  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,28,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Bureaucrats, I hope this 3 year "study" of the river of my youth (South Fork of the Merced) thru Wawona, Chilnualna, and other whereabouts beyond isn't a scheme cooked up by tree-hugging communists that have paid off the Government and National Park Service administrators like yourselves, to restrict or even deny the American public's access to it. In fact, can you explain to me in a reply to this email, why and what needs to be protected on the Merced that isn't being protected now? Aren't there rules that apply at this time to protect this river and all rivers, creeks, lakes, etc. in the Park? Answer me this please: How many more "Park Administrators" are going to be added to Yosemite to enforce this new "protection" of the River and how much will it cost the American Taxpayer? Is this part of Obama's "Jobs Stimulus package"? Can you justify what you are about to do to this river, the experience of the visitor, and the Park itself? I smell a nefarious scheme cooked up by so called "do-gooders" who are really just a-holes with an agenda and some cash, who have never ceased in treading over my American Freedoms. If you have any eggs, you will answer this email truthfully. I am watching you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 209      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Alonzo, Sandy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** As a nature lover and huge fan of Yosemite who has camped approximately 15 times in the valley during my life I would like to suggest that you do not get rid of any more campsites unless something comes up that makes them dangerous. My family and I have so many wonderful memories of Yosemite and camping is the way we really enjoy the whole experience. Coming in for the day is not the same as camping and enjoying all of Yosemite- the days and nights. My children all hold Yosemite in a special part of their heart and my son Ryan has even worked there the last several years for the Yosemite Association. Yosemite is a magical place and I sincerely hope that families in the generations to come will still be able to experience camping!!! Thank you for protecting this incredible gift.

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**Correspondence ID:** 210      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 211      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Grassi-Pierson, Christina  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I teach about places like Yosemite to my college students. Our first environmentalists, and forest ranger helped create a place of iconic beauty that symbolizes the American spirit. I also visit Yosemite regularly as a climber. I know climbers are of particular interest to non-climber tourists. Please take any and all possible action that will minimize impact on this national treasure. I visit the main climbing areas, use the trails, and would also like to see ways to minimize impact on these areas while still making them accessible. I have stayed in historical camp 4, and in the more established camping areas in the park. I do rely on the infrastructure available in the park for ease of getting around (like the shuttles) and the stores and dining halls. Access to tourists, to a degree is crucial. While Yosemite can boast being full to capacity often, it amazes me that our park system still runs at a deficit each year. But then we run into other problems of overuse. Just know that what's in place now is used, and regularly, in peak climbing months (spring and fall). Thanks for your time and careful consideration of the changes to the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 212      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Loberg, Christine  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,07,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Superintendent,

I love the wild rivers in the Yosemite Valley, South Fork of the Merced, and Tuolumne River. When I think of WILD RIVERS I think of a river with a natural flow without man made High Camps that filter thousands of people to a place that should be WILDERNESS without development. This includes HIGH CAMPS, DAMS, STOCK, CARS, AND OVER CROWDING IN A PLACE THAT SHOULD BE NATURAL AND WILD. I hope in the future the National Park Service will think of future generations and preservation for beautiful places like Yosemite National Park. Please rethink the future plan of Yosemite National Park and reverse man made mistakes. Please allow Yosemite High Country to remain as natural as possible without man made interference in nature.

Thank You for your time to listen

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**Correspondence ID:** 213      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Pierce, Ellen  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,14,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendant,

I wish I knew your name.

However, I'm not coming to any meetings about "plans," until you stop letting the forest encroach on the meadow. And, you stop calling it \_\_\_\_\_?(whatever) allowing the edges of the stream to be obscured from a distance. And, put bak in the campgrounds they used a flood to get rid of.

I lvoe the Yosemite Lodge, and the RNC vendor service. Best wishes for 2010.

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**Correspondence ID:** 214      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Persall, James and Carolyn

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** In response to the post card sent to us regarding a plan to determine protection of Merced River and balancing it with issues of camping, etc.

1. We're senior citizens with limited income and camp in Upper Pines campground when we can get reservations for one week each year. More valley camp spaces would be helpful instead of less which I have seen proposed in some plans.
2. We have a 24 ft. motor home and use the shuttle bus service.
3. We enjoy bicycling, sightseeing, hiking, rafting, fishing and visiting with friends if we could be there at the same time (very difficult).
4. Please don't cut out the camp sites which are affordable to those of us who can not afford to stay in the tent cabins, motels and hotels.
5. The private sector caters to the wealthy, upper class; the national parks belong to the people (all the people) so do not squeeze us out.

Items of Importance: Available camp sites in the valley Camping at a reasonable rates Free bus shuttle service More hiking trails for the less physically able,

Thank you,

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**Correspondence ID:** 215      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Zane, Barbara and Burke  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** In creating a new Merced River Plan, please remember that the general public should benefit from it, not just the park concessionaire. The most important thing is to protect the river and the beautiful land around it. Campsites should be kept away from the floodplain and must not scar the land near the river.

In the planning process, details about potential rockfalls and debris flows should be included so as to minimize accidents and lawsuits. The main purpose of our national parks is to preserve nature for the public to enjoy Keep new development small, keep roadside barriers low (so that people in passenger cars, not just in buses can see the river) and include enough inexpensive lodging to accommodate people who aren't wealthy.

Please realize that politics has no place in this plan; set politics aside and look at what's best for the natural beauty of the park and for the people who visit it. Yours truly,

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**Correspondence ID:** 216      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Libkind, Marcus  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. My first trip to Yosemite was when I was three years old and since then I've visited it many times. I've camped in the valley, kayaked and canoed on lakes and the Merced River, backpacked extensively, done a little rock climbing, and backcountry skied throughout including multi-day trips in the high country. I have two vivid memories of my first trip. One is of the fire falls and the other is of parking in the garbage dump with headlights illuminating the bears. Of course those two "historic opportunities" are gone and rightly so. Today the Park Service has the opportunity to make more changes to the park and I want to comment on them.

Several years ago I backpacked with my teenage daughter into Ireland Lake and then cross-country to Vogelsang Lake before heading out. The destinations to which we could get a permit were limited by quotas. I accept the quotas as a price I must pay for preservation of an amazing resource that I want to preserve, and improve, for generations to come. What amazed me was that while

my options were limited by quotas that were not large, at nearby Vogelsang High Sierra Camp day-in and day-out there is a huge number of people who have a profound impact on the environment and the visitation by others like myself and daughter.

The Vogelsang High Sierra Camp does not fit in the setting and is not necessary for management of the park. In short, it's an eyesore. I can't attest to it's affect on local pollution, but given that a large numbers of horses and mules are probably brought here, I suspect that pollution is probably an issue. I did, however, view first-hand trail degradation in wet areas just above the Camp where people had walked through wet areas trying to find their way onto the trail to Vogelsang Lake.

It is time that all High Sierra Camps should be removed from the Yosemite backcountry. Some might say that the camps are historic and should be permitted to remain. That idea does not withstand scrutiny. Just like the firefalls and the garbage dump, both very historic and fun for visitors, the High Sierra Camps should be eliminated.

I've always been amazed with the idea that horses are used in and around sensitive wet areas like the Merced River. Commercial horse use in Yosemite, in particular, Yosemite Valley, should be stopped. Their use in high numbers is both detrimental to the environment due to their affect on the ground and because of environmental pollution due to their concentration of use.

Today, if one wants to take an outboard boat to a lake, one has to jump through hoops to proved that there are no mussels hiding in the cooling system of the motor or lodged in the trailer. However, as a standard practice, hay is brought into Yosemite for the feeding of horses and mules. I think that there is a large chance that this is a source of invasive weeds and other vegetation in the park. For this reason too, the use of horses and mules should stop.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Very truly yours,

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**Correspondence ID:** 217      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Silberman, Andrea  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, I have traveled the world, all seven continents, in luxury. Yosemite is and always has been my favorite destination. I have been tent camping there for sixty years.

Yosemite has become a family reunion rendezvous and spiritual sanctuary to me. It is the most beautiful place in the world.

Tent camping provides a close-to-Nature experience like no other. Swimming and rafting in the Merced is precious. I have hiked every trail from the Valley floor. I treasure wildlife encounters. Campfire gatherings in the evenings are invaluable.

I still miss Mirror Lake but appreciate the naturalization and crowd control measures that have been initiated. The tram system is a huge success.

The most memorable performance I have ever witnessed was a slide show of waterfalls to Handel's Watermusic (about 1980) at the Lodge. Personifications of Muir, Roosevelt and the Buffalo Soldier are unforgettable. My family has learned volumes through the Ahwahnee Village and Ranger programs.

I truly enjoy time spent at the Ahwahnee Hotel. I feel that services offered by concessions are complete and hope they will not be enlarged or completed. There are plenty of shopping malls elsewhere.

Yosemite is unique and incomparable in its natural beauty. This should be preserved first and foremost.

Thank you for inviting my comments. Si nce rely,

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**Correspondence ID:** 218      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Swenson, Signe  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** I am writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. am very concerned about the effects of business activities and other high impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and around the Merced River Corridor.

I believe that the commercial horse stables in Yosemite Valley should be removed in a timely fashion, as was suggested by a previous plan and which was never implemented.

PLEASE remove the High Sierra Camps! These camps are dirty, noisy, smelly, and hugely detract from a back country experience. They are not of historical value, but from a time when environmental issues were not a concern, and when it was "fashionable to set up high impact camps. Please adopt strict limits on horse traffic, and keep groups small.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing careless practices and harm. Sincerely,

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**Correspondence ID:** 219      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Arp, Cindy  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I was sent a postcard flyer stating you would like to hear my opinions regarding Yosemite and the protection of it. While at this point I have no ideas regarding how to best protect the river, I do have some other ideas. I try to visit Yosemite every year and most years we camp at one of the Pines camp ground on the valley floor. So here are a few things I would like to see change or have done. 7 Install shower timers that you have to pay via tokens or quarters ? say \$1.00 for 5minutes. California State Parks use this system, and I like it. You can eliminate three things by doing this A) Lines - as most people will shower quickly rather than feed the machines. B) Water waste. C) You would not need to have an employee sitting there. Towels can be picked where you check in at for the tent cabins. Campers bring their own towels. 7 If the above does not work how about having a family/campground shower pass you can purchase for \$20 per site. 7 Housekeeping ? Have more rangers/employees patrol this area. Campers there almost always leave the food locker open and ice chests left out for long periods of time. I noticed this last year. They also do not like to pick up after themselves. Over at the campgrounds I was talked to when I left the locker open while unloading the food from our vehicle to the locker the day I arrived ? which I understand and am fine with. 7 Ask each campsite to have everyone in that site pick up at least ten items from the ground before they leave. This would include juice box straws and cigarette butts (even if they are not the ones who left it). This should also be done once the site is cleared (meaning all packed up) just as they are leaving. My family does this each time we are there. We also pick up items left elsewhere, to help keep Yosemite clean. 7 Only allow vehicles who have reservations or is handicap to the valley floor. Bus the Day Use people in. 7 Unless it is the day of arrival/departure, an emergency or handicap, you can ticket vehicles who drive around. There are plenty of buses a person can ride. If one needs ice/food they can walk, ride a bike or take the bus to get it. The ice will not be completely melted by the time you get back to camp. I have done this. Fees from the tickets can be donated back to the park. 7 Not sure how I feel about adding more campgrounds, if you do I would only add one of the River campgrounds back, not both. I do want any campgrounds/sites replaced if they are destroyed in any way (i.e. flood, rock slide) 7 I would like to go back to the old way of making reservations, by call in. Currently you have to sit on the internet ? logged in, on the site you want with the dates you want. You must be very, very, very quick and precise with your click of the mouse. If you miss it with the first time you click (7:00), you can forget about going. You will not get anything! It is hard for those of us who do not have internet capabilities because we cannot afford it. Calling in these days does not work because those people have the same issue and are slower because they have to get your information (ie what day you want to go, what campground, how many nights, etc.). The other option would be to back and allow mail in reservations?perhaps one month before the normal internet/call in time. I hope this helps. Thanks for listening.

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**Correspondence ID:** 220      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Conn, Carolyn A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Sir: These are items need be addressed in the Scoping of the Merced River Plan.

1. How will this plan affect private homeowners in Wawona? Will homeowners be able to replace boards in their dwellings, make improvements to their private properties, be regulated by extra permit systems, allowed to cut trees that are leaning toward their homes, etc?
2. How will this affect water for the area? Examples are wells that are needed. These private wells that homeowners own are within the presently proposed Merced River Plan corridor and some wells are owned by private landowners in old river bed sites no longer functioning as a part of the perennial south fork of the Merced River. These wells have been in use for over 80 years. (When the government water system fails, these wells also serve as backups.)
3. Other services need to continue for the private community that lives here without deteriorating the esthetic qualities that enhance



the community.

Examples are: sewer systems, power/utility systems, roads, propane deliveries for heat, mail and newspaper deliveries, etc. 4. A detailed map showing who is affected in what way is needed for us to make comments on the proposed plan.

5. How will the Wawona Golf Course, Wawona Hotel, several small businesses, and stores be impacted? Thank you for giving us a chance to comment on the upcoming scoping of this plan. Sincerely yours,

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**Correspondence ID:** 221      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** MacLachlan-Brown, Michael  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

Dear Sir, I have been rock climbing and hiking, in an environmental sensitive way, in Yosemite Valley for 33 years. I hope that your new plan will leave full access, for climbers, to the wonderful granite of Yosemite. To do less would be unacceptable to me.

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**Correspondence ID:** 222      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Zimmerman, Leon  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Someone: Enclosed is a post card announcement for the Merced River plan that has our old address. Please remove our contact information from your data base. We have moved from California and no longer have the opportunity to participate in these events.

All that the Park Service accomplishes to resolve this Merced River Plan is very much appreciated. We believe in what the Park Service is doing and is best for Yosemite. Thank you for maintaining Yosemite!

Most Sincerky,

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**Correspondence ID:** 223      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Dormanen, Susan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2101 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, I wish to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan in support of removing commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley and closing the High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise to remove pollution and inappropriate use and protect this beautiful area. I am an avid, regular hiker and backpacker in Yosemite and have seen the harm and pollution caused by the commerical horse operations and High Sierra Camps.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. I ask you to craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm and pollution. Yours truly,

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**Correspondence ID:** 224      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Rock, Stephen  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** 2/2/10 Dear Folks, I frequently hike up the Merced River in Yosemite (I have a wilderness permit for this June). I would like you to protect this very popular area from degradation. I have also hiked in the area above Mirror Lake. In the latter region, the stench, dust, and manure from hordes of horses made this stretch of trail horrible to get through.

Horses are a menace to our trails. They pollute the streams, destroy the trails, and leave piles of stinking manure. They should be eliminated from the park. If they must remain, then they should have mandatory manure catchers (as in some cities like Vienna Austria) and carry their own food and travel in small groups. I am 67 and someday may need a horse, but I do not want to damage the wilderness.

The High Sierra Camps should be hidden among trees (like at Glen Aulen) and not ugly eyesores out in the open as at Vogelsang. If the camps are to remain, they should become low cost primitive shelters, rather than high cost play toys for the the rich.

Thank you for taking care of our parks and wilderness

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**Correspondence ID:** 225     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** George, Andrea  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** I am honored to be asked to share my concerns about the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan.

1. What I love about Yosemite is the balance that has been struck between public access and natural preservation. My family for four generations has tent camped and hiked the Valley and high country. Ranger programs and the Ahwahnee Village are an inspiring source of education and information.
2. I hope to see as much natural landscape preserved as possible. I hope the Valley will remain open to lots of people. It should not become a "members only" club.
3. Campgrounds need to be fixed. Lower Pines and the River sites have been a rubble field for a decade. Porcupine Flat and Tamarick Flat should be open for use in summer. It seems reasonable to restore a limited number of group campsites so that parties of more than six can be together.
4. I am glad to see the opening of long term camping for those who volunteer Park maintenance. I feel the availability of shopping facilities and concessions is sufficient. The Valley doesn't need any more.

Yosemite is our favorite place to vacation. Thank you and all who participate for your work and concern. Sincerely,

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**Correspondence ID:** 226     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Deiderich, Karl  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, I'm writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I have been to Yosemite over 100 times, though I get there only annually or so now that I live in Texas. I am very concerned that the current plan for the Merced River corridor is missing elements that can dramatically improve conditions in and near the Merced River corridor.

\* Please add an option to removed the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley.

\* The plan should close the High Sierra Camps, including at Merced Lake, May Lake, Vogelsang, and Sunrise. They are bad polluters. They don't belong in the backcountry.

\* It is time to get commercial horses and stock off the trails up to Nevada Falls.

\* Stock should be banned from the Wild & Scenic river corridor.

\* Stricter limits should be imposed on horses and other domestic stock. They stink, they pollute the trails, they spread weeds, they destroy trails, they conflict with foot travel, and they pollute the water sources.

\* Stock should wear manure catchers to reduce the invasive weeds they spread through their feed and manure.

\* Stock parties should be limited in size to eight or fewer animals.

Implementing these recommendations will provide a plan that better protects the Merced River and its corridor. Thank-you for the opportunity to comment, and particularly for extending the time for comments, without which I would not have been able to contribute. Sincerely,

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**Correspondence ID:** 227      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Miles, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent I am writing to urge you and the National Park Service to adopt a Strong Plan to protect the Merced River Corridor from on-going abuses by commercial businesses.

Having spent many enjoyable times hiking along the Merced River and nearby areas,I am greatly concerned about the degradation being caused by certain commercial activities.

Your Final Plan should include these major provisions: 1. All of the High Sierra Camps need to be removed. These camps at Merced Lake, Sunrise, Vogelsang and May Lake are a continuing source of pollution, trash and noise. There is no place in any national park, particularly the Yosemite Backcountry for such gross sources of pollution, trash and noise. I urge you to remove the High Sierra Camps and restore those locations ASAP to their original pristine conditions. I understand that the Congress authorized the NPS many years ago to remove the H.S. Camps. Now is the time to get it done. Some folks might consider the H.S. Camps to be "part of our heritage." I say we don't need any heritage that continues to generate pollution, trash and noise.

2. The commercial horse stables in Yosemite Valley must be removed and that area restored. The presence of horse stables in such a jewel of nature as is Yosemite Valley is not acceptable. I ask that your new Plan include provisions for prompt removal of the horse stables from Yosemite Valley.

3. Your new Plan must include provisions for the adoption of strict limits and controls on the use of stock animals in the Park. All stock animals must be required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, water supplies and campsites. All open grazing in the Park must be prohibited. All stock animals must be properly washed and quarantined before entering the Park to minimize the possibility of importing invasive weed seeds. All stock animals must be kept tied when not actually traveling and they must be provided with feed that is weed-free. All stock parties must be limited to the smallest possible number of people and animals. All commercial horse rides in the River Corridor must be prohibited. Thank you for considering my views.

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**Correspondence ID:** 228      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Albright, Charles R  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** Thank you for continueing to ask for public input with regards to the Merced River. As you should know and SHOULD acknowledge all rivers and creeks that have potential for navagation by boats, including canoes and kayaks are navigable in fact in the state California. YOU folks should remember that your National Park is located in the State of California.

Therefore State Laws of which you rely on for many issues within the park should be obeyed by you, the Park Service. So all sections of the Merced River including tributaries should have no limits with regard to paddling. This policy should also apply to all sections of the Tuolumne River as well. I have always asked this issue of you anbd why you entertain public input for the Merced and NOT for the Tuolumne River as well is quite honestly befuddling.

Any river policy for a National Park should include all rivers and waterways for said park. Yet this is exactly what you deem appropriate. Baffeling to say the least.

Again I ask that you let the laws of California with regards to Navigation apply to all sections of the Merced River as well as the Tuolumne River and all of their tributaries and otehr waterways in your National Park. Why do yuo insist that I cannot enjoy paddling many sections of waterways in Yosemite Park?

PLEASE make this email a part of public input and record for your requested Policy Management Plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 229      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Lussier, Sasha  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Please recognize recreational climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and include climbing in Yosemite's user capacity framework. Please accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 230      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Samuelson, Sam  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Living in Colorado, it is hard to get to workshops or meetings, but I would still like to stay involved. I still get to Yosemite at least once a year and have been a regular attendee since the early 1950's. I helped with the 'master plan process' when it started in the late 1960's. I have always been of the thought that to preserve our National Parks, we cannot love them to death. Sensitive areas such as the Merced River need to be insulated as best we can from the heavy use of the public-ie. camping, lodging, roads etc. Also, my new mailing address is David Samuelson, PO Box 227, Placerville, Colorado 81430. You also now have my current e-mail address.

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**Correspondence ID:** 231      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Stone, Rodney & Diane  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,28,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** We appreciate the addition of handicap camping spots such as 111 and 113 in North Pines but we need more. and more that will accomadate longer motohomes. And when north pines and lower pines arent open the handicap spot in Upper Pines is too short,too unlevel and awkward. We have also witnesses campers in those 2 spots who appear to not be handicapped. They may have health issues but they appear mobile. We have never seen a wheelchair user in those spots!! It is our wish that they could be for wheelchair users only, as our motorhome has a built in lift and can only open out in wide spots. Imagine our disappointment to see abled, mobile people using them. We have been making an annual trip to Yosemite for 20 years in our motorhome,spending a week at a time and so appreciate all of the modernization that has taken place. We usually go in Nov or April and the handicapped spots in Lower Pines are not available and sometimes North Pines is closed too....How can we help see that there are spots for wheelchair users only? I know it is a lot to ask but Yosemite is our favorite spot in the entire world and when we first started going there our 23 year old son was only 3 and healthy and even climbed to the top of Vernal Falls as age 5 and went everywhere on a bicycle but since having a stroke 12 years ago his life is in a chair and we want to continue camping at Yosemite.. Any feed back? We have lots of other ideas re:comprehensive management plan and will keep in touch!!

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**Correspondence ID:** 232      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Chisholm, Sarah  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,25,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** Dear Park Rangers, Please record and consider these comments for your Merced River Plan. I can hardly believe the biased, disingenuous rhetoric posted on your website. You are feeding the masses a question such as "What do you love about the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp." Why are you promoting and pandering to commercial interests? Why are you consciously elevating high-impact uses above preservation of park resources? Why don't you at least acknowledge both sides of an issue, and ask what we HATE about the Merced Lake High Camp? I HATE that the camp is a visual intrusion & eyesore. I HATE that the camp pollutes Yosemite with sewage, wastewater, garbage, and noise. I HATE that the camp relies on endless packtrains of animals that spread weeds, pollute water, degrade trails, and makes Yosemite's trails & backcountry smell like a domestic barnyard. I HATE that the camp network entices people into the backcountry who should not be there in the first place (witness the old woman with dementia who caused a massive search a couple years ago). I HATE that the elitist camps cause all of this damage for the pampered convenience of a relatively moneyed few, at the expense of everyone else. And what does the Park Service do? Lay down like a cheap shill and make lies and excuses to promote the camps. Shame on you ! The only logical, honest, forward-thinking thing to do is

to remove the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp (and all of the others, too) and restore the sites. Has the National Park Service completely lost its vision?

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**Correspondence ID:** 233      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Minor, Bob & Jeanie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Hello,

Here are our comments on the river plan in outline form. We have participated in some of the public scoping meetings and so most of these items may already be included in your planning , but a few are new. This is a mix of things we value and action items we hope the plan will include. We hope this list will be helpful and if you have any questions please feel free to contact us. Thank you for your efforts to preserve and protect the Merced and the surrounding area,

Bob and Jeanie Minor

Comments: I. Outstanding values A. Peace and Quiet - imagine the Valley without traffic noise! 1. aggressively enforce traffic laws a. especially speed limit on downhill Hwy 140 b. speed bumps everywhere to slow traffic c. automatic camera enforcement of speed limits d. aggressively enforce motorcycle and vehicle noise levels 1. use sound level meter check at entrance stations 2. no diesel busses in valley- transfer to many small and frequent electric shuttles at entrance points a. hybrids better than diesel but are too noisy - OK only as interim solution 3. all electric public transit should be the goal a. fuel cell busses ideal - quiet and non polluting b. many small and frequent busses better than the large busses now in use c. electric vehicles were thought to be unable to deal with conditions in the park, but vehicles have and will continue to improve. 4. no commercial truck traffic during the day a. this was normal practice in the 1960's b. probably not practical to ban diesel trucks unless a transfer station was established outside the park B. Water Quality 1. maintain water clarity a. remove sand pit and restore wetland below El Portal 2. maintain unrestricted water flow a. no incursions by bridge abutments 3. add more public restrooms along river 4. improve or remove off road parking within 100 feet of the river to prevent erosion a. don't add more parking, but pave or remove pull out parking - good example needing improvement is along the large pool above hwy 140-big oak flat junction 5. leave all fallen trees and snags 6. restore the Bridalveil moraine a. unlikely, but it should be mentioned as it would restore the water table in the valley floor. C. Air quality 1. limit number and size of campfires a. maximum flame height of 36 inches to eliminate bonfires b. no fires in picnic areas along the the river within 100 ft of river 2. Ban outdoor smoking within 100 yds of buildings, campgrounds, picnic areas, scenic pullouts, etc. - yes 100 yards, not 100 feet D. Sky 1. control vapor trails with "no fly zone" north and south of valley a. currently planes are routed near the valley causing vapor trails to accumulate over the park impacting sunshine and weather - clouds often form over Yosemite when surrounding areas are clear. 2. night sky a. keep all outdoor lighting to a minimum and fully shielded to preserve the dark sky b. ban the use of laser pointers except for organized astronomical events like those at Glacier Point during the summer E. Recreation 1. fishing regulations based on Yellowstone model a. year round catch and release b. small stretch of bait and keep 2. tubing, rafting and boating a. in limited stretch in the valley - unclear how to deal with snags and fallen trees, but the river has priority over the recreation b. prohibit in canyon stretch below valley to park boundary F. Scenery 1. keep developed areas for public in the east end of the valley, but remove employee residences and employee parking. Provide electric shuttle service for employees. 2. remove or at least replace "housekeeping cabins" - the ugliest structures in the valley 3. Don't destroy El Portal to save the valley a. don't allow El Portal to become like West Yellowstone b. remove the trailer park at El Portal c. keep parking areas away from the river d. no new development between Hwy 140 and the river e. purchase the land for sale on the south side of the river just outside the park to prevent private development f. restrict further hotel development along the river bank and near the park boundary I. The existing hotels at El Portal are too close to the river 2. trade land across hwy 140 for land along the river for any new development 4. remove golf course at Wawona 5. aggressively attack star thistles and other invasive species 6. but no pesticide or herbicide use along the corridor a. keep blackberries and wild grapes outside the park safe to eat! II. Access A. Limit maximum number of visitors in valley 1. do not "improve" roads for better, faster traffic flow - if anything, make driving a private car in the valley as inconvenient as possible to encourage the use of shuttles 2. reservations for prime time, but first come first served most times 3. limit car access at all times a. use Devils Postpile as model - only shuttle with no private cars during heavy use periods, private vehicles OK during off season B. Improve access for handicapped a. add wheelchair access to allow handicapped to get into and out the river safely 1. Virtual access a. webcams on the river not just the mountains III. Education 1. better signage along the river explaining Wild and Scenic River status 2. local, national and international outreach 3. all people have a stake in Yosemite 4. keep them up to date 5. virtual access - website and webcams-

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**Correspondence ID:** 234      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Open

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**Correspondence ID:** 235      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Polacco, Rich

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I have been coming to Yosemite and in the valley for over 50 plus years, for hiking, camping and for just enjoying the scenic beauty. I have seen the change that has come from just too many people. I have been in the valley during summer when it was so crowded it was not enjoyable, too many cars driving around. I now wait for spring, fall, winter. What I would like to see is that the valley floor clear of vehicles, when you make your reservation you get a pass to drive into the valley once in the valley you do not use the car. I really see no need to use it with all the shuttle service, bike paths etc. would like to see campground area's spread out a little, same number but just more open. Once you check out you get another drive pass to drive out. The Valley without cars driving around here to there would be amazing with less pollution. Maybe it would be enjoyable again during summer months.

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**Correspondence ID:** 236      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Smith, Renee  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,28,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** 1) What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The Merced River holds a special place in the natural history of Yosemite and the entire Sierra Nevada. It is fed by some of the most famous waterfalls in the world and it is a treasure to California. Anyone who enjoys these crystal fresh waters wants to know that it will be preserved for the future. Yosemite Valley would not be what it is today without the Merced River. 2) What do you want to see protected? The amount of erosion that is occurring on the Merced River banks is startling. I feel that restoration is a necessity in the preservation and proper management of the area. More informational signage regarding the sensitivity of these areas could attract attention from visitors that swim in these areas. I think that interpretive rangers in Yosemite Valley should take advantage of the large amount of visitors that attend their walking programs and programs on the green dragons. They should discuss the significance of the river and the proposed Merced River Plan. The more outreach that takes place, the more accepting people will be. It is important to monitor the number of people walking on the banks. Relocating and restoring camp sites that lay on the banks of the river could discourage some activity. It would also help to have rangers monitor the activity on the river. There are other areas that people can raft on the Merced River outside of the park so I do not think that allowing it in the park is necessary. The wood debris should also stay in the banks as it falls to ensure that the ecological impacts by human activity are minimal.

3) What needs to be fixed? Another issue in the valley is the lack of parking available to day use visitors. I have seen a large number of cars park on the side of the road, in between pine trees and not on a paved area, near bridal veil falls. Visitors that did park on the side of the road, toward Wawona, also walked in the road to reach the falls. The amount of erosion caused by their vehicle and their careless walking on a busy road does pose a safety issue. Law enforcement in the park needs to discourage this from happening by ticketing vehicles if possible or encouraging people to park their vehicles elsewhere and take the valley shuttle. Many visitors think that they can pull off on ANY road side and this should be prohibited. Also, the number and size of RVs entering the park is an issue. I have seen a number of RV accidents in the park and feel that they are not safe on the park roads. Many RV drivers tend to drive over the yellow line and do not use turn outs when they have a 15 car line behind them in the Valley and on both the Tioga and the 41 heading toward Wawona from the Valley. It would be my opinion to outlaw RVs in the park but this is not feasible so I propose that the size of RVs entering the park be strongly regulated. 4) What would you like to see kept the same? I would like to see that the charge of per car rather than per person be kept. This will encourage people to car pool rather than take individual vehicles. I would also like to see that the amount of lodging either stay the same or decrease. Lodging could lead to less parking available for day use visitors.

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**Correspondence ID:** 237      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** McKnight, Jay  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** I have camped, hiked, and backpacked in Yosemite Valley, and around the Park, since 1939. I have hiked thru plenty of house manure and urine puddles, and it's all very unpleasant. One year when we had small children, we rented burros (or was it mules?) for part of a day to carry the children around the valley. I'm no packer, and the animals were of very little use to us.

I'm writing to comments on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of business activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows:

Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley. This is not a radical idea--it should have been done years ago. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of concession stables from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in

a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley.

Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is also not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They are of no help to the "general public." They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored.

Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage—but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps.

Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically:

- 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor;
- 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group);
- 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au) and
- 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

Please keep me informed of your work as you proceed.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	238	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Cremeen, Rebecca				
<b>Received:</b>	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center Conservation/Preservation				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Feb,02,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	As the Park moves forward with a more thorough and transparent planning process for the Merced Wild and Scenic River Corridor, CSERC looks forward to seeing an improved plan that includes development of specific management actions that will protect the Outstanding Remarkable values and associated resources of the River and its ecosystem. The Court directive mandating a User Capacity Program provides the Park with a new opportunity to draft a comprehensive plan that includes a thorough analysis and the presentation of baseline conditions along with specific actions that will be taken to improve conditions in areas where visitor use negatively impacts resources.				

Specifically, as CSERC staff has consistently urged in the past, we believe that the Plan must spell out which specific plant and animal species in the river corridor are threatened by excess visitor use, where problem areas are located, and some context of how specific management actions are planned to address these impacts.

During this new phase of scoping, CSERC provides the following more focused comments that are listed below. In the past CSERC has provided detailed written comments in a timely fashion, and we believe that they have not consistently been appropriately evaluated or responded to in the EIS documents. Accordingly, to establish a legal record, CSERC is emphasizing that we ask for the Park to respond in the EIS to the specific comments CSERC submits so that it is clear they are not ignored.

1. Identification of Baseline Conditions with a context discussion It is critical that the latest Plan comprehensively analyze and clearly present the baseline conditions of the ORVs in the Wild and Scenic corridor. It is especially important to underscore where existing environmental problems or declining populations of certain species may potentially degrade ORVs. The analysis of baseline conditions should identify known information about which plant and animal species within the river corridor ecosystem are most at risk, where specific problem areas are located, and what the Park has identified for desired conditions to help those at-risk species to recover. Also important is to provide available information as to what individual and cumulative impacts contributed to the negative

baseline conditions for those at-risk plant and animal species of concern, so that those factors can be considered in ongoing resource protection efforts.

It would also be valuable if the Plan contained clear, timely baseline information about how much use is already quantified for specific areas based on historic records, where intensive use currently takes place, the timing of that use (monthly, daily, hourly), and the known impacts of historical and current use. These baseline conditions will provide the public with a clear picture of the Park's challenges and where critical resources need to be protected. Included in this should be baseline and abundance data for all applicable species and habitat, where available. To the extent feasible, CSERC believes that the Plan should include specifics as to which species are negatively affected by exactly which type of user activities in the Park and to what degree.

2. Visitor Tracking and Monitoring protocol In order to manage visitor use and capacity, it is critical that the Park develop a comprehensive and innovate visitor-tracking system. A detailed program for exactly how visitor use will be monitored is necessary. As CSERC suggested in the past many years ago, an RF chip program or some other similar technological monitoring system would be a cost-effective method to monitor the locations of cars as they travel through the Park. CSERC is interested in seeing Yosemite develop a program that is truly cutting-edge and that will set a standard for visitor tracking and monitoring throughout the National Park system. With access to Silicon Valley companies that would jump at the opportunity to be seen partnering with Yosemite Park, and with San Francisco Bay Area-based funding partners, such a progressive program appears to be truly attainable. 3. Limits on visitor use Once the baseline conditions are clearly documented, it is critical that reasonable alternatives for setting visitor use limits be explored and provided for public feedback. CSERC strongly believes that Park experiences will be of higher value if visitor limits are established in order to protect sensitive areas. Although this Merced River plan is focusing solely on management within the River corridor, river protection goals can be better met if management throughout the Park is coordinated and interactive. For example, by knowing how many vehicles/people are coming through the Big Oak Flat and El Portal travel corridors en route to the Valley, Park managers would have a valuable tool to help manage parking, day use, air quality, and environmental impacts within the river corridor of the Valley.

The number of visitors admitted to the park should be tied directly to management strategies that protect the ORV's along the River corridor. High impact activities that continue to degrade natural resources and particularly sensitive species need to be curtailed by more aggressive Park management. The limitation of use in specific areas will ensure that the overall visitor experience will be one that is memorable for positive reasons, rather than memorable due to crowding and congestion. The Plan should spell out the kinds of specific limitations that will be enforced in particular areas and how these will be monitored. For example, if the River Plan determines that specific meadow or riverside areas in the Valley often have use that exceeds desired objectives, then the Park may explain which adaptive management responses will be applied to those areas (restrict parking, establish more fencing, post more signs, etc.).

4. Transportation planning Transportation is key to addressing user capacity. CSERC re-states and emphasizes that key comment. Managing vehicle use and parking is the key management tool the Park has to address user capacity. Large crowds of visitors do not kayak up the river nor ride bicycles into the Park from Groveland or from Fishcamp. Visitors come by vehicle. They get out of those vehicles close to where there is parking or where shuttle buses provide stops. So as part of the River Plan discussion for user capacity, CSERC urges the Park planning staff to help the public to understand what options may be available to better manage traffic and parking.

As one example, in order to minimize the number of vehicles entering the Park, an expanded shuttle system could be provided from the gateway communities. The number of people enjoying the Park might stay the same or increase, but the number of vehicles polluting the air, causing congestion on roads, and affecting various values by parking would all diminish. CSERC hopes that the Merced River Plan will at least discuss various options (solutions to problems) for managing user capacity. As part of that discussion, incentives should be considered to promote the increased use of transit such as YARTS. An effective, widely publicized transit program would reduce the area needed to devote to parking and would also improve air quality in Yosemite Valley. The Plan should spell out how a transit program could be effectively implemented to reduce impacts associated with excess vehicles entering the Park.

5. Management actions specified The Plan should document, in detail, the specific areas that Park staff expects to manage to protect the plant and animal species and associated habitat areas that are most heavily impacted by past/existing levels of visitor use. The current, historic, and potential range of affected key species should be clearly presented in the Plan. The locations at greatest risk should be identified and prioritized for effective management. Actions that can be taken in particular areas to reduce the negative impacts of excessive visitor should be clearly developed within an implementation program. Measures must be proposed to address real concerns that are identified at this planning stage. It is not sufficient to merely implement adaptive management once problems arise.

6. Reduction of non-essential visitor amenities CSERC believes that in order to effectively manage the ORVs in the Wild and Scenic corridor, some of the non-essential structures and amenities should be removed or reduced to allow for restoration of key areas to more natural conditions, or in other areas, to address over-crowding. Uses such as a golf course, artificial ice rink, and tennis courts are certainly the kinds of uses or facilities that many Park supporters will believe are better suited to a resort than a National Park.

A reduction in stock use should at least be considered in one River Plan alternative as a beneficial measure to improve conditions along the overall Merced River corridor. The intensive use of stock in the Wild and Scenic corridor contributes to soil compaction, erosion, the spread of invasive weeds, and the contamination of trails used by hikers.

If the Park intends to continue such non-essential uses, the Plan should clearly describe how retention, reduction, or removal of each



major use would affect the ORVs and the at-risk plant and animal communities within the Wild and Scenic corridor.

7. High Sierra Camps CSERC believes that it is essential in the Merced Wild and Scenic River planning process to not just maintain the status quo, but to provide scrutinizing evaluations of how existing development or permitted uses do or don't protect or enhance ORV's in the river corridor. The High Sierra Camps need to be looked at for more than historic, economic, and social evaluation. They should also be carefully considered for how they affect the full range of ecosystem resources and the specific ORV's that have been defined for the Merced River.

In the case of the High Sierra Camps, it is easy to focus on the decades of enjoyable experiences they have provided through commercial operation. Park encouraged publicity, and marketing. But to comply with the legal mandates of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, it is essential to consider how the Camps affect the river environment. Does concentrated recreational use centered around these camps lead to diminishment for wildlife or does it clearly result in some level of degraded water quality? Are public health and safety issues appropriately solved in terms of Wild and Scenic River management by plans to fix long-running problems tied to wastewater or other waste issues? How does the supply needs of High Sierra Camps lead to impacts to the wilderness experience for those not using the camps, or how does the supply chain result in environmental impacts on trails, along the river, or elsewhere in the corridor?

CSERC asks that the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan not only describe the positive as well as the negative effects of the High Sierra Camps, but that those effects are clearly tied to whether or not they individually as well as cumulatively degrade or enhance the ORV's that are the focus of this planning process.

In summary, CSERC sincerely believes that it is legally essential for the Park to develop a Wild and Scenic River Management Plan that includes clear and quantifiable objectives and identified measures to protect the Outstanding Remarkable Values of the Merced River. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and contribute to this important planning effort. CSERC staff looks forward to working closely with the Park staff to help craft a balanced, visionary Plan that places a priority on protecting the River ecosystem, rather than placing a priority on visitor use in the corridor.

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**Correspondence ID:** 239      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Behrens, Robert  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** As an active rock climber and regular user of the park and revenue contributor to businesses in and around the park, I would strongly urge preserving modular access to the river regions crags. That means, allowing vehicles to park along the river corridor to access climbing at the crags. Existing regulations, when based on objective science, protect resources already. Recreational use of the corridor should be of paramount importance in addition to resource protection. Please avoid draconian closures of areas and promote instead user education.

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**Correspondence ID:** 240      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bessem, Eric  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,11,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Yosemite is a precious treasure. I am against any major expansion in the park. However, I think that reducing campsites and river access to rafting, ect. is the wrong approach. Not everyone can afford the Ahwahnee. Preservation of existing is the right approach, not reduction or exclusion!

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**Correspondence ID:** 241      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ralston, James  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am writing to urge that strict limitations on the use of pack animals in the Merced River corridor be included in the new plan. Horses and mules are tough on trails and cause pollution. Naturally, people are nostalgic about their historic role in the park, but for the long term sustainability of Yosemite they pretty much have to go. After all they are not native to the Sierra. The High Sierra Camps share the same problems, and in terms of pollution they are probably worse than the pack animals. Phasing them out would be a good policy decision.

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**Correspondence ID:** 242      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Powell, Dan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent,

I am writing you in response to your request for comments about the new plan to determine the future protection of the Merced River in Yosemite National Park. I have been enjoying Yosemite since I was a child in the 1950's. Through the years my family and I have camped in the valley using tents, motorhomes, and everything in between. Now that my wife and I are retired, and the kids are on their own, we enjoy camping with our fifth-wheel trailer. However, we have found it impossible to reserve a campsite in the valley in the summertime. The reason for this is due, in large part, to the fact that 1) about 50% of the campsites have been closed. (Upper River and Lower River campgrounds were our favorites.) And, 2) there are VERY few sites that accommodate the large trailers and motor homes.

The obvious remedy for this unfair shutting out of (mostly) senior citizens is to 1) open Upper and Lower River campgrounds. Those campgrounds looked much better with happy campers than in their present ugly state. And, 2) make it so EVERY camp site will accommodate long vehicles. This way every site will accommodate every type of camping, from tents to motor homes and everything in between.. This will also eliminate the hypocrisy in your "first come, first served" reservation system.

The main reason for our National Parks was to set aside wild lands for all the people. To give one type of camper an advantage over another type of camper is wrong.

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**Correspondence ID:** 243      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Schoene, MD, Robert B  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Climbing in the Park is one of the most sacrosanct and unobtrusive activities which has identified the park as the most noteworthy and precious locations in akl the world. Without climbing, Yosemite would be less attractive not only to climbers but also to tourists who come to marvel at this sport. Any changes which obviously are also in the Park's interest and durability must also include logistics which will not greatly hinder climbing - transportation, camping and lodging, and food. I have been a devotee of Yosemite since 1969 and hope to continue to do so for years.

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**Correspondence ID:** 244      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ponslet, Eric  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I wanted to attract your attention to the unique climbing opportunities that exist throughout Yosemite National Park, their historical value, and the importance of considering the needs of local and visiting climbers in establishing management plans for the area. Of particular concern to me (and countless fellow climbers) are the following issues: \* the availability of camping in the park, in particular lower cost, primitive camping options. I believe that primitive camping should be favored by park managers over more developed options such as lodges and hotel rooms. Primitive camping is a much better way to experience the unique natural environment of the park and is much better aligned with the park's mission. \* The current restrictions on stay duration within the park are particularly worrisome to climbers. Climbing in Yosemite is done at such a scale and level of difficulty that long stays are required to achieve major objectives. The park should examine options to allow for these longer stays, in particular in combination with the aforementioned primitive camping facilities. \* Climbs within the park are widely dispersed and require motorized access. Safe climbing practice on long one-day climbs also requires very early departures from trailheads (usually pre-dawn). These special needs should be taken into account when defining transportation plans. Climbers must be able to reach all major climbing access trailheads at times of the day (particularly early morning and evenings) that may not be of interest to other users of the park. I sincerely hope you will give these concerns the consideration they deserve, given the unique and historic significance of Yosemite to the climbing community.

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**Correspondence ID:** 245      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Other  
**Correspondence:** open

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**Correspondence ID:** 246      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mendershause, Ralph  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,18,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am new and late to this project, but I am also interested in its potential impacts. It sounds like a good idea to get away from Crane Flat. I would like to know if any thought has been given to how this project will effect the watershed of the South Fork Merced. Specifically, will there be new trails built into that canyon to facilitate educational activities at the new site? I expect these matters have been looked into as the South Fork watershed is a sensitive area for many reasons.

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**Correspondence ID:** 247      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Drummond, Dana  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am a longtime visitor, recreationalist, and employee of Yosemite National Park. During my time in the Valley I have seen many changes and much room for improvement, both in policy and in park infrastructure. Please consider these ideas when constructing the newest plans for Yosemite National Park: -More primitive camp sites. Improve sanitation and camp sites at Camp 4. -Add another water spigot to Camp 4. -Less development. There are already far too many buildings and infrastructure on the Valley Floor. -Require the concessions company to provide bicycle rentals for a nominal fee. There are too many drivers and not enough people out and about-make it affordable, cheaply affordable. -Extend and improve bike paths in the Valley. Multiple old trails litter the Valley Loop Trail region. Consolidate and pave one. I know that the group 'Friends of Yosemite' are flat out against any new pavement for whatever the cause, but if Yosemite is going to be showcased to America as accessible and as a reason to have and support all of our Parks, wilderness and natural environments, lets make it interactive, less congested and bicycleable! -A bridge or tunnel at the Lower Yosemite Fall intersection to facilitate both vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist traffic. -Please do NOT reroute the road from its current location to the area in between The Lodge and the Merced. -Please allow full access to the Merced River. Perhaps an educational permit/registration system for whitewater enthusiasts would help let this group enjoy this aspect of the park. - Please allow limited B.A.S.E. jumping in the park. By limited I mean education based permit/registration system and specific days/times and limited numbers of people per formation. -Continue to allow hang gliders and paragliders access to the air of the park. -For the previous three comments, consider the model employed in Denali National Park regarding climber access to Denali and Foraker. -Rock climbing in Yosemite is world class, world reknown and a significant aspect of the world history of the sport. Please allow for continued and improved access to all formations, both large and small, within the park. -Please allow for extended stays within the park compared to the current restrictions, with an emphasis on rock climbers. -Consider hiring contractors who can maintain and build roads who can get the job done more efficiently than the current contract winners. Seemingly endless and inefficient maintenance and construction within the Valley is not quiet, peaceful or enhancing of the experience that should be attainable within the park. Good luck with the planning process and thank you for reading my concerns.

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**Correspondence ID:** 248      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Curry, David and Rozanna  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Sir or Madam,  
  
Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the MRP. Having be born and raised in Yosemite and now residing in Burbank, Ca. I understand and appreciate the hard work you have undertaken to keep Yosemite a wonderful place. Many people who visit the park come from urban area's and, therefor, need to come in direct contact with its environment, ie; touch, feel, smell, listen, taste and experience what this great park has to offer. These lessons can not be experienced if the park is treated is if it were a museum. The importance of respecting nature, and a greater appreciation of its attributes comes from this direct contact. I would like to make comments regarding the following things:

1) I think you need to reduce the one quarter mile boundary on each side of the river. It doesn't make sense when the Valley itself is one mile at it's widest, to have one half of it affected. 2) I believe that all people should be able to enjoy the recreation that the river affords. A big aspect of being able to experience Yosemite includes being able to stay and "play" there. There can be balance. 3) Accommodations in the valley have already been greatly reduced by floods and rockfalls. Reducing accommodations further yet due to the MRP is unacceptable. The average American should be able to experience Yosemite without having to hike in and camp.

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**Correspondence ID:** 249      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Heinrich, Darrell  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear planning members: We feel there needs to be more camping facilities in the valley. There have been so many sites closed that it is nearly impossible to get a campsite. Hence, the following recommendations: 1. Substantially more campsites 2. Campsites with electricity (cut down on generator usage) 3. Campsites with electricity and water Thank you for considering my recommendations.

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**Correspondence ID:** 250      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Friedman, David  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** The Merced river as well as all rivers in our National Parks should be open to recreational whitewater kayaking.

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**Correspondence ID:** 251      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Carrington, Dennis  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent,

I am writing to address the scope of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. I commend you for preparing such an important and long-awaited plan. I feel that several issues should be addressed, and included in the Scope of, the plan. I have outlined several issues and potential ways to address them in the plan and they are listed below:

? Aesthetics such as damage to scenic resources and views light and glare. Policies to address this: Require building materials and colors that fit into the landscape, site design that fits structures into the landscape rather than having them standing out in it, minimizing of the felling of trees and planting new ones to make structures less visible, minimizing the heights of cuts for roads or trails and low ?intensity lighting with cut-off luminaires

? Air Quality including pollution from automobiles, campfires, and heating and cooling. Policies that could address this: Require private automobiles to be parked outside of the park and provide electric trams to transport visitors. Limit the number of visitors to the Park at any one time. Limit the use of campfires by permitting them for clusters of campsites rather than for each campsite. Use LEED Gold technology in the design of buildings to conserve energy.

? Biological Resources such as sensitive habitat riparian areas, wildlife corridors, species of concern such as bears and rare or endangered species. Impacts to animals native to the Merced River Valley should be minimized and mitigated. Fewer vehicles running at lower speeds would protect animals. Dogs should be prohibited from the park. All livestock should be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park to prevent the spread of harmful and invasive weeds. Livestock should be fed weed-free feed and be kept from open grazing. A Habitat Conservation Plan should be part of the plan to protect species (and their habitat) and facilitate preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement.

? Cultural Resources including impacts to paleontological resources, historic resources and human remains. These resources should be protected and have a higher priority than their tourism value. Access to such resources should be restricted to qualified professionals. Prepare a Cultural Resources Preservation Plan as part of the plan.

? Soil Erosion impacts from trail use by humans and livestock, grazing, and the use of fertilizers and pesticides and runoff from roads, parking areas and structures. Limit the number of people and livestock in the park at any one time. Prohibit grazing in the park. Allow fewer horses to be corralled in one location and have more and smaller stables. Remove all animal effluent on a daily basis and dispose of it properly. Do not allow animal effluent to accumulate and percolate into the groundwater. Prohibit horses from single-track trails.

? Soils that cannot support effluent from visitors and livestock. Limit human effluent in the park by requiring visitors to the High Sierra Camps to walk in to the camps. Require visitors to bring in their own food to the camps. Require visitors to use composting toilets or to pack out their own toilet paper. Large commercial camps draw too many people (and their waste) into the high country. Cabins and restaurants should be removed and the areas restored. The camps could remain but as low-impact facilities with

composting toilets. Prohibit commercial horse rides in the park. All livestock should be required to wear manure catchers.

? Hazardous materials impacts due to gasoline storage and dispensing and hazardous materials brought by visitors such as camping fuel and dripping crank case oil. Gasoline stations should be removed from the park. Fuel depots for park vehicles should be constructed to eliminate the possibility of spills and impacts to groundwater. Limit the use of camping fuel to canisters and provide for their recycling. Require private automobiles to be parked outside of the park and provide electric trams to transport visitors.

? Water quality impacts due to runoff of chemicals into watercourses and pollutants seeping into the water table. Parking areas should be graveled rather than paved. Runoff from parking areas and roadways should be captured and treated. Control water pollution by complying the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) as required by the Clean Water Act.

? Public safety such as exposure to landslides, fire and auto traffic. Site structures and campsites away from potential landslide or avalanche impact zones. Site structures away from potential fuel. Provide fire sanctuary areas where visitors would be safe during a major fire. Have an emergency evacuation plan in the event of a fire. Require private automobiles to be parked outside of the park and provide electric trams to transport visitors. Limit the speed of park vehicles.

? Population impacts including crime, loss of connection with nature due to crowding. Yosemite has the same social ills as any city. Fewer people in the park at any one time will minimize crowding and crime and enable people to connect better with nature.

? Public Facilities like fire, police, schools and parks. Limit impacts to public facilities by allowing fewer visitors to the park at any one time. Fewer visitors would require fewer park employees thus reducing impacts to public facilities.

? Transportation and traffic impacts from automobiles, tour busses and trams. Require private automobiles to be parked outside of the park and provide electric trams to transport visitors. Limited parking could be allowed on Routes 41, 120 and 140 within the park for day visitors and people driving through the park. Limit the number of visitors to the park at any one time. Limit the number of tour busses in the park at any one time.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the scoping phase of the plan. Please address the issues outlined in this letter in your plan and in the EIS. Please include me on your mailing list for the plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 252      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Florek, Anne and Dennis  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,14,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, For years we have been camping in Yosemite National Park. Our oldest grandchild is 21 and the youngest is 4. We have taken each one of our 5 grandchildren camping to allow them to enjoy and appreciate the beauty and magnificence of Yosemite. After the flood which destroyed one of the campgrounds, it has been almost impossible to get a reservation in the campground of our choice. I know the park must be preserved for future generations but what about the now generation? How can it be appreciated if a reservation is unattainable? On the 15th of each month at 7 a.m., we are competing with the world trying to obtain a camp site. I feel that being a resident of California and a citizen of the United States, we should have some type of priority but we do not. We've had the pleasure of meeting many different people in the campground, mostly European. They tend to have campsites for one to two days before moving on to another vicinity. This greatly reduces our chance to get a campsite for a 3 or 5 or 7 day stay. We have had as many as four computers and one telephone operating at this time and we still did not get a reservation. Last year, for some reason, we were privileged to obtain one in the pines (which we always strive for)?.not the choice of campsite, but at least the choice of campground. We felt so honored. Mr. Superintendent, there must be an easier way to be able to get a reservation. What if someone doesn't have a computer. They are completely out of luck because trying to call on the phone and getting through to an operator is impossible. When we were younger, we were able to tent camp. Now that we are senior citizens and not able to tent camp, we have a 5th wheel camper. This limits our chance of campsites as all sites cannot handle an RV, 5th wheel or camper. The roads are too narrow and some existing trees make it impossible to access some campsites. Please consider having wider roads and better access so it is not an act of God to park your rig without damage. People are going to camp with campers so why make them feel like they are not welcome? It appears that you want the tourism for the dollar value but you do not want the people. That is exuded to us through the rangers and staff in the park but not the volunteers. I would appreciate if you would consider our suggestions.

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**Correspondence ID:** 253      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Rothell, Devon  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent Neubacher:

Please consider these comments for the new MRP.

1. The NPS should clarify how the site planning efforts at Yosemite Valley, El Portal, Wawona, and the Transportation Plan will be integrated into the Merced River Plan.

It seems that these site planning efforts could allow for a "pre-decisional" planning process unless scheduled apart from the larger MRP decisions (especially as it relates to user capacity and facilities). It also could get very complicated for the public and the NPS planners to have several MRP alternatives and then several site plan alternatives for each location and then "mix and match" to package a range of alternatives. No one will want to make sense of the 20+ possible combinations if done this way. This leads into my next comment which provides a suggestion?

2. The NPS should consider developing river plan alternatives first; conduct a CBA to choose a preferred; get all the Park and Regional approvals on that preferred; run it by the public and then start the process of developing a range of site planning alternatives that complement the larger, guiding river plan preferred alternative. I think that this may drag the process out longer, but I still think it could be completed by 2012.

3. The NPS should consider better sequencing strategies between the MRP planning process (more specifically, the accompanied site planning for Yosemite Valley, El Portal and Wawona) and the upcoming prospectus for the next concessions contract.

If the prospectus comes out as scheduled in June 2010, it will likely be based on the visitor services outlined in the prevailing park document, the 1992 Concession Services Plan/EIS (still valid). If the prospectus is not based on that plan, one could speculate that it is pre-decisional to the MRP if it is calling for expanded or reduced visitor services than what is called for in the 1992 CSP. Aside from that, I think it is likely that the new MRP could call for a change in visitor services than what is called for in the prospectus; however concession companies will have already bid and one would be awarded a contract based on the prospectus. If the next year the MRP is approved and calls for something drastically or even minorly different there could be impacts on many, including the Division of Business and Revenue Management, and others as there would likely be a surge in workload sorting through the discrepancy and managing the concessionaire to changes in the contract. It could have negative financial and employment impacts to the concessionaire and the government. The NPS could avoid this if they considered issuing the prospectus after the new MRP prescribes the appropriate types and levels of use within the river corridor. That way, the prospectus could compliment and implement the new MRP. Additionally, prospective bidders on the upcoming prospectus may be confused on what they are bidding on and the services they will be required to provide for the duration of the next contract. Finally, the prospectus and the above mentioned sequencing issues, as currently scheduled, should be analyzed in the EIS as a cumulative action.

4. The NPS should clarify if there is going to be a separate Park-wide Transportation Plan that will tier from or support the MRP; OR if there is a "transportation element" to the MRP that will be developed in this plan. The whole "transportation" issue and approach is very confusing at public outreach meetings and the public is left wondering what the intent of it is. I suggest that you separate the Transportation piece of the puzzle into a separate plan with distinct alternatives...especially since it will be a park wide scope. It would be unfortunate if the third MRP got bogged down by issues far outside of the river corridor.

5. The NPS should either conduct additional quantitative visitor use studies to support the MRP OR conduct additional quantitative analysis on existing visitor use data to better understand "Visitor Experience" in YNP.

It seems like Visitor Experience is always so qualitative in NEPA analysis which always seems to put that resource lower on the scale than the other Natural and Cultural resources that are supported by hard data/science. While I agree that Visitor Experience is qualitative, I think that it would be interesting to use the extensive data this park has on visitors to understand the types and levels of use valued by park visitors. If the overwhelming majority of visitors come to Yosemite to do a range of activities and the most popular is swimming/recreating in the river, wouldn't park managers want to know that? Presumably so they could provide that opportunity in a managed way? Wouldn't also be interesting to know what that visitor's tolerance level for traffic congestion and crowding was before they would not recreate in the river? I bet if there were some analysis done on tolerance levels, the NPS would find them to be pretty high by the average park visitor. That would be a good thing to know when going into planning for transportation, services, opportunities, etc. It seems that there are many studies done on the tolerance level of natural systems/resources, so there should be the same for visitor experience.

6. The NPS should explain what the "baseline" is for the term "protective of ORVs".

The court ruled that in this planning process, the NPS has to prove that existing conditions are protective of ORVs as well as any action alternatives developed in this plan. This will be very difficult without extensive resources and money going to a monitoring program. When developing ORVs, I suggest that the NPS factor in that humans are part of the natural environment so that "protective of ORV's" will still allow humans to interact and impact their surrounding environment to an extent. For example, if Cooks meadow is deemed an ORV, I could negatively impact it by walking through it; therefore, the MRP would prescribe that people not access Cooks meadow as one foot on the grass could cause damage. If the ORV were instead the meadow ecosystem, then it would allow for a certain amount of human impact without compromising the ecosystem; or a limited amount of development (boardwalks) could allow for unlimited visitor experience and protect the ORV.

7. The NPS should retain the existing number of overnight accommodations that currently exist in Yosemite Valley in their current

location.

8. The NPS should retain the existing campground accommodations in Yosemite Valley, and seek areas where additional campgrounds could be expanded in the Valley.

9. The NPS should continue centering visitor services in the East Valley instead of spreading out development. I think it is OK to have heavy concentrated development in the Valley in one location. This is a sustainable approach as well because instead of massive deconstruction/restoration/rebuild or relocations, you keep what you have and make it work.

10. The NPS should retain all existing visitor services in Yosemite Valley and Wawona. They are all heavily used services.

11. Rafting should be an ORV in Yosemite Valley and El Portal segments of the river.

12. Swimming/waterplay should be an ORV throughout the river corridor.

13. Kayaking should be an ORV of the river and South Fork, even where it is not permitted for safety reasons.

14. Picnicing/waterplay/beach activities should be an ORV in Yosemite Valley and there should be areas where this is allowed even if there are higher impacts to those areas. To mitigate this, these areas should be established, appropriately developed and then substantial resources programmed for restoration efforts each year.

15. The NPS should consider expanding dining options in Yosemite Valley. Right now, visitors have the choice of a food court or the Ahwahnee or Mountain Room. There is no middle ground ? visitors either have fast food or fine dining. The majority of visitors to this park would probably benefit from something in the middle on their vacation. I don't think that there should be a conversion of the Food Court, Ahwahnee, or Mountain Room to accommodate this; they should be retained.

16. Pools should be retained at Yosemite Lodge, Curry Village, The Ahwahnee, Wawona, and El Portal. This is a visitor service well-liked by park visitors and community members and it provides a safe, managed way for visitors to swim, who may be anxious about the river. If the MRP calls for a reduction in pools as part of the alternatives on the basis that it is not the type of use that National Parks should support, then that decision should be consistent for all pools in the river corridor, including Wawona and El Portal.

17. The NPS should lift the moratorium on residential development in El Portal prior to the completion of the MRP ? in fact, I think it should be lifted now. It is unclear on what grounds this moratorium was issued. Could the NPS clarify? If it has to do with user capacity, it seems that there is more regulation required than just on building development. For example, if people are denied adding a bedroom to their existing house, one could infer that it is because that action means expanded capacity? What if someone wants to sell their house? Do they have to sell it to a family with the same number of people as their own for the NPS to sign the permit? What if a couple wanted to have children? If the intent of the moratorium is capacity related, it should be clarified; and if that is the case, the moratorium doesn't fully deal with capacity related issues in the community. If the moratorium does not have anything to do with capacity, then why is it in place? Also, why is it only in place in El Portal and not Wawona? Additionally, the moratorium should be an action analyzed under cumulative effects in the EIS.

18. The NPS should build more NPS employee housing in El Portal.

19. The current site planning efforts at the Ahwahnee and at Curry Village should help inform site planning for the MRP in Yosemite Valley to reduce resources expended on site planning for this new plan, and possible inconsistencies between planning efforts.

20. The NPS should consider the possibility that, like Tuolumne (though not to the same extent), the Merced River corridor rejuvenates every year. Use is heavy three months out of the year and moderate an additional three months, but the river corridor is largely untouched for 6 months out of the year. This plan should focus on how to protect it in the busier months and how to help it recover for the six months that it gets each year.

21. The MRP should not separate the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp from the rest of the High Sierra Loop when planning for that area of the river corridor. I believe that the high Sierra loop system would be best addressed in a future Wilderness Management Plan and that the MLHSC should be retained in its current use and capacity in all MRP alternatives.

22. My understanding of the TRP is that alternatives started to form by "themes." For example, there seemed to be a "historic" alternative, a "green/science" alternative, a "Wilderness" alternative, etc. Then the best parts of each alternative were packaged together to form a preferred. I know that themes came out of the scoping process for the TRP, but I think the planning team should not proceed that way for the MRP alternatives development. Instead, there should be consensus amongst all the resource groups in each alternative developed for the MRP. The cultural folks should feel that each alternative meets/protects cultural resources, just as the scientist should, and the visitor "folks" and the Wilderness folks. Otherwise, you may have a core team and the public fighting for "their resource" alternative which could hinder the process.

23. When deciding how the NPS will manage to the user capacity that must be established in this plan, the NPS should recognize that

the management actions may only have to be taken a few days per year. For example, if the only way to manage to the number is to establish a day-use reservation system, don't implement that reservation system 365 days per year; it is unnecessary. Instead, use the data you have over the past ten years to establish which days you would implement that type of system. This leads me to the next comment?

24. If a day-use reservation system is part of this plan and becomes a part of the preferred alternative, the NPS needs to support that action with considerable public outreach/advertisement efforts that are clear and not misleading. The NPS will need to budget a lot of money to that item. Private advertising and PR firms should be contracted with to do it the right way. As a YNP resident, I still get questions every day from visitor's who ask "when is the park going to disallow cars in the Valley?" or "I didn't know you could drive to the Valley?I thought cars weren't allowed" The misconceptions are a residual result of previous planning efforts that announced the NPS was going to "Close the gates." The message needs to be delivered correctly, accurately, and widely and made as simple as possible for visitors. With that said, I do not propose that the NPS should consider a day use reservation system, only consider it fully if it becomes part of the plan.

25. The NPS should hold a public workshop to establish desired conditions for the river, in addition to the many other public workshops scheduled for this planning process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. As a life-long Yosemite resident, I am excited to be a part of this planning effort that is so important for YNP. I commend the park's efforts so far in reaching out to the community and the public to help define the scope of this plan; it will be a good one.

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**Correspondence ID:** 254      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Cuyle, Diane  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,14,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Thank you for requesting public input and sending me a postcard notification of the three year comprehensive management plan.

I am most interested in camping near the river, as well as some access to the river. I especially like the beach like spaces near safe pull off or parking areas. Wading and limited swimming near calm areas of the river are also very nice in the summer.

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**Correspondence ID:** 255      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Evans, Don  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** My first visit to Yosemite Valley was in 1936, when I was introduced to God's spot on earth! Since then, my children grew up in the Valley, my grandchildren grew up in the Valley and now, hopefully, a nacent great-grandson/daughter will be privileged to grow up in the beauty that is Yosemite Valley. It is very difficult to think of restricting access to camping in the Valley and I believe that certain measures would enhance everybody's experience: 1. Elderly folk like us just cannot sleep on the ground, on air mattresses, cots, et al. My children are getting to the age where they wake with aches and pains, but are still able to cope with that kind of camping. 2. Perhaps planning for the Valley might include a specified campground for RV/Motorhomes for bearers of a Golden Age Pass, and that would be the only campground allowing vehicular entrance. 3. All other campgrounds could then be designated tent-only camping and access would be via shuttles with cargo space for conveying tents, stoves, etc. These shuttles would enter the Valley from designated parking space inside or outside the Park. These measures would go a long way toward mitigating the increasing vehicular traffic that is so clogging the byways of the Valley. There are enough transit possibilites currently available to get campers to Glacier Point, and other points of interest, now accessed by the glut of automobiles today. I hope these comments are of interest to you, the staff of the Valley. I would ask that I be included in the email correspondence regarding planning for the future of Yosemite Valley and Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 256      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** A Open, Number  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** OPEN

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**Correspondence ID:** 257      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Drayna, Dennis



**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Yosemite Valley is the most respected technical rock climbing landscape in the world. Technical climbing has been a traditional usage of this landscape extending back more than 80 years. The traditional climbers campground, once again named Camp 4, has been designated as a National Historic Landmark, indicating the importance of climbing and climbers in both the history and the continuing daily fabric of Yosemite Valley. It is absolutely essential that the climbing resources in Yosemite be preserved and enhanced in the new Merced River Plan. The new plan must include a place to camp, such as Camp 4, that facilitates early starts and late returns from the Valley's climbs. It also must include both approach and descent routes that maintain access to the climbs, while simultaneously protecting the sometimes fragile terrain. The plan must also include provisions for maintaining an active presence on the Valley floor for the Yosemite Search and Rescue, the most highly skilled technical climbing rescue service in the world. What the plan should not have are any requirements for reservations or quotas on the number of climbers allowed on existing technical climbing routes. These would impose an unreasonable burden on park staff, and would probably be impossible to enforce. Likewise, bivouac sites on big walls should not be subject to back country reservations and permits. Even today, climbing is too uncertain an activity to know exactly what ledge you'll end up on when it gets dark. Although my days as a Camp 4 climbing bum are long past, I still revere the Valley's giant walls and smaller cliffs. I can't imagine that my fabulous experiences there would not be equally available to the current and future generations of climbers. The new Merced River Plan must maintain a vigorous climbing community in Yosemite Valley itself, and must insure that technical climbing there remains open and accessible as the world treasure it is today.

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**Correspondence ID:** 258      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Ainsleigh, H. Gordon  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

I wish to comment on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP).

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

Climbing in Yosemite has inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, countless stories and legends, and a plethora of movies and books, from Star Trek to Galen Rowel.

With the advent of removable protection devices in the 1970s and '80s, climbing became the showcase "leave no trace" recreation pursuit, and the bolts on unprotectable routes not only are invisible beyond 20 yards distance, but can be further camouflaged if desired.

Camping should be expanded into invisible areas under the trees, with more gravel parking areas and less pavement, more red-brown-black volcanic gravel and less grey-white limestone and such, so as to allow trees with happy roots, nourished by rainfall, to hide away the parking areas and camping mounds that look just about like natural forest floor.

Climbers are among the most minimalist campers in their impact on the land, and the traditions of Sunnyside have a glorious history that should be carried forth to future generations.

What needs to be curtailed to preserve the Yosemite Valley and the Merced River Canyon is buildings, pavement, camping platforms and grey-white gravel. Raised areas of dirt for tents create equally dry camping surfaces, and can be spread under the forest canopy inconspicuously.

If these suggestions are followed, user capacity of Yosemite Valley can be increased while simultaneously reducing impact to the visual and ecological environment.

Climbing and low impact camping as described above holds an especially valuable place in the "Outstandingly Remarkable Value" category of assets for the Merced River Plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 259      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Hibbs, Ed  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,15,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, Please put the campgrounds back in. I've noticed in media news that you wonder why the attendance is down. A lot of us can tell you why. It is the lack of being able to camp in Yosemite with our trailers or RVs. You are also making it harder and harder for normal people to attend. It is becoming the young and able place to hike and you seem to be bent on eliminating opportunities for people who are older. We want to camp in Yosemite with our trailers or RVs and are too old to "rough it" in tents and hiking to back country camps just to sleep on the ground. Our families used to go to Yosemite and have many memories of camping there. Now, it seems you do not want us there unless we go just for the day. Please put the campgrounds back in. Thank you for reading my comments.

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**Correspondence ID:** 260      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Andre, Edward  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

#### Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational

values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

I would like to add a few personal words to this letter. I've been a climber since the age of 14, and the very first big climbing trip I took at the age of 16 was to Yosemite, when I hitchhiked there from NY. Today, at 44, I am a professor at Columbia University, and still climb actively on the East Coast; and whenever I can, I climb around the country and internationally. It is a marvellous fact that Yosemite has become an international site of great cultural significance to climbers both young and old. A new renaissance in climbing seems to take place every 5-10 years in Yosemite. The most recent ascents on cliffs like El Capitan, carried out by young Americans like Tommy Caldwell, and seasoned international climbers such as Alex Huber and Yuji Hirayama- are a logical extension of the extraordinary climbs by Americans such as Lynn Hill, Todd Skinner, Hans Florine, and many others.

Yosemite is an incredible destination for tourists and climbers alike. But it's important to recognize that a truly international CULTURE was nurtured by the exceptional climbing in Yosemite, which should be considered on a par with the many other uses and users of the park.

I spent six summers in Yosemite between 1982 and 1989. It was an absolute crucible for my formation as an adult, as a professor. The Park Service should recognize that the status of climbing and mountaineering goes far beyond a simple 'adventure sport'. It's always been interesting to me that in Europe, climbing has been recognized on a mainstream level, with the names of great climbers known just as great football players are known here in the states. What an incredible opportunity for the Park Service to set a precedent in this plan, acknowledging the deep and important cultures- American and International- that have been formed in Yosemite and that continue to grow and evolve!

I hope that a substantial dialog emerges between all the constituents in this process, and that the significant cultural contributions that we have made as climbers are recognized.

Finally, it is important to note that climbers in Yosemite, as a community, have over the decades been an ecologically conscious constituency, with numerous voices raised in defense of the environment. I am sure that as the plan for Merced area goes forward, climbers will be thinking at the forefront of how to protect the ecosystem. In my experience from many years climbing in Yosemite in the 80s, our climbing community was a strongly visible presence, yet a low impact presence ecologically.

For all these reasons I hope that access to climbing in Yosemite will continue to be open, and indeed hope for improvements- so that I can celebrate my 50th year, and more, with future ascents in the Valley.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	261	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Keller, Edward J				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb.03.2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Yosemite Planning,				

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

#### Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally.

Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

I would like to add a few personal words to this letter. I've been a climber since the age of 14, and the very first big climbing trip I took at the age of 16 was to Yosemite, when I hitchhiked there from NY. Today, at 44, I am a professor at Columbia University, and still climb actively on the East Coast; and whenever I can, I climb around the country and internationally. It is a marvellous fact that Yosemite has become an international site of great cultural significance to climbers both young and old. A new renaissance in climbing seems to take place every 5-10 years in Yosemite. The most recent ascents on cliffs like El Capitan, carried out by young Americans like Tommy Caldwell, and seasoned international climbers such as Alex Huber and Yuji Hirayama- are a logical extension of the extraordinary climbs by Americans such as Lynn Hill, Todd Skinner, Hans Florine, and many others.

Yosemite is an incredible destination for tourists and climbers alike. But it's important to recognize that a truly international CULTURE was nurtured by the exceptional climbing in Yosemite, which should be considered on a par with the many other uses and users of the park.

I spent six summers in Yosemite between 1982 and 1989. It was an absolute crucible for my formation as an adult, as a professor. The Park Service should recognize that the status of climbing and mountaineering goes far beyond a simple 'adventure sport'. It's always been interesting to me that in Europe, climbing has been recognized on a mainstream level, with the names of great climbers known just as great football players are known here in the states. What an incredible opportunity for the Park Service to set a precedent in this plan, acknowledging the deep and important cultures- American and International- that have been formed in Yosemite and that continue to grow and evolve!

I hope that a substantial dialog emerges between all the constituents in this process, and that the significant cultural contributions that we have made as climbers are recognized.

Finally, it is important to note that climbers in Yosemite, as a community, have over the decades been an ecologically conscious

constituency, with numerous voices raised in defense of the environment. I am sure that as the plan for Merced area goes forward, climbers will be thinking at the forefront of how to protect the ecosystem. In my experience from many years climbing in Yosemite in the 80s, our climbing community was a strongly visible presence, yet a low impact presence ecologically.

For all these reasons I hope that access to climbing in Yosemite will continue to be open, and indeed hope for improvements- so that I can celebrate my 50th year, and more, with future ascents in the Valley.

If I can be of any assistance in this process I would be happy to add my voice. Please feel free to contact me.

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**Correspondence ID:** 262      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Waxman, Eleanor  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite National Park Service, I found out this morning via the Access Fund and the American Alpine Club about the Merced River Planning in Yosemite National Park. The Access Fund synopsis said that Yosemite's original plan was to focus on land mitigation and restoration rather than place a cap on the number of visitors allowed in the Merced River area; however, due to litigation, the park is being forced to redesign the plan and probably implement a cap on the number of visitors. I am a huge fan of the National Park system; I've purchased the national park pass every year since I've graduated from college, my household contributes to the National Park Foundation, and some of my favorite places to travel are National Parks, whether it be to Rocky Mountain for a day trip or a long road trip through Yellowstone/Grand Teton/Glacier. I love these places and absolutely want to preserve them for future generations, so I can understand the concept of capping visitors in the Merced River area. I have not yet been to Yosemite, but it has been on my list for several years. However, my plans when I get to visit Yosemite include, as I am sure is true for many visitors, hiking Half Dome and many of the trails in Yosemite Valley. Additionally, if my climbing skills are good enough, I would love to climb El Capitan. If not, there are several other famous climbs in the same area. All of these activities would be affected by the Merced River plan as I currently understand it because so many of the campgrounds, parking, and trail heads are within the quarter-mile boundary of the Merced River. I think this plan would drastically negatively affect many visitor's experiences in Yosemite. What I would really like to see instead of a visitor cap (in addition to land mitigation and whatever is necessary) is a focus on education: if visitors learn how to tread lightly on the land and there is an emphasis on not only what visitors should do to protect the park but why, then perhaps the river can be protected but still remain open for as many people as who wish to visit Yosemite Valley. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice my opinion, and thank you very much for taking the time to consider it!

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**Correspondence ID:** 263      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Volker, Stephan C  
**Outside Organization:** Citizens for the Protection and Preservation of Wawona Conservation/Preservation  
**Received:** Feb,04,2101 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Re: Scoping Comments of Citizens for the Protection and Preservation of Wawona in response to NPS' Notice of Intent to Prepare Environmental Impact Statement for the new Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

Dear Mr. Ueberuaga:

INTRODUCTION Citizens for the Protection and Preservation of Wawona ("Citizens") is a group of - concerned citizens who live in the small mountain hamlet of Wawona, which is located within Yosemite National Park. The South Fork Merced River runs through Wawona, and Citizens has an interest in the protection and preservation of both the river and its watershed. On behalf of Citizens and pursuant to the National Park Service's ("NPS") Notice of Intent to Prepare Environmental Impact Statement for the New Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) published in the Federal Register on June 30, 2009 (74 Fed. Reg. 124, 31305 (June 20, 2009)), we submit these comments. In accordance with the direction set out in the Notice of Intent, we address the issues that should be discussed in the new CMP, including a suitable range of alternatives, appropriate mitigation measures, and the nature and extent of potential direct and cumulative environmental impacts.

The Merced River ("the river") was designated as a "Wild and Scenic River" in 1987 by Congress. 16 U.S.C. 1274(a)(62). NPS has the duty and authority to manage 81 miles of the river, encompassing both the main stem and the South Fork in Yosemite National Park and the El Portal Administrative Site. 2000 Comprehensive Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement ("CMP/FEIS"), 1-2. The U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management administer the remaining 41 miles of the designated portions of the river. Id.

NPS should do all it can to preserve the river's free-flowing condition and to protect and enhance the river's distinct values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. In order to protect and preserve the river's values, NPS recognizes its duty to prepare one single comprehensive management plan for the river. 2005 Final Revised Merced River Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement ("RMRP/SEIS") ROD-i. Citizens requests that in preparing the new CMP, NPS take the steps

detailed below to fulfill its duties under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act ("WSRA") and the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") to protect the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values ("ORVs").

#### Promptly Prepare a CMP that Fully Protects the Merced Wild & Scenic River

The WSRA directs that Wild and Scenic rivers "shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." 16 U.S.C. ' 1271.

To achieve this goal, the WSRA requires NPS to prepare a CMP within three years of a river's listing under the Act. 16 U.S.C. 1274(d). Since the Merced River was designated in 1987, NPS was obliged to prepare a CMP by the year 1990. Despite this bright-line requirement, NPS is nearly twenty years late in preparing an adequate CMP for the Merced River. The lack of a CMP has resulted in faulty land management and overuse. NPS must prioritize completion of a CMP that fully complies with the WSRA and NEPA.

NPS must make a good-faith effort to prepare a valid CMP that fully complies with the WSRA, NEPA, and the Ninth Circuit and federal district court decisions interpreting their requirements. Because of the significant degradation that the Merced River has already suffered without a CMP, NPS should err on the side of environmental protection and preservation above all else when preparing this CMP.

Determine an Accurate Environmental Baseline In order to fully analyze project impacts, an accurate environmental baseline must be established. The baseline should reflect historical and current use of the river and its management corridor. It should describe the developments within the river corridor, including the number, size and type of buildings and related facilities, capacity of hotels and campsites, and length, width and condition of existing roadways and trails. The free-flowing conditions of the river should be documented by water year type and seasons, and the baseline should reflect the current water quality and quantity of both the river and its watershed (both below and above ground).

This baseline must reflect actual conditions, rather than the expectations of the 2000 CMP or 2005 CMP. Moreover, both the 2000 and 2005 CMPs have been found invalid, and thus do not provide an appropriate starting point for a lawful planning process. The Ninth Circuit has expressly rejected NPS's prior attempt to rely on the 2000 CMP when determining baseline conditions for the 2005 CMP. *Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Kemp/home*, 520 F.3d 1024, 1307- 1308 (9th Cir. 2008) ("*Friends of Yosemite III*").

Similarly, a baseline cannot be established based on user capacities proposed in the CMP itself. See *Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Scarlett*, 439 F.Supp.2d 1074, 1105 (9th Cir. 2006) ("*Friends of Yosemite valley II*") (baseline conditions should not have "assume(d) the existence of the very plan being proposed.") As the courts have explained, a proper baseline is established using the actual conditions in existence, not the proposed hypothetical conditions that would exist under a management plan such as a CMP.

Finally, a proper baseline should include a comprehensive examination of the environmental health and status of the Merced River. This review should include new information on the impacts of climate change on the Merced River, as well as the current and historical impacts on the river from dams, mining activity, and visitor usage.

Once an accurate baseline is determined, the CMP can then actually analyze the impacts that a reasonable range of alternatives will have on the river and its management corridor.

#### Ensure Resource Protection a. Establish Measures to Protect ORVs Before Thresholds Are Exceeded

NPS bears a heavy responsibility to protect the river's resources under the WSRA. 16 U.S.C. ' 1271, 128 1(a). Contrary to this direction, the 2000 CMP/FEIS and 2005 RMRP/SEIS provide that only after certain fixed indicators and thresholds are exceeded will management measures be triggered to address resulting environmental impacts. See RMRP/SEIS 111-19 (Park managers may voluntarily take action before conditions exceed standards, but such action is not required).

The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection framework ("VERP"), relied on by NPS in its 2000 and 2005 CMPs, provides an "early warning" mechanism by which excessive use and/or environmental impacts can be addressed before conditions violate established standards. VERP Handbook at 82. While the 2000 and 2005 RMRP/SEIS mention the existence of this "early warning" aspect of VERP (see 2005 RMRP/SEIS 11-33), neither document proposes actual implementation of any early warning procedures.

The practice of setting indicators and standards/thresholds for assuring desired conditions is a good planning and management tool. However, only requiring management actions to be taken after thresholds have been crossed does not protect resources. *Friends of Yosemite III*, 520 F.3d at 1033-1034 (NPS erred "by not requiring a response to environmental degradation until after it already occurs") "A standard must be chosen that triggers management action before degradation occurs." *Id.* at 1034.

Management measures to be taken before thresholds are violated should include, but not be limited to: ? Temporary or permanent decreases in public use, such as by implementing more restrictive visitor caps and reducing public use at specific sites, in specific management zones, or throughout the Park; ? Halting or cancelling proposed development and even ongoing projects when desired environmental conditions are deteriorating; ----- Footnote: 1- See *America's Most Endangered Rivers*, 2008 Edition, discussing impacts from climate change on rivers, including increased frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and changes in water quality and availability. Available at: <http://www.americanrivers.org/assets/pdfs/mer-past->

reports/MER\_Report2008optb969.pdf ----- ? Decreasing and rationing water use and groundwater pumping when it appears that surface or subsurface water supplies are declining below prescribed minimum levels; ? Temporary or permanent closure of facilities to reduce use where excessive use is triggering resource damage; ? Temporary or permanent restrictions on extent of use (e.g., the number of visitors, stock, boats/rafts, vehicles, the location and time of visits, activity, and equipment) where usage threatens environmental harm; ? Modify facility design to prevent environmental harms, for instance, by increasing the use of signage or physical barriers such as vegetation.

Initiating management activities only after threshold levels have been exceeded allows for an unacceptable and unnecessary level of harm to Merced River ORVs. Practically speaking, substantial time could pass before NPS officials notice actual harm or are able to begin implementing management activities once thresholds are violated. From a management perspective, it makes far more sense to implement an early warning system whereby potential environmental harms must be addressed before they exceed threshold levels, thereby decreasing the time and resources NPS would otherwise waste in rectifying avoidable environmental damage.

Initiating management activities only when threshold levels have been surpassed is also a violation of the WSRA requirement to "protect and enhance" Wild and Scenic Rivers. 16 U.S.C. ' 1281; see also, Friends of Yosemite III, 520 F.3d at 1033-1034 (failure to address environmental degradation until after thresholds are surpassed violates the WSRA) Oregon Natural Desert Ass'n v. Singleton, 47 F.Supp.2d 1182 (D. Or. 1998) (court overturned CMP EIS that did not adequately "protect and enhance" river). Without developing specific and binding management protocols when it appears that thresholds may be surpassed, NPS has not devised a CMP that actually protects and enhances the Merced River.

Finally, while VERP does specify that "early warning" management measures may be implemented, such early warning measures are entirely voluntary under VERP. This is one reason why relying exclusively on VERP is inadequate. NPS must manage beyond VERP standards and establish mandatory mitigation and management measures that will be undertaken when indicators and thresholds are exceeded.

b. Thresholds Should be Decreased Below Current Capacity All alternatives examined in the 2000/2005 CMP's employ existing user capacities as a baseline. Alternatives in these two CMPs adopt user capacities that are nothing more than slight variations on these currently existing visitor capacities. There is no analysis of whether existing user capacities are in fact adequate to protect ORVs. There is no discussion or consideration of reducing user capacities below current levels. Without such an analysis, it is not possible to determine whether such reductions would protect ORVs better than the proposed visitor caps and similar proposals.

The new CMP must remedy this faulty analysis. It must provide alternatives that examine reductions in visitor limits below current capacities. NPS should not merely assume that historical capacities are adequate to insure protection of ORVs. To the contrary, it is now evident that existing use of the Merced River watershed is not adequate to protect ORVs. As the 2005 RMPRISEIS acknowledges, existing and historical use of the river has resulted in numerous adverse impacts. See 2005 RMRP/SEIS Tv-S ("Dams and diversions throughout most of the Sierra Nevada have profoundly altered stream-flow patterns and water temperatures. [as well as] loss of riparian vegetation."); Id. (Other concerns include loss of habitat and species); RMRP/SEIS Iv- 16 (river suffers from increased sedimentation from dam removal and changes to its normal channel and bank); RMRP/SEIS IV-17 (development on the river "tends to alter the sediment distribution and formative streamflows, thereby disrupting the natural alluvial processes."); FMRP/SETS IV-1 8 (hiking trails along river lead to bank erosion); RMRP/SEIS IV-20 (land use and infrastructure have led to "loss of streamside vegetation, soil compaction, channel confinement, and loss of wetlands and riparian vegetation."); RMRP/SEIS Iv-42 to 43 (discussing species that have gone extinct in Yosemite and other species that are in decline as a result of habitat loss, invasive species, pesticides, and disease).

Nor can NPS rely on an unfounded assumption that existing use restrictions, land management zoning, and other current standards and conditions are sufficient to protect the river and river corridor. NPS must provide data and analysis that adopted visitor caps will in fact adequately protect ORVs. Standards and thresholds should be established to achieve desired conditions, not merely to maintain the status quo or reflect existing conditions. "[S]tandards set at baseline or existing conditions may potentially lead to the perpetuation of unacceptable conditions."<sup>2</sup>

Even the VERP framework warns against relying too heavily on existing conditions. For instance, when delineating management zones, the VERP Handbook states that "[u]nless existing conditions are the desired future [conditions], the zoning should not describe existing conditions. (Zoning the existing conditions, rather than the future conditions, will maintain the status quo, which usually will not help managers resolve current or future visitor use impacts.)" VERP Handbook at 52. (emphasis in original).

#### c. VERP Provides an Incomplete Framework for Protecting ORVs

The WSRA mandates a CMP for each river segment listed under the Act that "provide[s] for the protection of the river values," and "[t]he plan shall address resource practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of this chapter." 16 U.S.C. ' 1274(d). VERP is an inadequate tool for achieving compliance with this section.

VERP is a monitoring program. It does not in itself establish user capacities, land use zones, or otherwise establish thresholds and appropriate land management. VERP does not establish numerical limits. ----- Footnote: 2 James Bacon, James Roche, Crystal Elliot, and Niki Nicholas, VERP: Putting Principles into Practice in Yosemite National Park. Available at: <<http://www.georgewright.org/232bacon.pdf>>. ----- The adequacy of the VERP process has even been called into question by Park Service staff.<sup>3</sup> Specific suggestions for improving the VERP review include mandating management measures when it appears that a standard may be violated (i.e., before, not after, the standard or threshold is exceeded).<sup>4</sup>

The Ninth Circuit has also forbidden NPS from exclusively relying on VERP, warning that "VERP requires management action only when degradation has already occurred, and is therefore legally deficient." Friends of Yosemite 111, 520 F.3d at 1034 (emphasis in original).

**Address Development of Lands and Facilities** To protect and preserve the river and its ORVs as required by the WSRA, NPS must limit the development of lands and facilities within the river corridor. Unchecked development within the corridor can only lead to degradation of the river and its ORVs.

As an essential step in achieving this required protection, NPS should reevaluate management zones with the goal of optimizing protection of ORVs. The 2005 RMRP/SEIS, relying entirely on its 2000 predecessor, states that "the existing management elements, which include management zoning, as analyzed in the [2000 CMP] remain unchanged and are not addressed as part of this planning effort." RMRP/SEIS F-144. As such, NPS relied on a system that merely assumed, without analysis or scientific verification, that existing management zones were adequate to protect ORVs.

The CMP should limit "developed" land use zones (zones allowing intensive visitor use and/or developed facilities) in order to insure that Yosemite National Park is not overburdened with facilities such as hotels, cabins, and restaurants that attract an excessive number of visitors and consume an unsustainable quantum of the Park's resources such as ground-water. Highly destructive resource uses such as dam or water diversion projects, mining, wetland fill, and expansion of parking areas (which impacts the river both by destroying habitat and by degrading air quality by accommodating more vehicles), must, of course, be prohibited entirely. Strictly limiting developed zones is essential to insuring protection of ORVs.

----- Footnote: 3 Hof Marilyn and David W. Lime, Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Framework in the National Park System: Rationale, Current Status, and Future Direction. Available at: <http://www.treesearch.fs.fed.us/pubs/23907> at 31, 41d. at 34. -----

The CMP should also expand wilderness and other zones with a low degree of visitor use and facility development. Preserving existing wilderness zones, and where possible expanding upon them, will help insure that ORVs are adequately protected. Similarly, zones allowing a moderate range of visitor use and facility development should be managed in such a way that at least some portion of these zones can one day be restored to their former wilderness condition. See 16 U.S.C. ' 128 1(a) (requiring "a nondegradation and enhancement policy for all designated river areas, regardless of classification.")

Management zoning should be designed with the goal of providing optimum protection for ORVs. As such, analytical information needs to be provided in the ORV demonstrating that NPS considered the impacts of management zoning decisions on ORVs and that their conclusions are consistent with protecting ORVs.

Specifically, projects such as the Yosemite Lodge Development, the Yosemite Village Parking and Transit Area Improvements (Camp 6 Parking Lot), Curry Village Cabins, and the Camp Wawona Redevelopment and Proposed Land Exchange are likely inconsistent with WSRA's goals for protecting the river corridor. Land management zoning should be designed to curtail projects that increase rather than reduce resource consumption and induce excessive visitor usage.

Finally, the CMP should expand river management boundaries to the maximum extent allowed by the WSRA to best assure protection of ORVs. 16 U.S.C. ' 1274(b) (requiring a CMP to delineate river boundaries to "include an average of not more than 320 acres of land per mile measured from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of the river.") To draw river boundaries narrowly, particularly in high use areas such as the El Portal administrative site, will not afford ORVs the optimum protection required by law.

#### Address User Capacities

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act commands that a CMP "shall address . . . user capacities to achieve the purposes of this chapter." 16 U.S.C. ' 1274(d)(1). By failing to propose any user capacity thresholds in the past, NPS violated the plain language of the Act. NPS must right this wrong in the new CMP by proposing specific, binding user capacities that achieve the purposes of the Act by protecting ORVs.

The WSRA's regulations define user capacity as "the quantity of recreation use which an area can sustain without adverse impact on the Outstandingly Remarkable Values and freeflowing character of the river area, the quality of recreation experience, and public health and safety." 47 Fed. Reg. at 39455.

There is no assurance in the 2000 CMP/FEIS and 2005 RMRP/SEIS that any proposed alternative, including the preferred alternative, is designed to, much less will, achieve the WSRA mandate that user capacity be the level of use "which an area can sustain without adverse impact on the Outstandingly Remarkable Values." This oversight must be rectified.

A central goal of the WSRA is not only to maintain and preserve ORVs but also to enhance and expand ORVs. There is no discussion of this goal in the old CMPs. In particular, these invalid plans fail to address whether any proposed alternative, including the preferred alternative, will expand or enhance any ORVs. Not only must such a discussion be provided in the new CMP, but NPS has a duty to select the alternative that enhances and expands ORVs as necessary to comply with the WSRA's mandates. In the 2000/2005 CMPs, NPS merely assumes, with little analysis, that existing numerical caps and other standards are sufficient to protect ORVs, an approach the Ninth Circuit has declared invalid. NPS must "articulate[] a rational connection between the facts found and



the choice made." *Friends of Yosemite v. Norton*, 348 F.3d 789, 793 (9th Cir. 2003) ("Friends of Yosemite 1").

NPS is required to place specific measurable limits on use of the river. *Id.* at 796. This means that NPS must gather and analyze relevant resource use and impact data to determine the river's capacity. The river's capacity should not be based solely on historic use levels. Just because the river has handled a certain number of visitors in the past does not mean that the river can necessarily handle that number of visitors in the future without adverse effects on the river's ORVs.

The Ninth Circuit has disapproved NPS's prior attempt to provide "only sample standards and indicators." *Id.*; *Friends of Yosemite Valley II*, 439 F.Supp.2d at 1078. Such an approach is not adequate under either the VERP framework or the WSRA because it "fails to yield any actual measure of user capacities." *Id.* at 1078; *Friendc of Yosemite Valley I*, 348 F.3d at 796.

NPS must instead institute an actual numerical cap on visitors. *Id.* at 797 ("WSRA does require that the VERP be implemented through the adoption of quantitative measures.") The cap on visitors to the river corridor should not be a general one, which would allow "hot spots" to develop and go unaddressed. Specific user capacities should be developed for each management zone of the river.

Similarly, in developing this numerical cap NPS must consider whether reductions in visitor usage are needed rather than simply assume that the maximum number of visitors per year previously allowed will suffice in the future, as prior CMPs for the Merced River have proposed. The historical levels of visitor usage may no longer be appropriate for sensitive areas. Therefore, NPS must examine capping the number of visitors per year below the historical average in areas experiencing resource damage.

Create and Analyze a No Action Alternative NPS must create a true "no action" alternative that is based on the 1980 General Management Plan, the Wilderness Plan, and all other existing plans and documents that are currently in effect. The "no action" alternative must describe and examine what would happen to the river corridor if no new CMP were adopted.

Prior "no action" alternatives promulgated by the NPS (in the 2000 and 2005 CMPs) have not actually been true no action alternatives. Instead, they relied heavily on the conditions, user capacities, etc., proposed in the CMPs themselves. For instance, the 2005 "no action" alternative includes implementation of the boundary for the El Portal segment selected in the 2000 CMP. RMRP/SEIS ES-9. A true no action alternative should disregard any proposals in previously rejected CMPs, and analyze baseline conditions as they currently exist.

#### Create and Analyze Action Alternatives

NPS must also create and analyze a range of action-alternatives. In the 2005 RMRP/SEIS, the action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3 and 4) all involved the VERP plan. But as the Ninth Circuit has held, the proposed VERP-based plan is inherently flawed because it only required action after thresholds had been exceeded. *Friends of Yosemite III*, 520 F.3d at 1034. Action alternatives must be formulated so that each will protect ORVs and require preventative action before the ORVs are harmed.

NPS must also consider alternatives whose protections extend well beyond the inadequate VERP standard. VERP provides a preliminary framework for evaluating impacts and conditions to the Merced River, but it is just that: a minimalist framework. VERP is overly broad and identifies few binding measures. VERP is intended to be a basement floor, not a ceiling, to NPS's compliance with the WSRA. NPS should consider, analyze, and adopt more stringent alternatives that go beyond VERP's meager requirements in order to provide complete and adequate protection for the Merced River.

Consideration of alternatives based only on the VERP framework, moreover, is a violation of NEPA's requirement to consider a reasonable range of alternatives. 40 C.F.R. ' 1502.14.

Consideration of alternatives that rely on the Wilderness Trailhead Quota System, as was the case with the 2000/2005 CMPs, is likewise inappropriate. See RMRP/SEIS ES-9 to 17. That Quota System predates the adoption of any CMP and thus does not reflect the current management needs of this sensitive river environment.

The only differences among alternatives in the past CMPs are slight adjustments in proposed interim limits. By providing action alternatives with only minor variations, the past CMPs have failed to provide the public with a reasonable range of alternatives and foreclosed consideration of more stringent options that would afford adequate protection for the Merced Wild and Scenic River.

NPS cannot merely repeat the alternatives it has used in the two prior CMPs. The new CMP should provide a fresh look at this issue, complete with a range of alternatives proposing substantially varied user capacities, land management designations, and other standards and conditions, all of which will meet WSRA's management requirements.

#### Thoroughly Study and Analyze the Impacts of Each Alternative

The 2000/2005 RMRP/SEISs failed to link resource data and user impacts to determination of acceptable impacts. The information provided was too general, and the impacts too ill-defined, to constitute a "hard look" under NEPA. NPS must now employ a more resource-based, analytical approach in the new EIS, providing specific information on use and development thresholds and resulting

impacts.

The CMP must also discuss what kinds of impacts each alternative will have on each environmental resource that is currently identified in Chapter IV: Affected Environment. RMRP/SEIS IV- 1. The 2005 RMRP/SEIS only lists the "Impact Topics Considered in this Plan" and then briefly describes the "Regional Setting." RMRP/SEIS IV-1 and IV-4. Although the chapter spends over 150 pages summarizing all of the resources within the river corridor, the chapter (and the CMP in general) fails to address in detail the impacts that each of these resources will suffer under each alternative.

A reader of the CMP might assume that Chapter V, titled "Environmental Consequences," analyzes the impacts of the alternatives on the river corridor. Indeed, that is what the introduction to this section claims to do:

This chapter analyzes the environmental impacts of the four. . . (Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS) alternatives on natural resources, cultural resources, the visitor experience, and social resources. This analysis provides the basis for comparing the beneficial and adverse effects of the alternatives.

RMRP/SEIS, V-I. This chapter, however, fails to provide a comprehensive analysis of impacts, as it does not analyze the impacts of the "remaining management elements as previously described and analyzed in the Merced River Plan/FEIS [which] are not being revisited or reanalyzed in this Plan." *Id.* The Ninth Circuit rightly held that the Comprehensive Management Plan must be a "wholly self-contained" document that cannot refer back to the equally flawed 2000 CMP. *Friends of Yosemite Valley II*, 439 F.Supp.2d at 1092. The new CMP must analyze the impacts of all of the management elements in one section to provide the public with a rationally organized, comprehensive basis for selecting appropriate alternatives.

Further, the so-named "Environmental Consequences" section of the 2005 RMRP/SEIS provides little actual analysis of impacts, instead providing vague and generalized discussion. To give but one example, in the SETS section discussing impacts on wildlife and biologic ORVs, it states that: "[t]he continued use of the Wilderness Quota system" will protect wildlife, and the "user capacity limits and the VERP monitoring and management program would allow existing natural areas to remain relatively intact . . . Alternative 2 would result in a local, short- and long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impact on native wildlife and the biological ORVs within the river corridor." RMRP/SEIS V-I 56. Vague phrases such as "relatively intact" and unsupported assurances that the yet-to-be-developed VERP measures will be adequate to protect ORVs are insufficient under NEPA. NEPA requires hard evidence to support such assertions, and prohibits mere conclusory statements that are entirely unsupported by any data. 40 C.F.R. 's 1508.1(b), 1502.24. Under NEPA, NPS is required to "articulate[] a rational connection between the facts and the choice made." *Friends of Yosemite Valley I*, 348 F.3d at 793.

This lack of analysis of impacts in the 2000/2005 CMP seemed to be predicated on a mistaken belief that NPS need not include more specific information because the proposed CMP was a "programmatic plan" advocating no specific action. See e.g., RMRP/SEIS V-4, I-24. Such an approach was expressly rejected by the Ninth Circuit. *Friends of Yosemite Valley II*, 439 F.Supp.2d at 1078; *Friends of Yosemite Valley I*, 348 F.3d at 796. NPS must propose specific indicators, user capacities, and other thresholds, and must discuss specific impacts stemming from these proposals.

#### Thoroughly Study and Analyze Cumulative Impacts

NEPA requires an EIS to consider the cumulative impacts of an agency's proposed action. The NEPA regulations define cumulative impact as follows:

A "cumulative impact" is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future action regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. [40 C.F.R. ' 1508.7.]

Agencies must provide "quantified or detailed information" about cumulative impacts. *Neighbors of Cuddy Mountain v. United States Forest Service*, 137 F.3d 1372,1379-80 (9th Cir. 1998). "General statements about 'possible effects' and 'some risk' do not constitute a 'hard look' absent a justification regarding why more definitive information could not be provided." *Id.* at 1380.

Agencies must go beyond merely cataloguing projects and must include a helpful analysis of the cumulative impacts of past, present, and future projects. *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. United States Forest Service*, 177 F.3d 800, 809-10 (9th Cir. 1999).

The 2000 CMP/FEIS analyzed projects within the region surrounding Yosemite, including the eight surrounding counties. CMP/FEIS, IV-2. Much of the Merced River's Wild and Scenic management corridor is surrounded by private property where infrastructure such as housing construction and power-lines have been built. Neither the CMP/FEIS nor the RMRP/SEIS, however, analyzed the cumulative impacts of private actions occurring in the town of Wawona, specifically the existing Seventh Day Adventist Camp Wawona, and its proposed expansion. Furthermore, neither the CMP/FEIS nor the RMRP/SEIS analyzed the foreseeable future project of NPS' recently proposed Employee Housing in Wawona. These two projects are foreseeable and will have a potentially considerable cumulative impact on the river corridor. Therefore both of these projects must be included in the cumulative impact analysis of the new CMP's EIS.

The 2005 RMRP/SEIS likewise fails to provide a true cumulative impacts analysis. Appendix E lists multiple future and current projects, but merely listing projects is not sufficient. There is no discussion about what the actual cumulative impacts associated with

the listed projects will be. While we can imagine that cumulative impacts will include greater loss of habitat and related impacts on species, more visitors and visitor traffic, increased use of water and a decrease in water quality, to name but a few impacts, it should not be up to the reader to make these assumptions. A true cumulative impacts analysis identifies related projects and then provides a discussion of how impacts from these projects, combined with impacts from the proposed project, will cumulatively impact the environment. The RMRP/SEIS fails to do this. This omission must be remedied in the new CMP.

#### Create and Implement Enforceable Mitigation Measures

In addition to providing a unified analysis of all of the impacts of all of the management elements in one comprehensive section, the new CMP must identify and analyze mitigation measures for each adverse impact. The RMRP/SEIS places all of the mitigation measures in Appendix B. Mitigation measures for the adverse impacts should instead be integrated into the impacts section so that the reader does not have to flip back and forth between two sections of the CMP to determine what mitigation measures are proposed for each impact.

The new CMP must also formulate mitigation measures which will mitigate the adverse impacts of each CMP alternative. The Mitigation Measures found in Appendix B only address impacts of "construction of any proposed improvements within the river corridor." RMRP/SEIS, B-i. Providing mitigation measures only for construction activity fails to account for the many types of other non-construction activity that will result in impacts. The mitigation section also fails to discuss whether proposed mitigation will be adequate to alleviate impacts, and whether proposed mitigation will be adequate to comply with the WSRA-mandated duty to protect ORVs. Indeed, it may be that the only way to adequately protect sensitive ORVs is to prohibit new construction in certain areas entirely. Appendix B, however, seems to suggest that environmental impacts can be mitigated away, without providing any analysis or data to support this assertion.

Furthermore, the mitigation measures listed in Appendix B consist mostly of deferred surveys, plans and consultations, which are not the type of mitigation measures that will protect the river's ORVs.

In its response to public comments in the RMRP/SEIS, NPS repeats countless times that it need not propose any specific mitigation or management measures because the CMP is intended to only be a programmatic document. See e.g., RMRP/SEIS, F-198. NPS misapprehends the management direction required to address resource impacts identified in a CMP. Other CMPs have developed specific management requirements and the new CMP should do the same. A programmatic document may not ignore the specific details of river management that must be identified so that adequate management direction is in place when specific projects are proposed. A programmatic planning document is intended to set specific environmental goals, use restrictions, development standards, and mitigation measures to guide future resource management decisions, rather than allow reinvention of these goals, standards and measures with each project.

#### NPS Cannot Rely on the 2000 or 2005 CMP

As the Ninth Circuit has held, NPA cannot issue a CMP that merely supplements or amends the previously rejected CMPs. According to that Court, both the 2000 and 2005 CMPs are fundamentally flawed, as is NPS's prior approach of merely supplementing the 2000 CMP with new information in the 2005 CMP. *Friends of Yosemite Valley II*, at 1081 (holding the entire 2000 MRP to be invalid); *Friends of Yosemite Valley III*, at 1036-1037 (holding same). While the Court's decisions allow NPS to use some information from the older CMPs, they clearly require that NPS must now formulate a fundamentally new CMP, void of the prior flaws.

#### Shorten Proposed Five Year Time-Table

The 2000 CMP/FEIS provided that NPS would have a five-year time table in which to assess the success of its current management policies. CMP/FEIS ES-7. During this five-year time period, interim limits would be established to control visitor capacity. CMP/FEIS 11-63. The new CMP should not rely on such a long time frame for assessment. Congress has already determined that a three year period is sufficient to assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing user capacities and other management standards. For this reason, it is a violation of the WSRA to simply tack another five years onto this allotted time frame. *Friends of Yosemite Valley I*, at 797 ("NPS's proposed five-year timetable for the implementation of the VERP framework would not satisfy ' 1274(d)(1)'s three-full-fiscal-year timetable... "). In this case especially, where NPS has already had two decades to determine the strengths and weaknesses of its land management policies for the Park, making final decisions should not be deferred until a later date. Instead, those decisions should if possible be made in the new CMP itself.

#### Conclusion

The Merced Wild and Scenic River must finally receive the full protection that it deserves, and that Congress intended. In order for this to happen, an accurate environmental baseline must be determined and the new comprehensive management plan must do everything possible to ensure that all of the outstanding, remarkable values of the river are protected. To this end, NPS should set thresholds that will guarantee full protection and restoration of the river's values. Land uses surrounding the river corridor must be taken into account, and limited where necessary and feasible to protect the river. Likewise, where necessary, user capacities should also be limited to restore and protect the river's ORVs.

In order to determine the best course of management for the river, a reasonable range of fully protective action alternatives should be considered in the new CMP. The impacts of each alternative should be carefully examined and analyzed based on a comprehensive

inventory of the river's resources and their need for protection. Impacts on the river should also be analyzed cumulatively in order to assure the highest level of protection for the river and its watershed. Lastly, NPS should do everything possible to formulate, analyze and implement enforceable mitigation measures to avoid or reduce all foreseeable impacts on the river.

Thank you for considering our comments on this vital planning process.

Attorney for Citizens for the Protection and Preservation of Wawona

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**Correspondence ID:** 264      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** El Portal Historic District: El Portal has significant historic structures and values that should be documented for designation of the area as an historic district. Railroad era houses, the old school house, rock walls, the motor in cabins, hotel, and old restaurant, the Standard Oil buildings and remnants of the historic Hennessey Ranch are some of the features that deserve preservation as well as restoration. Placing of temporary structures by NPS, such as fiscal office (which has been there over 25 years), trailers, and metal buildings, diminishes the historic values of the El Portal Community. The random storing of new and old materials, bone yards, through El Portal and Yosemite Valley are not only unsightly, but are apt to swept into the river during high flood stages. Likewise, construction staging areas have caused considerable damage to many areas in the river corridor. Largely due to the existence of private employee owned homes in Old El Portal and the Abby Road area, El Portal has had the opportunity to flourish as a community. This community is exceptional for its support of the town's children, of elders, social events, fundraisers, history. It includes visual artists, such as well-known painters and photographers, writers, rock climbers, and long time employees of the concession, NPS, and other park partners. Many park employees transient, moving from one park to the next, but El Portal has a community that attracts people to stay and invest their love and skills in the park. During the effort to designate the Merced River as a Wild and Scenic River, the El Portal Community plays a major role. Community members raised funds, talked to thousands of park visitors, and coordinated much of the efforts that led to the protection of the Merced. Without that community this plan never would have been required. The El Portal community is has outstanding values. In order to support the community, please consider the following: Stabilize and renovate the old school house atop Chapel Lane so that is can be used by the community, NPS, park partners and other non-profits such as Balanced Rock as an aesthetic gathering place. Included in the renovation should be quality lighting that can offer a "non-institutional mood", ie not only flourescent lighting, wood flooring for yoga, dance and other movement classes and workshops, and a heating system that is capable of heating the main classroom quickly for classes with demand such. The kitchen should be retored to standards so that food may be prepared for the public. Within the small population of El Portal, there is a significant percentage of the population who values this need. For example, bi-weekly yoga classes held in the school multi (which is NOT an ideal atmosphere due to cleanliness, lighting, heating and flooring) currently have an average of 15 students each night. The community hall is even farther from an ideal location for such classes because of the same reasons?and the stale smell of beer! The community hall IS an ideal location for many gatherings and the MRP should include plans for a renovation of this building as well. The community hall and the old school house compliment each other well, and should both be tended to. Allow a local community cafi in the "downtown" of El Portal. It could be small scale and local, a place where NPS employees could get a sandwich, bagel, smoothie, and read a newspaper on Sunday morning. Of course we want to support families who work for the park, and having children can mean the need to expand one's home. Please let the process for home additions and renovations become streamlined. Homeowners in old El Portal should be allowed to improve their homes; this only improves this area for the park. Please also streamline the process for approval for necessary repairs and reasonable improvements that need to be completed while this MRP process is underway. I feel that there is no precedence for homeowners being extravagant and adding to their homes beyond what fits into "typical" El Portal standards. I think the fact that the market is somewhat capped because people can't own the land keeps things in check and that NPS should not lean towards being overly controlling in this area, but rather supportive and helpful. As NPS deems it necessary to use temporary structures, please insure that aesthetics are accounted for. We know that temporary structures sometimes stay around for an awfully long time and it is sad to degrade the El Portal area, or any area in Yosemite, with unsightly trailers, etc. After the MRP is completed, during what I expect to be a phase of lots of construction, please consider the aesthetics during the construction. Do we really need to have bright orange fencing around construction staging areas and along roads? Sometimes they are like this for many years and greatly depreciate the visitor experience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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**Correspondence ID:** 265      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Shields, Eric  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I received your postcard asking for input as to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. First off it would be much easier to provide feedback if I had some idea as to what the background is in regard to creating this need for the plan. I have been camping in Yosemite for over 40 years and in my opinion with the number of visitors that the valley receives each year, it is my observation that there has been minimal impact on the park. My belief is the park is there for us to enjoy, and within reason some of that enjoyment comes from being in the natural surroundings and "using" the park. I am not a believer that these parks are for "viewing" only. So with that said any Merced river project in my opinion would be one that continues to allow "use" of the river such as wading and rafting and fishing as they do now. I feel campsites should remain along the rivers edge with natural barriers to discourage campers

from eroding the banks. As for my suggestions, I would say it makes sense to control the entry and exit points and to keep those areas well marked and supervised. I would create natural looking signs along the river explaining about bank erosion however would continue to allow people to use and camp along the river. So that would be my suggestions for the project any project should be simple, cost effective and appropriate for once.

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**Correspondence ID:** 266      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love to kayak along the Merced River and hike within the Valley. I would love to Kayak in the valley as well, but it is prohibited. I also love the S. Fork Merced (both hiking and kayaking) and like to stay in Wawona in the winter. 2. What do you want to see protected? The Merced River along 140 and all of the trails leading off of it. You should also protect the Wild and Scenic parts of the S. Fork Merced. 3. What needs to be fixed? Let us paddle more of the Merced within the park boundary! And also take care fixing the area with the landslide. A tunnel might be the best bet, but don't ruin or restrict the river! 4. What would you like to see kept the same? The Merced along 140 is amazing, as is the S. Fork coming out of Wawona.

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**Correspondence ID:** 267      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Lindsey, I. E  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Re: a teacher's honor, integrity and respect for the children of our children...

This email is about Yosemite's Merced River Plan and specifically about the harmful effects of profit seeking business activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows:

Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley. This is not a radical idea—it should have been done years ago. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of concession stables from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley.

Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is also not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They are of no help to the "general public." They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored.

Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage—but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps.

Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically:

- 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor;
- 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group;
- 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and
- 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be

properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

Please keep me informed of your work as you proceed.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	268	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Rhoan, Erick J				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Superintendent, This letter is our response to the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") as noted in the June 30, 2009 entry in the Federal Register, as well as its corresponding deadline extensions, seeking public comments concerning the new Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan ("CMP"). DISCUSSION				

#### I. The Environmental Impact Statement and Merced Wild & Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan Must Protect the Cultural Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River.

Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act ("WSRA"), 16 U.S.C. " 1271 ? 1287, to protect "selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable . . . cultural . . . values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." 16 U.S.C. ' 1271. The Merced River located within Yosemite National Park, California was designated a Wild and Scenic River, entitling it to federal protection. Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Kempthorne, 520 F.3d 1024, 1026 (9th Cir. 2008) ("Yosemite II"). This designation is "based on specific 'outstandingly remarkable values' (ORVs)," Yosemite II, 520 F.3d at 1027, among which are Socio-Cultural Values, and Cultural. See YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, MERCED AND SOUTH FORK MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS: DRAFT OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES REPORT 7-8 (2008) ("Draft ORV Report"). This comment advocates for the protection of prehistoric, historic and modern American Indian artifacts, belongings, human remains, and various items of American Indian material culture. See Draft ORV Report at 8. Yosemite National Park is a virtual mausoleum of buried Indian artifacts and we do not doubt that such items will be unearthed during the construction and renovation of the Merced River and El Portal Area. a. Consultation with all Lineal Descendants of the Yosemite Indians is Required. The National Park Service is required to consult with American Indian groups "having traditional cultural associations to Yosemite," even if they are not federally recognized tribes. However, in the past, this has not always been so. In Yosemite I, then-Superintendent Tollefson testified that all proper consultation procedures had taken place with regards to the Indian remains underneath the El Portal Wastewater Treatment Facility. However, testimony by a lineal descendent showed otherwise, and in conjunction with other factors concerning the MRP, an injunction was granted. In his opinion, Hon. Anthony Ishii noted that "the controversy regarding [the treatment facility] project appears to have the greatest potential of resolution through good faith communications between the parties. The court encourages the parties to seek such a resolution." Yosemite I may stand for the proposition that lack of consultation with lineal descendants of Yosemite may have a negative impact against NPS planning. Furthermore, the 2006 Management Policies state that the NPS "will pursue an open, collaborative relationship with American Indian tribes to help tribes maintain their cultural and spiritual practices and enhance the Park Service's understanding of the history and significance of sites and resources in the parks." Lineal descendants, such as myself and the undersigned, do not feel that we have been included in the planning and consultation process for the Merced River Plan, or for numerous park projects that would involve potentially invasive impacts against our cultural and spiritual relationship with Yosemite. We feel that the National Park Service has chosen to deal with a handful of tribes, recognized and unrecognized, and have assumed that those groups speak for us as well. We also feel that particular groups have been singled out for special attention that effectively forecloses meaningful consultations with other lineal descendants who are not members of a park-affiliated group. We feel that reasonable efforts should be made to contact us for consultation purposes. My contact information is listed, and for the undersigned, their information is available upon request. We do not wish to upset the planning process for this project or for any project, but we do want our proper place within this process, and we are entitled to it because we are the descendants of the Yosemite Indians. b. The Indian Remains Under the El Portal Waste Water Treatment Facility Need to be Protected In Yosemite I, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California granted an injunction against the NPS for failing to prepare a valid comprehensive management plan for several construction projects along the Merced River corridor. In particular, the El Portal Wastewater Treatment Facility was due for demolition because it had been abandoned for more than 30 years. This demolition was restricted to previously disturbed ground after which would be re-vegetated; however this ground also housed American Indian remains over 9,500 years old. Yosemite II did not address the El Portal facility on appeal. Nor was it addressed in the Settlement Agreement between the parties in the MRP litigation. However, we assume the El Portal construction is current enjoined until the NPS develops a valid CMP. Until that time, we strenuously suggest that the NPS take due care in protecting our ancestors' remains. In confluence with our earlier demand for consultation, we, the lineal descendants of the Yosemite Indians, expect to be fully informed about what happens to our peoples' remains in El Portal. In conclusion, all we are asking for is a place in the consultation process that the NPS gives to park affiliated tribes. We know that non-federally recognized tribes are allowed to consult with the NPS, and some are given a peculiar level of priority. However, we expect a reasonable level of good faith communications between us. We promise to act with all due haste in consultation matters, and to communicate our wishes to you as quickly as possible. This Comment is just one example. We do not seek to overturn any pre-existing structure, plan, design, scheme, or negotiation; but rather, we simply seek communication. As much as we want communication we are also willing to listen and learn from the NPS, who has a unique and experienced voice from managing a unique and diverse park such as Yosemite. In the comment I wrote concerning the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Environmental Education Campus, I stated the following: [The Yosemite Indian community] recognizes that the guardian relationship between the NPS and Yosemite is indefinite.

The National Park Service should also recognize that the nationalistic relationship between Yosemite and the lineal descendants of [Chief] Tenaya is just as perpetual. The correct balance is struck when both sides work together. Just as the NPS is required to properly consult with all valid Indian tribes, so too should all lineal descendants from Yosemite become involved with park planning goals and procedures. Until a proper federally recognized Indian nation is in place within Yosemite that is comprised of the correct lineal descendants, the NPS must know who the proper Indian tribes are before they begin consultation with them. For lack of this properly recognized Yosemite Indian nation, the NPS must consult with the lineal descendants of the Yosemite Indians. I offer myself as such a descendant and pledge to act with all possible haste (as my schedule allows) in addressing projects such as these.

I renew my offer, and now include the offers of the undersigned, so that we might work together, and both parties may achieve the goals they seek.

"Yosemite II" refers to the Ninth Circuit decision. As used below "Yosemite I," will refer to the lower, Eastern District decision given by Hon. Anthony Ishii, *Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Kempthorne*, 464 F.Supp.2d 993 (E.D. Cal. 2006) ("Yosemite I"). A precise definition of what a Cultural ORV is not alluded to in the Draft Outstandingly Remarkable Values report; however, evidence and examples of what a Cultural ORV are: trails along the Merced River serving as trade routes among the Indian tribes that lived in Yosemite; bridges, historic buildings, campgrounds, trails, and spatial / circulation patterns within the natural environment, or any such "cultural landscape;" archeological sites including village sites, camp sites, and historic ruins; spiritual and cultural relationship between the Indians and the Merced River, of which partly compromises Yosemite Indian identity. *YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, MERCED AND SOUTH FORK MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS: DRAFT OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES REPORT 8* (2008). *YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT: YOSEMITE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER, APPENDICES B-6* (2010) (citing *NPS MANAGEMENT POLICIES* (2006)). In particular, Section 1.11 of the *NPS Management Policies* distinguishes between bands, nations, or other organized groups or communities of Indians, which are "recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians." *NPS MANAGEMENT POLICIES 19* (2006). There is; however, a discrepancy in that *NPS Management Policies* refers to tribal groups as having a "government-to-government" relationship, and some tribal groups have not been federally recognized. See *Id.*

See, e.g., *Yosemite I*, 464 F.Supp.2d at 1008 ? 09. *Id.* at 1008. *Id.* at 1012 ? 13. *Id.* at 1009. *NPS MANAGEMENT POLICIES 19* (2006) See *NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN COUNCIL OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, INC. FOR CONDUCTING TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES 1* (1997) ("1997 Agreement"); *NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT AMONG THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AT YOSEMITE, THE CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER, AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL*

*FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION REGARDING THE PLANNING, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK 1* (1999) ("1999 Agreement"). *Yosemite I*, 464 F.Supp.2d 993 (E.D. Cal. 2006). *Id.* at 1008. *Id.* See *Yosemite II*, 520 F.3d 1024 (9th Cir. 2008). See *Settlement Agreement, Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Salazar*, No. CV-F-00-6191 AWI-DLB, CV-F-06-1902 AWI-DLB (E.D. Cal. 2009). See *Yosemite II*, 520 F.3d at 1032. See 1997 Agreement, *supra* note 9; 1999 Agreement, *supra* note 9.

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**Correspondence ID:** 269      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Whitaker, Howard  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent, RE: Merced River Plan

I'm so disgusted with the harmful effects of commercial activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and use of stock animals in the near the Merced River corridor, that I've ceased visiting. For far too long, YNP has shown more interest in supporting commercial interests, than in protecting fragile, irreplaceable, environments.

My specific comments are as follows:

Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley. This is not a radical idea--it should have been done years ago. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of concession stables from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley.

Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is also not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They are of no help to the "general public." They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored.

Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage,"

The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage—but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps.

Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically:

- 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor;
- 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group);
- 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and
- 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

Please keep me informed of your work as you proceed.

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**Correspondence ID:** 270      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Lloyd, Evan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** My name is Evan Lloyd and I live in Fresno, CA. I am an avid white water kayaker and practice the sport over 100 days a year. I would like to express to you my desire to be able to legally kayak some of the rivers and creeks that are located in Yosemite national park. The Merced river, Big creek, and the Tuolumne all offer amazing boating options that are currently not available. I can tell you that as a group, kayakers are among the safest athletes in the outdoors. We travel in groups, perform pre-boating safety meeting, and we carry first-aid and other precautionary gear. Is kayaking dangerous? Of course it is. That is why kayakers make every effort to educate one another before we get on the river. I have hiked out of several drainages that were above my skill level.

I request that you allow kayaking to become a legal activity in Yosemite National Park. If you need to regulate us to certain areas that is fine, but allow us an opportunity to prove that kayaking can be safely accomplished inside the park boundaries.

Thank you for your time

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**Correspondence ID:** 271      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bartak, Fiona  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** In response to the card I received inviting me to participate in your plan to consider how best to protect the Merced, I am sending you my thoughts.

We own a small motor home and love to travel and stay in the national parks. Yosemite being our very favorite, I am glad to see you taking this step.

Once in the park, we do not drive, but hike or bike to all the trails. The amount of cars in the valley seems overwhelming at times. We really appreciate the way Zion National Parks does not allow any vehicles in the valley at the peak season, except those who have reservations at the various lodging places. Their bus system is wonderful, and we are happy to utilize it. I understand they have the



large parking area right at the entrance of the park, which Yosemite does not have, but I feel if something along these lines could be developed, it would really cut down on the pollution in the park. In that same light, cut down on the hours that generators are allowed to be run in the campgrounds.

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**Correspondence ID:** 272      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Unger, Geoff  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite National Park, My name is Geoff Unger and I am an International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA) guide from Utah. My training is through the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) and I hold certifications in rock guiding, alpine guiding and ski mountaineering guiding. I am a frequent visitor to Yosemite National Park (YNP) because of the high quality climbing contained in the valley and the surrounding areas, but I am not allowed to guide there under the current management plan. The one way to guide in the park is to be an employee of Yosemite Mountaineering School (YMS). I would like to propose that allowing guides with the American Mountain Guides Association rock guide certification or higher credential be allowed to guide in YNP. Other National Parks are already employing a system where credentialed guide can obtain a permit for a single trip inside the National Park each year. The example that I can point to is the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) system that is in place at Mount Rainier National Park (MRNP) in Washington State. Initially there was one concessionaire on Mount Rainier, Rainier Mountaineering Inc. Now there are two more after a reconsideration of the management plan in that park. At the same time as International Mountain Guides and Alpine Ascents International were added as concessionaires, the CUA program was introduced. The CUA allows a credentialed mountain guide or guide with 'equivalent experienced' apply for a one-use per year permit. The permit allows the guide to lead one trip with up to four other people. The ratio generally turns out to be one guide to two clients and an assistant guide who is with one client. There are many differences between the terrain in the two different parks. Specifically the glaciated nature of Mount Rainier NP versus the glacially carved rock faces of YNP. I would like to point out that I am mainly interested in using the model of credential based access to open guiding to AMGA certified rock guides in YNP as a corollary to MRNP where AMGA certified alpine and ski mountaineering guides can gain access on a per trip basis. It should go without saying that where an AMGA certified alpine guide is credentialed to guide in glaciated terrain, an AMGA certified rock guide is credentialed to guide in rock climbing terrain up to the AMGA standard. Specific details of how a proposed CUA one-time per year permit would work can be worked out at a later date, but it is important to note that rock guides generally operate at a two clients to one guide ratio especially on longer climbs, but could operate in a single pitch environment at a 4 clients to one guide ratio. The CUA could be for one guide from 5 days one time per year, which is the same number of days for the CUA in MRNP. If there were twenty of these made available each year that would be a total of 100 additional guide days per year.

I would like to highlight some parts becoming an AMGA certified guide that make AMGA credentialed guides especially suited to stewardship of Public Lands and National Parks. Learning and training to be an AMGA certified rock guide is not just about climbing at a standard and performing rescue scenarios. There is a way that credentialed guides learn to carry themselves and represent a larger community that can help influence others to have respect for the land and other climbers. Part of this representation is caring for their clients and shaping their experience in a positive way. Certified guides help clients to understand caring for the land through teaching Leave Not Trace principles. The Leave Not Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics helps to keep guides informed on the latest protocols for keeping nature's resources clean. And of course managing risks and keeping clients safe is the guides' number one priority. One criticism I anticipate hearing about this program is that it will infringe on the business of YMS. I would like to propose that this would be far from the case. I think that having guiding on a limited scale outside of the current concession would strengthen the community of guides in the valley through guide interactions and promote rock guiding in the spirit of healthy competition. I also think that guides under a proposed CUA program would bring clients from their own contact list who may not think to come to the park for climbing at all. I think that it is important to reexamine the way that lands are managed from time to time in order to make sure that all user groups are being represented equally and that the goal of preserving the resource for future generations is being met. The area for improvement that I laid out for the Park is to allow credential based access for AMGA certified mountain guides to do a limited number of programs in the valley under their own insurance and through their own individual businesses. Under a CUA based model this would help bring visitors to the park and keep their visit within the goals of preserving the resource in a safe and positive environment.

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**Correspondence ID:** 273      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Junga, Frank A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent: I'm writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of business activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor.

My specific comments are as follows:

Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley. This is not a radical idea—it should have been done years ago. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of concession stables

from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley.

Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is also not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They are of no help to the "general public." They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored.

Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage—but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps.

Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically:

- 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor;
- 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group);
- 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and
- 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

Please keep me informed of your work as you proceed.

P.S. I did not appreciate error message--get a bigger mailbox.

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**Correspondence ID:** 274      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Wiedenhoefer, Hans  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** As a person who has climbed for many years in the park, that experience has helped shape my understanding and appreciation of the value that wilderness plays in enriching our lives. I'm sure that kayaking in Yosemite would add a new dimension to that understanding. The Merced watershed, is a world class venue for showcasing the beauty that is Yosemite. Please consider exploring the possibility of allowing kayaking in Yosemite Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 275      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Maxwell, Craig and Elaine  
**Outside Organization:** Sugar Pine Ranch Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent: Thank you for extending the MercedRiver Plan/SEIS (MRP) scoping comments period. We truly appreciate the opportunity this extension afforded us to reflect, collaborate and offer our brief comments. Of course, we also appreciate your willingness and readiness to start fresh. We couldn't agree more with you and others writing you when it comes to a fresh start. Your willingness to knuckle down and address the core mandates - "recreation use..without adverse impact on the outstandingly remarkable values (ORV) and free-flowing character of the river area, the quality of recreation experience, and public health and

safety: is so, critical to your success.

Also, we are aware of the detailed comments submitted by others. A few letters we have seen (with scoping comments and questions) more than express our detailed concerns. Therefore, in the interest of time and effort, we will keep our comments brief and focused on systemic issues. We trust that this time the National Park Service (NPS or Park) will avoid the use of complex science, special interest agendas and established growth patterns to describe plans. A return to basics, where the place - "River Area" - is looked at where it is, as it was in its native state, how it changes over time from natural processes, and unencumbered by commercial and political forces to the extent possible. In these words, we suggest that you make impact avoidance your highest priority, much more important than "quantity of use...", and stop interpreting "recreation experience" as a euphemism for urban convenience and an extension of suburban lifestyle. It will do the MRP justice to recognize that the majority of Americans are facing a significant long-term austerity reduction, and will not have the money or means to experience expensive decadent venues, which appears to be the direction you are taking the Park.

#### MRP Relationship and FIT with Other Plans

The Current system of developing various interrelated plans, separated by long time frames of relevance, without a system to incorporate amendments that bring older plans up to date as logic requires - in order to track related and dependent elements in newer plans - is contrary to prudent and best practices.

Please consider and implement a feedback/amending policy as an outcome of the MRP process, and use it to take the public through appropriate and relevant changes to the Yosemite General Plan (GP). The time and money spent on arguing and discussing issues related to obsolete, or outdated elements of the GP would be better spent to facilitate a GP update.

Even if the amendment process is approached as a temporary management discretionary addendum, it is better than knowingly accommodating outmoded plan elements.

Even if the amendment process is approached as a temporary management discretionary addendum, it is better than knowingly accommodating outmoded plan elements.

#### Connecting and Dove-Tailing Management Best Practices and ORV Prescriptions

The Visitor Experience and Resource Planning (VERP) methodology is not hard to understand through a narrow band intellectual prism. No one with NPS we have met (and we've talked it over with plenty) can connect the dots between budget requirements, required human resources, real-time visitor capacity management, and visitor experience quality. Yet, VERP is touted as THE capacity management tool. Sorry, that just is not possible.

#### Redefine Progress Metrics to Reflect the Park's Protection Role

Unlike most operating sectors (private and public), it is (or should be) clear to the Park that national parks are a finite resource (in the MRP case for recreation use). They are finite not only in their area, ORVs and other assets, but also due to their relatively long impact recovery cycles.

Today, we tend to measure progress in terms of percent this or that over a prior period of time, e.g., on average the Park's budget grows by x percent, visitor use increases by y percent, and infrastructure capacity expands by z percent. In general, our population, economy, energy use and resource consumption follow this pattern. We measure our past performance this way, and we plan growth that way, which is a serious mistake if sustainability is our goal. The Park's charter to protect is a sustainability directive. Therefore, the Park should not use these types of measures, which it does.

Our point is that systems driven by this or that percent over prior periods as a measure of growth behave in an exponential fashion. And although we do not know when this behavior turns the corner, and skyrockets vertically to a crash point, the system does at some point crash. For a finite Yosemite resource, no matter how much human effort or money you invest, the time will come, under such a model, when the cumulative impacts are irreversible and devastating.

When a large percent of the MRP area is managed by a for-profit (year-to-year growth driven) operator, and there are nonprofits with increasing donor pools with millions of dollars to throw at growth projects, and the NPS operates under a continuous growth model, the course is clear. Eventually, the MRP area will be managed to death; the protected resource will be lost under compounding deferred maintenance, commercial exploitation, and critical shortage of resources.

Our suggestion, therefore is to redefine in the MRP how you will measure progress for any given area or the entire park; to adopt a model or methodology that measures impacts on ORVs, natural and cultural resources, environmental systems, etc. for infrastructure projects, transportation system changes, facilities expansion, amenity venues, and so on for all projects. Follow this by ranking the various alternatives for a given project in terms of minimum to maximum overall natural resource impact. At least future decisions will be based on some objective measure of protection, and NOT based on a rate of change. There are such models being used today for land use and public and private development projects. Please step up to a real leadership role by creating and adopting sustainable

progress metrics. It is doable, and the Park has this opportunity to lead the Nation in sustainable government policy.

#### Recognize in the Plan the many Benefits from Regional Partnerships

Over the long haul accommodating increasing visitor populations will require partnerships with regional visitor service providers. Ordinarily, many parks may never experience crushing visitor flows, but Yosemite has, and will in the future. Attempts by concessionaires and other visitor experience contractors to develop additional business will only lead to acquisition and control of regional services. Service provider diversity will suffer as a result. As in the growth model discussed above, impact on Yosemite assets will be intense. The contractor's dominant position over recreational use in the Yosemite area will simply guarantee this intense impact.

On the other hand, regional partnerships with community businesses, planners and other organizations will afford the opportunity to establish complementary visitor capacities. As OVRs, other Park assets and resources, and systems experience overloads, sold partnerships will lose intensity. Regional partnerships, of a diverse nature, can maintain visitor interest and excitement, while buffering and rechanneling visitors. It will be self-serving to address visitor expectations and to insure a quality experience by combining local, non-stressed Park, and other gateway assets into the visitor's journey.

The MRP should explore these dependencies, along with current and potential future support requirements. Many regional businesses have approached the Park before in the hope to establish these partnerships. The road has been rocky, and not as productive as will be required in the future. Capacity management during overload times is a predicament requiring preplanning, established responses, and coordination across the entire region. The MRP should recognize the potential and detrimental impacts possible, and look at effective mitigations. Regional partnerships are an excellent vehicle for such mitigations.

The issue has been, from our point of view, the Park's view of partners. For the most part, the only welcomed partner is one, like the Yosemite Fund and the Yosemite Association that either bring lots of money or political clout. Presently, what is viewed as gateway partnerships appears to us to be no more than a PR exercise in a setting of improved communications. What we are suggesting here is much deeper - it creates programs and infrastructure, and assists with funding for effective buffering and rechanneling. In fairness, progress is being made, but a lot more must be done for the benefits of regional buffering and re-channeling to be achieved.

#### Conclusion

We hope that you treat our comments seriously, and will address each, and provide thoughtful responses. We know that others will specifically address the legal and technical aspects of the new MRP plan, i.e., The Merced River area and various Acts and policies, and therefore we have focused on the equally important practice elements also so necessary for plan's successful implementation.

Planning exercises that recognize misguided components in predecessor plans should be able to amend the predecessor. Planning prescriptions around the invalid or substantially flawed predecessor plans only weakens the MRP. The MRP must deal with the realtime capacity management challenges at the same time it addresses the long and short-term impacts on ORVs and other natural social and financial assets. Foremost, and most critical, is the need to address how growth is calibrated and measured. Continuing to rely on traditional rates of change measurements simply leads to exponential growth and a crash point in a finite resource setting. Worse yet, because exponential behavior starts off slow, and human behavior looks at the immediate past as a predictor of future events, the actual future in terms of severe impacts will not be seen soon enough. Once the rate of change growth turns upward, and shoots vertical it is most likely too late for short term or intermediate solutions to be effective.

The time left to recover is extremely short, and most likely too short for an appropriate response considering normal government processes. The Park/NPS needs to redefine progress in terms of minimum impact scenarios ASAP. Additionally, the importance for diversified regional partnerships with regards to capacity buffering and visitor rechanneling cannot be overstated. Because "every main artery leads to the Valley" visitor buffering and redirection is very limited within the Park - even at the entrance gates. Dealing with extreme overloads is best accomplished within the gateways. Real partnerships, where visitor experience programs and communications channels are worked out in advance can put to use excess capacity in the region. The visitor's use of personal vehicles is not the issue. The Park's island mentality is the issue. The MRP needs to recognize this, and address the development of regional partnerships.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	276	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Rein, William				
<b>Received:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Feb,06,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	E-mail				
	would say that vehicles should be severely restricted in the valley. If you don't have a campsite reserved you should not be allowed to drive in to the valley. I think a substantial shuttle service should be set up so that if you are just visiting the valley you can hope on a shuttle and ride it in. And if you are camping you should only be allowed to drive in to the valley and straight to your campsite where your vehicle should stay parked unless you are leaving the valley. Vehicles bring in all kinds of nasty pollutants that in no way help the river. and with reduced traffic you can probably demolish some roads and allow the river to claim a little bit more of its valley back.				

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**Correspondence ID:** 277      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Kropach, William  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** i love the natural beauty of Yosemite National Park, it truly is aw inspiring of the power and deep time and subtleties that forge such a natural beauty, putting in perspective the insignificance of our own species' accolades.

i would want to see much of YNP protected, including the entire stretch of river running through the park, all the trees, plant life and animals that incorporate the parks biosphere. i would want human development of the park to be next to nothing, what lodgings are there may make their case to stay but preferably stays in the park should be in tent, the product of camping. a few hotel should be allowed however provided they disrupt very little of the ecosystem, so as to provide comfortable housing for elderly or others who just cant or unfortunately wont enjoy nature to the best of their senses.

i don't see much wrong with Yosemite, i would encourage the park service to campaign for lower to middle income families to stay and enjoy the park. particularly families in urban areas. seasonal discounts should be offered as well as a convenient public mass transit system, like large buses, that don't necessary need to run year round, but to offer a cheap escape for the more impoverished of our citizens to see beauty and grace that invaluable is a great service, children and old alike should always keep with them.

i feel the park distrupts very little of Yosemitees natural processes, i would encourage as much as the park stay wild as possible only laying small humble tracts for trails for people to walk and safley enjoy the park, as well as provide lodging, and dinning again making special pains to disrupt as little of the eco and natural bio-systems as possible.

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**Correspondence ID:** 278      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Knapton, William E  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Your postcard got it exactly right. The best possible Valley experience is camping by the river. In 7 decades of visitation at levels of accommation from the Ahwanee to old camp 14 with only a hammock i feel qualified to offer an opinion. Restore the river camps!

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**Correspondence ID:** 279      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mather, Viv  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I'm writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of business activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows: Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley. This is not a radical idea. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of the concession stables from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley. Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored. Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage -- but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps.

Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity. Specifically: 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor; 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group); 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See, for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and 4) to prevent the

spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm.

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**Correspondence ID:** 280      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Saldivar, Vincent  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I like the experience of Yosemite. I like having true unaltered nature close enough to me that i can make just a day trip out of it. It is nice to be able to leave the city behind me and just go and see what wonderful things there are in nature. I would like to see the nature undisturbed. i would hate to see hotels or resorts or things like that too close. for me seeing things like that take away from the true experience that places like Yosemite has to offer. When I have children I would like them to have to opportunities to see such beautiful and natural sights just as I have. As far as fixing things goes I think it would be beneficial to come up with a system that allows the most people to see the parks at the same time. I have heard that Yosemite has turned people away due to capacity problems. I think that is unfair but if nothing could be done about such problem at least having a way for people to find out if it is possible to get in such as having the current information on a website or some other easy to access way. I would like to see the natural look and feel of the parks to be preserved as best as possible. What makes the parks so special is their untampered with beauty. I believe that without that they would lose much of their appeal with people. It would most definitely be a negative thing in my opinion.

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**Correspondence ID:** 281      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** McMichael, Vicki  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1. I am concerned that the average visitor is unaware of the MRP planning process and the restrictions that may come of it because they did not understand or had no opportunity to provide input. Please contact tourism agencies and groups such as AAA, Thousand Trails, the Good Sam Club, AARP, and give them an opportunity to provide input into the process. They may have demographic info that is helpful to your outreach program. 2. I feel that the info posted at the MRP open house meetings is misleading. The information posted leads the participant to automatically provide a comment about preservation; the wording on the posters and comment forms give them no other choice. Visitors may need to understand that limiting their comments to preservation may eliminate their ability to stay overnight in Yosemite National Park, or swim, raft and picnic by the Merced River (in Wawona, Yosemite Valley, El Portal). Please provide equal weight to visitor use issues so that it is clear that the inverse of preservation may be loss of access to Yosemite National Park. 3. I am concerned that the MRP planning process and eventual plan will discriminate against a lot of day and overnight users of Yosemite National Park because they may have been overlooked or may not have the resources to understand government processes and provide input. I envision a complicated permit system spurned on by user capacity requirements that allows for the wealthy dominant culture to access Yosemite National Park, but leaves out a society of underserved populations. The groups of visitors I refer to are those who may be less educated, low to mid-income, non-English speaking, senior citizens, disabled, and minorities. 4. Consider human interaction with the natural environment while fishing, rafting, swimming, picnicking, reflecting, painting, and napping along the banks of the Merced River as an Outstanding Remarkable Value. 5. What science will the MRP team rely on to establish an ORV? Will past studies be accepted or will new monitoring programs be required to establish impacts, etc.? Is there a proper amount of time to acquire, and study the data with 2012 looming? 6. Please consider performing a "dry run" of what ever user capacity program is being developed. It may be worthwhile to try it over 4th of July or Labor Day weekends during 2010 and 2011. Have monitors taking demographic information at the Park Entrances to see what populations of visitors were able to figure out how to gain entry into Yosemite. Work out the issues before implementing a final user capacity plan. 7. Leave all current visitor services in place ? manage what is there and implement sustainable practices where ever possible to limit impacts. 8. Increase the number of camp sites in Yosemite Valley as they provide access to lower/mid income visitors. 9. Leave all current employee housing in Yosemite Valley in place ? asking staff to live and drive from outside the park to work has a bigger environmental impact to air and carbon foot print than what currently exists. Staff (NPS and Concession) living in the Park often walk, ride a bike, or take a shuttle to work limiting their impact on existing environmental conditions. 10. Have a park and ride shuttle system from El Portal during peak holiday periods. Lease parking space from the Fisher properties at the View Lodge and have a supplemental transportation system into Yosemite Valley. Use an alternative fuel vehicle(s) to transport day visitors from this location for a nominal fee or make it free. 11. Reinstall the foot bridge crossing Yosemite Creek near Yosemite Lodge to allow pedestrians to cross the water and access the bike path leading to the Superintendent's Bridge (it used to parallel the roadway along the " humpback section"). Right now there is only one way to cross Yosemite Creek, you must cross the intersection at Yosemite Falls, which has caused significant traffic congestion. Reinstalling the "second" footbridge would allow pedestrians to disperse on the Yosemite Lodge side of the creek and reduce traffic stops at the Yosemite Lodge/Falls intersection. 12. Provide an alternative pathway across the Yosemite Lodge/Falls intersection by either installing a pedestrian walkway over head or underground. Retain the existing cross walk and path of travel for ADA visitors to continue to allow proper access to the Falls. Since the elimination of parking and the

shuttle stop located directly at the Yosemite Falls area, pedestrian and vehicle traffic are in conflict. I believe the excessive congestion on peak holiday periods will be tremendously reduced if this area is addressed. 13. Swimming pools: Keep all pools in the river corridor. They keep a certain capacity of visitors from utilizing the river during peak summer months. Require the concessioner to install the "Ozone" pool sanitizing system which is completely chlorine and chemical free and exceeds sanitation requirements. The Ozone pool sanitizing system will reduce hazardous materials use in the river corridor. 14. Merced Lake HSC; retain the camp to allow visitors to access a wilderness area who may not otherwise venture nearly 15 miles off the roadway. 15. Rotate access to sensitive areas. Rather than permanently close off or limit access (capacities) to certain areas of the Merced River, rotate access depending on time of year, bi-annual, etc. 16. Do not pave the path along the river from El Capitan to Pohono Bridge and back. The asphalt in this area has all but disappeared and allows those who venture in that area to have a more natural experience. 17. Often it appears that NPS planning processes have put the burden of their decisions on the visitor ? made many things difficult for them to enjoy their National Parks by taking out services, picnic areas, parking, camping, public fueling, and not providing enough public restrooms. Take the time to know your visitor and be empathetic to their needs. The natural environment maybe unique and intimidating to many, make plans that balance preservation actions with visitor needs.

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**Correspondence ID:** 282      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Long, Trevor M  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I think all vehicles should be banned from the valley. Especially ginormous deisel spewing land ships. To do this, you should give people the option of riding a bike, walking or a free shuttle service which runs from very early to very late...more camping opportunites as well. no new buildings...people have trashed the place enough. you should tear out the two lane highway that's been plowed through there and leave only a narrow path for shuttles/maintenance. it is disgusting seeing how crowded the valley can get. vehicles are the #1 culprit.

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**Correspondence ID:** 283      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Haagenson, Trevor  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am an avid climber and whitewater kayaker and frequent visitor to Yosemite National Park. Yosemite is one of my favorite parks in large part due to the excellent balance between conservation and recreation that the management has found. I am always impressed by the access and support the climbing community receives. On the other hand the ban on whitewater boating is in stark contrast to the policy on climbing. The many restrictions on whitewater recreation within the park have always struck me contrasting with the mandate of the park service to provide for the enjoyment of the people. Each spring that I drive up the highway from El Portal I long to explore the river to my right. And each time that I put in at Wawona to paddle down one of the single best quality wilderness whitewater runs in the world I wonder about an unexplored river upstream. Whitewater recreation has an low impact on the rivers in use. We ask for very little in the way of infrastructure and we statistically unlikely to need EMS or rescue services. My father who is an avid outdoorsman refers to the Park Service as the Gestapo due to his impression that they have forgotten that the parks don't belong to them, but I him and I and every American. The ban on boating in Yosemite is capricious and unnecessary. Reverse it and prove my father wrong.

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**Correspondence ID:** 284      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Suk, Tom N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Mar,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** This message is to provide my thoughts about your Merced River planning process. I want to start by thanking you for initiating a process to develop a new plan to protect the Merced River and its corridor from harm, and from the intrusions of inappropriate developments. And i thank you very much for this opportunity to comment.

I encourage you to direct your staff to develop a strong plan that removes inappropriate developments from the river corridor, that restores the disturbed areas, and that places strict controls on high-impact activities, such as the use of domestic livestock animals.

I have reviewed the material posted at your website, and appreciate the time your staff has taken to provide such information on the Internet for public review. There was one item posted at your website that, unfortunately, calls into serious question the impartiality and professionalism of your staff. I refer to the official "Comment Form." The posted official response form begins by asking the question: "What do you love about the...Merced Lake High Sierra Camp." Such leading questions illustrate a clear and highly inappropriate bias of your staff to promote this harmful development. The High Sierra Camp has for too long degraded the Yosemite wilderness and the Merced River's wild & scenic character. This camp (and all of the other High Sierra Camps) should be removed,

and the sites restored, as provided by Congress in the House Committee Report for the California Wilderness Act. Yet some member (or members) of your staff is doing the exact opposite: disseminating biased questionnaires, posing leading questions, and actively soliciting comments favorable of the camps, in an apparent effort to rationalize the continued existence of these unnecessary, elitist, polluting commercial developments. These prejudiced staff person(s) should be removed from your planning team, and replaced with unbiased professionals.

Yosemite's former "Valley Plan" called for the removal of the commercial livestock stables from Yosemite Valley. Unfortunately, this wise vision was never fully implemented. Your new plan for the Merced River should contain unequivocal provisions to remove the commercial stables and to restore the site.

Your plan should acknowledge that domestic livestock, such as horses, mules, burros, etc., are known to pollute water, degrade trails, spread invasive weeds, and degrade the recreation experience of foot travelers. Your plan should respond to these significant effects by prohibiting livestock use from the Merced River corridor, including Yosemite Valley, unless: 1) stock animals are fitted with manure-catchers, and stock users dispose of all manure so it does not contaminate water, trails, or campsites; 2) stock animals are sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, cleaned, and provided weed-free feed for at least two weeks, so they do not introduce or spread invasive weeds; 3) stock animals should be allowed only on trails that are properly designed, constructed, and maintained to withstand the erosive forces of stock use; and 4) to protect the experience of other visitors, stock groups should be limited to no more than four animals per group.

In conclusion, this planning process is an historic opportunity to remove inappropriate developments, and to stop harmful activities within the corridor of the Merced River. Please meet this opportunity with action, and please implement, at minimum, the suggestions provided above.

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**Correspondence ID:** 285      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Outside Organization:** Ron, Sundergill  
National Parks Conservation Association Conservation/Preservation

**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent Neubacher: We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to help define the scope of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management plan. Below we have identified several concerns that we hope the plan will address. As you know, we supported the 2005 plan and submitted a Friend of the Court brief defending it during the court challenge of the plan. However, in light of the fact that the plan was overturned, our overriding concern is now to ensure that the new plan not only continues to be sufficiently protective of the Merced River's Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs), but also is legally sound and can withstand any court challenges. Of particular interest is including a defensible and effective approach to limiting visitor capacities that reinforces the validity of the NPS Visitor Experience and Resources Protection approach. Because this plan will serve as a model to many other park units and non-park areas with designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, it is imperative that you get it right. To those ends, we respectfully submit these comments, and pledge to participate in and keep our members and staff engaged and informed about these issues throughout the planning process.

Addressing User Capacity The Wild and Scenic River Act (WSRA) requires river managers to "address ... user capacities" in comprehensive management plans. However, the statute does not define "user capacities," but the WSRA guidelines use the term "carrying capacity" and define it as the "quantity of recreation use which an area can sustain without adverse impact on the ORVs and free-flowing character of the river area, the quality of the recreation experience, and public health and safety." (Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification and Management of River Areas, 47 Fed. Reg. 39 at 459). But as you know since 1978, Congress has already been requiring each unit of the park system to identify and implement commitments for visitor carrying capacities in their general management plans (GMPs). So up until now, it made sense that the NPS could use its visitor capacity approaches to satisfy WSRA's requirement to address user capacity. The approach used by NPS has been the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP), which has proved effective and scientifically valid when implemented correctly at national parks until throughout the system.

However, as you know, the lawsuits highlighted the distinctions between the approaches to limiting capacity under the NPS planning mandate and the WSRA standards. The opinions that overturned the first Merced Planning efforts represent the judiciary's first interpretation of the WSRA's user capacity mandate, so it is important for the park to incorporate the courts' analyses into the plan. We cannot overemphasize the importance of getting this right; not only will a correct interpretation avoid costly and delaying lawsuits, it will also be closely watched and followed by managing agencies, not just NPS, tasked with creating management plans for wild and scenic rivers throughout the country. The importance of setting the right direction is reinforced by the fact that the number of WSR designations are increasing rapidly. The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 designated 86 new Wild and Scenic Rivers, totaling over 1,100 miles in Oregon, Idaho, Arizona, Wyoming, Utah, California, and Massachusetts ? including 165 miles of wild and scenic rivers in Zion National Park. These areas and parks will be watching this planning process closely, in order to make sure their plans and efforts to address user capacity reflect the lessons learned from your experience.

In the first Merced plan lawsuit, on appeal the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals interpreted the statute and guidelines to require "descriptions of actual levels of visitor use" and invalidated the 2000 Merced River Plan. The court maintained that setting the desired future conditions, and calling for action when indicators reflect that desired conditions have fallen below standards, was not enough. Overturning a District Court opinion, the court held that the requirement to "address user capacity" required NPS to "deal with or discuss the actual numbers of people that can be received" (Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Norton, 348 F.3d 789 (9th Cir.



2003)).

The 2005 plan responded to the court's interpretation by including actual numbers. Still employing the VERP process, the plan used existing facility caps as interim limits during VERP implementation (thus including actual numbers of people), and going beyond this by including other management systems that impose limits on visitor use, such as the Wilderness Trailhead Quota System. The resulting District Court opinion, upheld by the 9th Circuit, invalidated this revised plan in *Friends of Yosemite v. Scarlett*, 439 F. Supp. 2d 1074 (E.D. Cal. 2006) (aff'd sub. nom. *Friends of Yosemite v. Kempthorne*, 520 F.3d 1024 (9th Cir. 2008)). This time, the reason was not because actual numbers were lacking. Instead, the court maintained that NPS did not advance a "rational connection between the interim levels and its duty to protect and enhance the park", and because VERP only calls for action after degradation actually occurs (Kempthorne at 1034). The fatal flaw was that the interim capacity limits were connected to existing facilities and uses, and should have been directly connected to the river corridor's ORVs. This holding is the one that must be carefully considered during this third and hopefully final version of the comprehensive plan.

The essential strategy to conform to the court's requirements must be to not only identify the ORVs, but also to link numerical limits to how these limits demonstrably prevent degradation to these ORVs. We applaud you for issuing the draft ORV Report in February 2008, and are using this scoping process to seek input to ensure that all ORVs are identified and described. The challenge, of course, is to devise a process that assesses the use limits that protect ORVs in a scientifically valid way.

Our view is that the VERP process is the only certain way to determine the links between uses and the effects on the ground. There are often so many factors affecting ecosystems and use levels, and variation in actual visitor behavior and characteristics, that setting limits based upon anything but actual observation and testing is highly questionable. In other words, we supported the approach set out in the 2005 plan, since it was realistic about setting use limits that could be adjusted as feedback and adaptation takes place. The feedback loop provided by VERP is really the only way to test the actual use levels that achieve the minimal levels of protection.

Hopefully, the park has been collecting data on use levels and the actual on-the-ground actual effects during this ten-year process. If so, we hope that you can provide hard evidence to show when and how ORVs are diminished at different use levels. If not, the challenge will be to predict the proper levels in the absence of this hard evidence. We are confident that you have invested in experienced conservation biologists and ecosystem experts that can make these predictions in effective ways. This is critical. We will work with you as limits are proposed and discussed during the drafting stages, and hope that the transparency of the process will allow all the interested parties to help review these levels and their justifications before they are finalized.

We feel that in identifying the carrying capacities, the NPS Management Policies remains an effective guidance tool. The relevant section is below:

**8.2.1 Visitor Carrying Capacity** Visitor carrying capacity is the type and level of visitor use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and visitor experience conditions in the park. By identifying and staying within carrying capacities, superintendents can manage park uses that may unacceptably impact the resources and values for which the parks were established. Superintendents will identify visitor carrying capacities for managing public use. Superintendents will also identify ways to monitor for and address unacceptable impacts on park resources and visitor experiences.

When making decisions about carrying capacity, superintendents must use the best available natural and social science and other information, and maintain a comprehensive administrative record relating to their decisions. The decision-making process should be based on desired resource conditions and visitor experiences for the area, quality indicators and standards that define the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences, and other factors that will lead to logical conclusions and the protection of park resources and values. The level of analysis necessary to make decisions about carrying capacities is commensurate with the potential impacts or consequences of the decisions. The greater the potential for significant impacts or consequences on park resources and values or the opportunities to enjoy them, the greater the level of study and analysis and civic engagement needed to support the decisions.

The planning process will determine the desired resource and visitor experience conditions that are the foundation for carrying capacity analysis and decision-making. If the time frame for making decisions is insufficient to allow the application of a carrying capacity planning process, superintendents must make decisions based on the best available science, public input, and other information. In either case, such planning must be accompanied by appropriate environmental impact analysis, in accordance with Director's Order #12.

As park use changes over time, superintendents must continue to decide if management actions are needed to keep use at sustainable levels and prevent unacceptable impacts. If indicators and standards have been prescribed for an impact, the acceptable level is the prescribed standard. If indicators and standards do not exist, the superintendent must determine how much impact is acceptable before management intervention is required.

If and when park uses reach a level at which they must be limited or curtailed, the preferred choice will be to continue uses that are encouraged under the criteria listed in section 8.2, and to limit or curtail those that least meet those criteria. The Service will consult with tourism organizations and other affected service providers in seeking ways to provide appropriate types and levels of visitor use while sustaining the desired resource and visitor experience conditions.

This guidance is useful in that it provides a roadmap to address the uncertainties surrounding the establishment of the user capacity limits. The key excerpt from above is "If the time frame for making decisions is insufficient to allow the application of a carrying capacity planning process, superintendents must make decisions based on the best available science, public input, and other information." If the park has not carried out the VERP process to produce demonstrable levels past which degradation occurs, the

best available science must be implemented (along with the public input and other information). We urge you to include scoping guidelines that clearly state that the best science will be used so that levels that protect ORVs are set so that management actions occur before degradation occurs.

Monitoring and Enforcement Setting credible, scientifically justified use limits is only the first step in an effective management plan. Having limits without the means to monitor the levels or enforce the limits are just as critical.

We believe the monitoring plan should be stringent enough to adequately analyze, monitor, and enforce the stipulations in the user capacity program, but it should not inappropriately divert or demand resources from the NPS, or create a program that is practicably unenforceable.

Transportation and vehicular traffic

The National Park Service should take this planning opportunity to determine what transportation programs and systems could play a role in helping to alleviate any potential impacts that are found to be unacceptable. In addition to potentially helping avoid or minimize resource impacts, a closer look at alternate transportation programs and systems would be consistent with the goals of the Climate Friendly Parks initiative, which Yosemite is part of, and consistent with a broad goal of the 1980 General Management Plan ("markedly reduce traffic congestion"). Such an analysis should feed into an adaptive management program and take into account the social science data that exists regarding use of national parks, which may inform the relationship between private auto use and ability for a park visitor to enjoy the park.

Visitor serving structures (lodging, food, education/interpretive related buildings)

As the National Park Service evaluates current and possible future visitor serving structures, various options may present themselves as viable alternatives to appropriately meet the diverse demands of the visitor. Social science data may inform the NPS on what options they may wish to preference when several options that do not cause "unacceptable impacts" exist.

Conclusion President Clinton's Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt characterized Yosemite's stakeholders as a "cantankerous, eccentric, passionate, irrational, idealistic, quarrelsome, impossible crowd of people." (Brian Melley, Yosemite: Tough Task Ahead for New Superintendent, Seattle Post Intelligencer, Feb. 6, 2003). We wanted to acknowledge the challenges and frustrations that the park staff has experienced over the years, trying to satisfy the diverse, conflicting and vocal interests involved. We applaud the dedication, commitment and professionalism of your NPS staff, and look forward to working with them to help craft a plan that is effective, protective, and legally airtight.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	286	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Mosley, Peggy				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	The Groveland Hotel Business				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	The attachments are my comments on the Merced River Plan scoping and a copy of my testimony at a Congressional Hearing in Yosemite in 2003 on this subject. Re: Scoping comments for the Merced River Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement				

Superintendent Neubacher:

Thank you for extending the acceptance of comments under "scoping" until February 4, 2010.

I would ask that the National Park Service (NPS) take a comprehensive new look at how the infrastructure around the Merced River is to be maintained or reshaped without being influenced by earlier decisions that were intended to accommodate charter and transit tourists by reducing or eliminating private vehicle access.

As a hotel operator in the Groveland area for more than two decades, a past member of the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation Strategy (YARTS) citizen advisory committee, and a Board Member of the Yosemite Gateway Partners, I have been exposed to many perspectives on how vehicle access to Yosemite National Park should be managed. It has been my experience that many of Yosemite Valley's visitors seek to have an individual experience centered around a personalized itinerary which the transit schemes being offered cannot come close to duplicating. I also believe that many visitors prefer to experience Yosemite in small family groups or as individuals as opposed to being herded into charter or transit buses.

The Merced River Plan is to address how to maintain the wild and scenic characteristics or qualities of the river corridor. This means to me that visitor experiences should accentuate the scenic and wild nature of the river system, they should be as unobtrusive as possible, and they should, by their design, place an emphasis on the grandeur of nature not on the works of man. I believe that overnight guests staying in "hard-shell" accommodations within the Valley and the charter tour bus customers place a much greater demand for intrusive infrastructure and other associated visitor supportive services (such as the attendant resident employees) than do

day visitors who commute into the Park from outside lodging locations.

Day visitors traveling via private vehicles from outside lodging clearly do not need the kind of massive rebuilding proposed in the previously adopted Yosemite Valley Plan. If access to the Valley is restricted to passenger sedans, light trucks, small tour busses and a minimal number of 45 passenger vehicles, the costs and negative environmental impacts of major highway improvements needed to accommodate large buses could be avoided. Day visitors also can bring their own supplies and can buy souvenirs from Gateway community businesses thereby reducing the need for such facilities to be located in the Valley.

I would ask the NPS to prepare an alternative in the new Merced River Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement which considers implementing a well managed private vehicle access policy in lieu of a region-wide transit system. A variation of this proposal could explore the economic, environmental and social costs and benefits of allowing 18 passenger (182' wheel base) transit and charter industry buses to share the roadways with private vehicles. This would accommodate individual businesses that wish to provide a specialized shuttle service. Such a specialized service centered on using small coaches would avoid the conflicts, costs and environmental impacts that are associated with the bus fleet of the proposed regional transit service, or the expansion of the in-Park transit service.

One of the significant deficiencies of the previous NPS plans for Yosemite Valley was the failure to address both the environmental and the socio-economic impacts that will occur within the surrounding gateway communities by changing the historic transportation access policy of Yosemite National Park. Previous plans for redesigning Yosemite Valley's infrastructure which drove the language of the previous Merced River Plan placed an emphasis on getting tourists out of their private transportation and into a transit system. Whether that transit system originates within the gateway communities or intercepts tourists at the Park's entrance stations, this access change will dramatically alter the visitor experience. This was identified in Yosemite National Park's own transportation studies that were conducted in the early 1990s. However, these impacts were not fully addressed in the previous Merced River Plan. I would submit for the Park planners consideration that the environment and economy of the whole Yosemite region must be treated with equal respect. Moving problems from the Merced River corridor to the entrance stations or the gateway communities is not acceptable. In a similar fashion, as the NPS addresses the issue of "people capacity," the capacity of the gateway region to absorb Yosemite tourists needs and demands should be addressed in any comprehensive management plan of the Merced River.

Also, I have attached the testimony (Yosemite Freight) I gave to a Congressional Hearing on this subject in 2003, in Yosemite, at the request of Congressman George Radanovich.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Testimony:

Yosemite Freight and YARTS (Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System) April 2003

Imagine this scenario and then decide if you really want to take a bus.

It's 8:30 AM. You, your spouse and two small children are totally excited about the prospects of visiting Yosemite for the very first time. You have debated about taking your own private vehicle (which could soon be forbidden) or leave the driving to them, and take the bus.

You elect to try the bus. You gather your family, your Yosemite Freight, (which consists of a stroller, diaper bag, picnic basket for lunch, camera bag, bicycle, clothing change for the kids, etc.), open your wallet for the \$28.00 fare for the four of you, (remembering, of course, that the gate fee is \$20.00 for a 7 day pass, for as many people as you can safely put in your vehicle ? for a 7 passenger van, that's 41 cents per person day) and board the bus by 9 AM.

The bus arrives and you load your 'freight' on the bus. Since Buck Meadows (Highway 120) is the last pickup stop prior to entering the park, you rumble along the scenic highway into Yosemite. Perhaps, your first stop will be Bridal Veil Falls, where you've heard about the spraying mist, the hike up the backside of the falls, etc.

You arrive at Bridal Veil, and get off the bus ? yes, you, your family and all your 'freight'. Now what?? The kids are antsy after the hour plus ride and need to stretch their legs ? not to mention the adults. Where will you leave all your belongings while you experience the Falls? Or what about that desire to hike up the backside? Someone must stay back to watch the 'freight'!

Now that you've 'done' Bridal Veil, the next bus arrives to spirit you off to the next stop ? maybe the big meadow for your picnic. You load your 'freight' and family and head for the next stop, where you get to unload again, haul your 'freight' to the picnic site and proceed to have lunch.

One of the kids is fascinated by the cute little striped yellow thing flying around the clover. Bingo!!! Now that is some sting on a tender little finger, that begins to swell amidst all the piercing screams of a child is great pain. What to do? Your vehicle with its trusty first aid kit is back at your hotel in Buck Meadows, and there's no YARTS bus in sight to take you for first aid.

Finally you get to the Visitor Center in the Valley and everyone needs a treat after the harrowing ordeal with the bee. Stop at

Degnans for something and prepare to unload your wallet a second time.

If you decide to take the 2.5 hour tour of the Valley Floor, expect to spend about \$18/person. If you get out for under \$100.00, consider yourself most frugal.

It's finally nearing 5 PM and almost time to find the YARTS bus where you can load your 'freight' for the final time and head back to your hotel, where you'll arrive about 6:30 P.M.

Wow!!! What a day ? What a Yosemite Experience!!! Do you suppose Teddy Roosevelt ever imagined he was creating such a monster? I don't think so!

The one year YARTS Demonstration program was entirely successful. It clearly demonstrated that people will NOT ride a bus ? the YARTS ridership during the demo period was primarily employees of NPS and YCS ? riding at taxpayer expense.

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**Correspondence ID:** 287      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Thornton, Mark V  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Thank you for extending the acceptance of comments under "scoping" until February 4, 2010.

I would hope that the National Park Service (NPS) would truly hit the "reset" button and consider a comprehensive new approach to the development of a new Merced River Plan. I believe the previously adopted River Plan, and its companion document, the Yosemite Valley Plan, were fatally flawed because of the following reasons. First, the Yosemite Valley Plan was written before the Merced River Plan and the resulting process appeared to be "pre-decisional." The Merced River Plan should drive the development strategies of the Yosemite Valley Plan, not the reverse. Second, many cultural resources were being impacted or removed to allow for new or rebuilt infrastructure. There was no clear justification for such impacts. Third, there are many management plans governing various aspects of the Valley floor but no clear message has been forthcoming from the NPS on which plan or which law has priority. For example, does the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act "trump" the National Historic Preservation Act? Fourth, all the alternatives relative to the subject of "access" to the Valley, seem to be centered on a common theme: the elimination of traditional private vehicle access. I believe NEPA requires alternatives to be proposed and studied that have clearly definable and discernable differences. Fifth, the courts have ruled that people capacity is to be addressed yet the NPS does not provide clear documentation of current or past visitation totals, socio-economic strata of those visitors, what the nodes of activity are, and a long list of other quantified information which would be instructive in understanding how cultural and natural resources are being appreciated and impacted from visitor use. Sixth, management decisions regarding volume of visitation and methods of access to the Valley have a significant impact to the surrounding gateway region yet the NPS has failed to adequately identify and assess what those impacts are, and how they should be mitigated.

I would request that the new Merced River Plan address these concerns I have noted above.

Before discussing specific areas of study I wish to see the planning team address, I shall express my disappointment that the NPS is sitting on a wealth of information about Yosemite Valley which has not been made readily available to the public nor distilled and addressed by NPS planners. Arguably, over the past 150 years Yosemite Valley has been one of the most visited, photographed and studied pieces of real estate to be found anywhere in the State of California. Yet much of this information apparently has not been considered by the NPS in developing current management policies. An example of the consequences of this failed review of historic information may very well be the unfortunate escaped prescribed fire which occurred near Foresta in the summer of 2009. A careful review of fire history, landscape documentation, weather data, etc. may very well have provided a fuller and deeper insight into the complexities of initiating a fire during the tail end of August. I would suggest that developing a plan for protecting the Merced River should not be taken any less seriously than formulating policies that govern the use of fire. A misunderstanding of natural processes can lead to tragic outcomes. With this as a backdrop, I would suggest that the original NPS explanation to the public that the Merced River Plan was designed to give government better "control" over "natural processes" may be considered to be an oxymoron. The NPS should be acknowledging that their role is to develop a plan that knows how to get out of the way of natural processes by developing infrastructure and support activities that are the least intrusive to the environment or are the most readily repairable after a catastrophic event has visited the area.

To elaborate on my last point, I would suggest that campsites and picnic grounds, as well as pullouts and viewing stations for day visitors are the most easily repaired after the occasional flood event, rock fall or fire has visited the area. Conversely, hard-shelled lodging, the concessionaire's stores, employing housing, administration buildings and associated utilities may be the most costly to repair and many of these facilities place more people at risk.

Another core issue to address is "capacity." Capacity has often been couched in the terms of the total number of private cars that can be accommodated in the Valley floor. The signs of crowding have traditionally been photographs of vehicle gridlock at the east end of the Valley or of long lines of cars stopped at the entrance stations. In neither case do these highly exploited spectacles shed light on what the true infrastructure capacity is of the Valley or the Park as a whole. These events are, however, symptomatic of poor

management.

Perhaps the best information on capacity comes from what is inferred from the 1980 General Management Plan, where 20,000 visitors daily is hinted as the maximum to be allowed (on a summer day). In addressing capacity, I believe the NPS should provide information not just on how many cars or buses per hour can be processed through the entrance stations or what the parking inventory limits are or what the available camping and lodging space is, capacity should be focused on the areas in the Valley floor where human activity concentrates. The number of "people per hour" that a highly valued natural or cultural resource location can withstand before negative impacts occur to the resource or visitor experience should be identified in the Merced River Plan's various alternatives. Furthermore, the seasonal vulnerability of the resources must also be addressed, i.e. the Valley's resources cannot accommodate as many visitors in the middle of winter as opposed to mid-summer nor should the NPS attempt to promote such high level use during the "off-season."

Similar to those stretches of the river where flood waters make their first breach into the surrounding areas, the locations which draw a high level of visitors could be one means of identifying people capacity. Where those locations are in or adjacent to the river, their impact is even more critical to identify so as to protect both natural resources and the visitor experience. One example may be the over exploited river rafting activity that has become intrusive to shore line visitors, lowers the quality of experience for river "floaters" and elevates first responder calls. A reduction of the current visitor use and the elimination of the commercial part of this activity should be fully analyzed in the new Merced River Plan.

I am certain that the new Merced River Plan will include an analysis of high and low water flows, and the scouring impact a debris swollen river will cause. Obstructions to the river's flows, such as bridges, are probably going to be further scrutinized for possible removal. However, where historic resources are proposed to be removed, clear documentation of the expected outcome, as well as specific documentation on how these historic resources have fared under past flood events should be provided. Artificial obstructions may actually simulate natural obstructions. Information and analysis on how these intrusions can be allowed to stay because they mimic natural processes should also be provided

Most visitors to Yosemite Valley are going to arrive by wheeled conveyance. Their routes of travel are going to be for the most part restricted to the three ribbons of asphalt whose confluences are at the west end of the Valley. Those roads have natural limits on the number of vehicles per hour they can handle. If the NPS chooses to widen and straighten those roads to accommodate large over-the-road coaches, it is akin to widening and straightening the river. Forces of impact will increase, volume of material is elevated, and the consequences downstream can be more severe. Consequently, I suggest that not only is the number of vehicles allowed into the Valley floor an important issue to address but also the type of vehicles that are allowed.

Buses will bring more people per hour to the Valley than private cars. Buses need wider lanes, larger pullouts, invasive passenger stops, and they breakdown asphalt and road bases faster than private cars. A complete analysis of this difference needs to be provided. In the context of the 1980 General Management Plan, if 20,000 people daily is close to the limit I would submit that private vehicles can accommodate this level with no need to change the road system, and with a lesser impact to natural resources, and with a significantly lower risk for multi-casualty accidents, and with a greater ability to be evacuated in times of natural crisis, and with little or no need for an expensive environmentally unsound region-wide transit system. A wise vehicle management plan would take advantage of modern technology to notify the public of current traffic conditions via the Caltrans information system and commercial broadcasters. The Merced River Plan should address implementing such a system so as to achieve a low potential for gridlock and traffic jams thus protecting the environment and the visitors' experience. Additionally, the NPS should work with the concessionaire and other large scale tourism businesses to program access for various tour groups to avoid conflict with private vehicle based tourists such as prohibiting charter buses from entering the Valley Fridays through Sundays when private vehicle use reaches its highest numbers.

The Merced River is surrounded by an historic road system that was developed to accommodate wagons, and sedans. The previous plan sought to abandon Northside Drive, creating a huge safety issue no matter what vehicle access system was adopted, but it also required a reconstruction of Southside Drive to facilitate the increasing bus traffic. These impacts are not as severe or may not even be needed if limitations are placed on the size of vehicle that is allowed to enter Yosemite Valley, while still leaving Northside Drive open to private cars. An alternative that compares costs in dollars and cost in landscape impacts between a car "friendly" as opposed to a bus "accommodating" access plan should be provided for in the new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. Additionally, since under the old plan Northside Drive is not going to be physically removed just closed, the justification for its closure to private vehicles seems highly disputable.

I also request that the NPS look carefully at the historic trends of access and consider the implications of restricting or eliminating certain types of vehicles. Since previous planning efforts have focused on eliminating private vehicles in favor of a bus based system, I would like to see a fully vetted private vehicle access plan which supports daily people capacities as identified by the 1980 General Management Plan, and would accommodate the traditional family camping experience. This model (or alternative) would also eliminate transit and charter bus entry into the Park, and restrict in-Park buses to 18 passenger vehicles or smaller. There are many needs associated with people: age, culture, physical challenges, budget, personal comfort, and etc. which a socialized and regimented bus scheme cannot accommodate. It is part of the NPS's responsibility to assess protecting visitor experience. The car experience is not the same as the bus experience.

I also ask that the NPS clearly make distinctions between bicyclists, motorcyclists, sedan and light truck visitors, large RV and trailer recreationalists, and bus passengers. The problems, costs, safety issues and environmental damage associated with long-wheel based vehicles should be fully documented. As with a river swollen in spring, the larger objects being carried in the water can have a greater impact than the smaller ones. The reconstructed roadway between the old Cascade Dam site and the Arch Rock Entrance Station was an unnecessary intrusion into the Merced River corridor caused by the demand that the road be rebuilt to accommodate large buses and big RVs. This kind of piecemeal expansion of the road system appears to be particularly driven to facilitate the

expulsion of private vehicles in exchange for busing tourists into the Park.

The bus policy reached full fruition in the previously adopted Merced River and Yosemite Valley plans. Roadway impacts to the river will be less if the large buses and RVs, as well as vendor traffic are restricted or eliminated. A plan that places an emphasis on accommodating private sedans and light trucks filled with campers or day visitors might very well also provide for a greater variety of visitor experience (people choosing their own itineraries not confined to bus schedules and bus stops), and with a more diverse group of visitors (many people simply cannot acclimate to a bus experience in winding mountain country with limited stops, or sitting with strangers or confronted with cultures they are not comfortable being in close quarters with). Day visitors, in particular, place a lesser demand for hard infrastructure (e.g. utilities and concessions) than bus travelers and "hard-shell" lodgers require. How people are allowed to access the Valley (i.e. cars versus buses) will influence the physical plant of Yosemite Valley exerting a real and profound impact on the Merced River's corridor. The goal is to protect the River's scenic and wild attributes while providing for a diverse yet manageable visitor use.

In addressing a management plan for the Merced River I cannot see where anything that occurs within Yosemite Valley does not have an impact on the river or the visitor's enjoyment of the river. Activities that allow for individual and small family experiences should be given priority over charter group activities, and other large group excursions into the Valley. Yosemite is first and foremost a park celebrating the beauty and majesty of the natural wonder of water and land, flora and fauna, and open spaces free of man's handiwork. As such, the extravagant and intrusive bus stop at Yosemite Falls trail head, the exhibitions of rock climbers on El Capitan, the unregulated mobs ascending Half Dome, the full service souvenir mall at Yosemite "Village" seem to me to bring focus to humans and humanity. The management of the Merced River should be conducive to bringing our focus upon nature. Seeing a family on the trail to a waterfall or going down to the edge of the river is far more acceptable than encountering a large group of noisy college students being escorted by a college professor on some tax supported exercise. Consequently, I would request the NPS planners look at accommodating a minimal number of special interest groups that often commandeer a large number of camping or lodging spaces, clog the roads with their caravans, and place extra demand upon the ever intrusive visitor supportive services.

I would also ask the NPS planners to identify what percentage of the Valley's infrastructure (that is utilities, lodging, stores, administrative buildings, etc.) is dedicated exclusively for the overnight guest/resident, what percent is dedicated solely for the day visitor, and what percent is shared by all. It is my impression that most of the infrastructure that is in Yosemite Valley is there to accommodate the overnight visitor/resident, specifically the hard-shell lodging guests. If the infrastructure requirements for the day visitor and the auto camper (as opposed to large RV camper and hard-shelled lodger), is the least invasive to the environment, then an alternative in the Merced River Plan which places an emphasis on maintaining these activities with a reduction in the others should be provided and fully vetted.

As with previous NPS plans, the lack of information on what the NPS knows is going on in the Valley creates a major disadvantage for the average American who wishes to provide an informed opinion on the direction the NPS should take in developing a plan that protects the Merced River while accommodating the NPS's other directives of protecting historic and prehistoric resources and visitor experience. I ask again that the NPS relocate its museum and research center outside the Valley into an expanded complex to provide better access to this wealth of data. Moving this activity out of the Valley will also help reduce traffic and other infrastructure impacts to the river corridor.

I close with my observation, or more specifically concern, that commercial interests inside and outside the Park appear to be more interested in coordinating plans to maximize profit in the short run rather than look at how to protect an invaluable resource in the long run. Certainly the NPS understands better than most the origin of our National Park System' a system designed to be kept free of economic exploitation by private businesses. But concessionaire exploitation is not the only threat to Yosemite. Given the size and craftiness of today's private nonprofit groups and the avarice of past Park Service personnel to obtain grants, earmarks, and other tax and fee revenues, Yosemite is not just being exploited by certain national tourist industries, it is also being used for profit by too many of its acclaimed "friends." Plans to build facilities inside or outside the Park to increase visitation from their interest bases should not be accommodated at the expense of the average American family or by permitting increased use of the Valley and River corridor, especially under the ruse of "education." Yosemite Valley and the Park as a whole belongs to the American people, the great unwashed average citizen who seeks only to have a relatively brief peaceful encounter in a beautiful place for spiritual and emotional renewal. It is not a place to line one's pocket, or bolster a portfolio. Commercialism and pride should be checked at the door, quiet meditation and rest in a humble tent or at a roadside picnic ground is the essence of connecting with nature. A long walk listening to the sounds of nature, not the drone of a guide, provides nourishment to the soul. Should not all our plans for Yosemite center on accentuating individual rights over corporate gain?

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	288	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Meierdering, Pam NPS Employee				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,17,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	El Portal: I realize that El Portal is an archeological site, but so is every other place where people currently reside in the world. My recommendation is to do the archeological work that needs to be done and then use the area as the administrative site that it was meant to be. To that end, please find a place to build a Ranger Club-esque housing area (a place with nice character) for seasonals and interns to free up the apartments and houses that are currently being used for this purpose; this will allow more terms and permanents to have a shorter commute. When I lived in Midpines and Mariposa, the commute had a major effect on my work-life balance, and I believe Yosemite will have better staff morale and productivity if the housing issue can be resolved. I do not believe that housing in Midpines/Mariposa is the answer because the NPS should be working to cut its carbon footprint and because it affects				

work-life balance, especially for those that commute an hour each way to Yosemite Valley.

I love the character of the area and the community feel of old El Portal, and I love the community hall and events there. I love the open oak hills. I love the beaches and swimholes along the river. I believe that if any development takes place in El Portal, it could be done with a mindset of making El Portal an eco-ville or a demonstration project about green and sustainable living. Ideas that I'd like to see come to fruition in order to create an eco-ville with a town center and limited amenities for locals include: ? Make a site for a community garden at Abbieville; that would re-purpose it back to its historic farm roots as well as grant the community residents a place to grow their own food. Additionally, there should be a compost area/facility because it is a sin to throw biodegradable trash into a plastic bag and send it off to a landfill! I believe throwing biodegradable waste away goes against the values of many NPS employees. This could even be a demonstration project with interpretive signs or something. If this gets the kaibash due to current residents, at least put a more robust one in at the El Portal school. ? Re-purpose the old church as a wellness center/yoga studio that Balanced Rock can develop for the community. It would be nice to have yoga facilities, but it could even go beyond that to include a sauna, massage room'a la a mini Bug Hostel. ? Allow a local community cafe in the "downtown" of El Portal. I believe Sunshine Goodmorning's idea was to do this and it's a fabulous idea. It could be small scale and local, a place where NPS employees could get a sandwich, bagel, smoothie, and read a newspaper on Sunday morning. ? Streamline the process for old El Portal residents to be able to make repairs on their homes. Right now, people are afraid to go to the NPS to get a permit because they think they will be turned down. Someone that needs to fix his/her roof should be allowed to do what needs to be done't only enhances the character of the area. A strategic initiative should be to make sure that the NPS isn't seen as the enemy, the obstacle?this would require both communications and follow-through from the NPS. ? The SPU and Protection trailers are fairly ugly. I realize they are a "temporary" solution, but it would be nice to make the buildings permanent and give them some character. NOT modern like the EP warehouse--something that harkens back to the roots of the place. It might be nice if there was a small visitor center/orientation kind of space there for the public to get a better first impression of Yosemite.

Transportation: Negotiate more YARTS routes for employees. In deliberations, I hope you will skew towards providing better options for public transportation as much as possible, making it easier for people to leave personal vehicles and get out of their car.

Yosemite Valley: Implement better wayfinding for bikers and walkers. This project has been tackled several times and as far as I know, there is even a new Harper's Ferry recommendation ready to implement.

Redo ugly buildings such as SAR, Law Enforcement building, and Project Management trailer to go along more with the historic character. Right now, they are hideous. How are employees supposed to feel good about their jobs when they are working in a prison-like environments?

You MUST re-do the East Auditorium. That thing is a blight and very hard on the knees to stand in there. We need a good community meeting space for public meetings and all-employee gatherings. Something with a softer floor and an actual office for Ed Whittle.

This is probably outside the scope of the planning effort, but whatever you can do in the wording so that the NPS shows environmental leadership in its building and operations would be a good thing.

The natural progression of meadows is that conifers would begin to grow in them. I don't mind that we clear meadows in order to maintain a historic character and historic views'heck, they're gorgeous'but I'd like to see the NPS be honest about what it's doing rather than pretend it is maintaining natural processes. My understanding is that we burn more than what the natural fire regime calls for in Yosemite Valley meadows'fine by me, but be honest about the reasons.

Continue to allow rock climbing access, but be aggressive with education campaigns about climber leave no trace practices.

I'd personally love if you'd allow biking on the Yosemite Valley loop trail.

Wawona and Wilderness: No comment because people with more experience than me with those areas will have more fruitful comments. But of course, they are gorgeous and I love their character.

Planning Process: I hope that you will have a public involvement person to advocate for public stakeholders and to make sure that all comments receive adequate deliberation. And I hope you document all of the deliberation process so that the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed in case of a lawsuit. I wish you good luck'you'll need it!

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I may submit more if I think of any great ideas.

El Portal Resident NPS employee

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	289	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				

**Received:** Feb,10,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** To whom it may concern, For decades my family has made a yearly tradition of gathering our family and camping in the Yosemite Valley. This tradition has now been passed on through three generations. Over time my family has made many close family friends while camping and enjoying the designated area known as North Pines. We have hiked numerous trails such as half dome, clouds rest, vernal falls, and yosemite falls. We have enjoyed floating down the Merced River and bike riding up to Happy Isles. But over the years we have seen a steady decline in the ability to take advantage of the parks beauty and an increased restriction by park management. After the 1997 flood of the Yosemite Valley a lump sum of federal money was given to the restoration project of the Valley floor. To this day, park management has yet to use that money appropriately or use that money for what it was intended for. It is my hope that Yosemite National Park be restored and restrictions reduced. The restrictions I am speaking of include the freedom to light a fire before dinner time. For whatever reason the park deems it necessary to restrict this although it will let a raging fire burn and infiltrate the valley without acting to put it out. The ability to float down the river without restrictions and the ability for families to come into the park with their own vehicles is a genuine experience that will create lasting memories for all. The park continues to make restricting policies. For Yosemite to make its National Park more friendly to the public it needs to think more about the public. Thank you for your time,

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**Correspondence ID:** 290      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Bill, Terry

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:**

Feb,17,2101 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** Sirs: Attached is an entry I made to the web site "Yosemite Campers.com" The subject of restricting visitation to Yosemite has been a "hot" topic for some time. Here are the views I posted. Please count my comments as opposed to installation of a Carrying Capacity.

CARRYING CAPACITY has been tossed around for some time now and those who are in favor have made good and viable arguments. The thrust of this writing is to state I think a carrying capacity is unjust and unfair and here's why: Yosemite is a public park, paid for and maintained by tax dollars. Taxes which we all pay. I believe if anyone is admitted, all should be admitted. I travel more than two thousand miles to come to California for my annual visit to Yosemite. As soon as a trip is over and I am back at home in Arkansas I start counting the days until time to go again. Like everyone reading this , I love The Park and respect it. Unfortunately there are those who don't and perhaps those are the people a carrying capacity will keep out. But will it really? I see tremendous problems in barring anyone. Imagine the pile up at the four gates to The Park. Lines backed up for miles while Rangers try to tell individuals they can't come in. I would not want to be one of those who tell people they can't come in! You probably would need security on top of security just to protect them. It is possible, I guess to inform the public by newspaper or radio or television when the gates will be closed. .. But will everyone get the word? Probably not. If you posted signs along the roads leading to The Park?. Who will keep the signs up to date? Will they have to be changed as the numbers of people in the park increase or decrease? It may be possible to set up some sort of reservation system?. But think of the headaches in trying to coordinate making reservations for gate admittance, lodging or camping reservations and restaurants, not to mention activities like ranger or camera walks or lectures and in my case, air reservations and car rental. . How about workshops such as painting or photography? Check the little newspaper handed to you when you come through the gate. It is full of activities at various times and days. Can you make reservations days in advance for those? I would like to see those tour busses prohibited but how would that affect the businesses which operated them and how many people would lose jobs if those tours were canceled ? How would the people who come into the Park on YARTS be considered? Would they be counted among those to be admitted or refused entrance? And how would they be counted or projected? What about the hotels and motels outside the gates? Would people take the chance on coming to them if there was the possibility that they would not be admitted through the gates? As much as anyone I am short tempered with those who would come to Yosemite to drink, curse, party and trash the park. But no matter what their reason is (unless it is dangerous or harmful to others) they have as much rite to be there as me. Tragically, it is for everyone. Yosemite is for all of us?Campers, hikers, climbers, sight seers, photographer or those who just come to marvel at the majesty of the place. There is no one way to enjoy Yosemite National Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 291      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Casey, Ryan

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:**

Feb,27,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** I have spent a good deal of time kayaking and the merced river from wawona to the main merced is a beautiful stretch of whitewater. This is the only stretch of the merced that I have done, but I'm sure there are many other stretches that offer great experiences for many. Please keep the merced and it's tributaries open to boaters as the tuolumne is not. Thanks for your time.

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**Correspondence ID:** 292      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Pierce, Sharon

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual



**Organization:**  
**Received:** Mar,01,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence**  
**Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Hello, I am responding to the postcard you sent to me re Yosemite. Yosemite is very dear to me, I have been going there since I was 3 yrs old; over 60 years! I feel the park should allow more "tent" camping, catering to families with children. Tent camping families often can't afford more. Put a BAN on the large RV's that take over the campgrounds. I also think you should not do away with the Ranger Programs for children. Hopefully this helps with our plans. I want to continue going to your Park for many years to come.

Nevada City, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 293      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Martin, Rosada  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,26,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Hi, I would like to voice my opinion about the Merced River management plan, as a person who works near YNP and frequents the park often. I would just like to say that whatever happens, I think the environment should be put first, as a priority, always. I believe keeping the integrity of the river and its ecosystem is paramount, and the plan should be as non-invasive to the natural environment as possible. In all circumstances where possible, "leave no trace" ethics should be practiced to the fullest. Thank you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 294      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Roussear, Paul  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,17,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Thanks or soliciting inputs, here are a few suggestions: Bike Trails Bike trail - extend throughout the valley, or at least to El Capitan. Right now, neither shuttle, nor bike path go to El Capitan so people have to drive. If plan comprises Merced, bike path along the Merced, opposite bank form 140, from El Portal to Briceburg is nice to have, although understand this is bigger project.

Camping: 1. Disallow generators in campings, period. It pollutes the air but most of all destroys the camping experience. Potentially convert part of Upper Pines to RV with 15amp hook ups. With Solar panels and LED lighting, there is really no need for RVs to run their generators ( I can dry camp one week without solar). If people really want to run their generator to watch TV, maybe they should stay at home or go somewhere else, not to Yosemite. If convert a campground to partial electrical hooks-up, don't give prettiest campgrounds like Lower and North Pine, rather use Upper Pine. You can still allow RVs with no hook-ups and no generators in all campgrounds.

Warm Regards,

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**Correspondence ID:** 295      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Schwartzberg, Lisa  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,28,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** In response to a postcard I received in the mail regarding the future of Yosemite, I would like to let you know what is important to me.

My family visited Yosemite in September, 2008 for camping, and we brought along our family Labrador Retriever for our vacation. Unfortunately we were not allowed on any trails with our dog, which posed a huge problem. We came prepared with doggie bags to clean up after her, but found that we were extremely limited with what we could do while there. Needless to say, we probably will not consider Yosemite as a place to camp in the future because of this limitation.

While I understand the rules, I would love to see this restriction lifted, possibly during your slower times of September - May. Most dog owners are responsible, and it's unfortunate that the minority can ruin it for the majority.

So, in closing, allowing pet owners the opportunity to have our dogs with us while we are experiencing the beauty of Yosemite

would be wonderful, otherwise, we will have to find other places to visit.

Thanks for allowing me the opportunity to voice my opinion. Sincerely,

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**Correspondence ID:** 296      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Rolfe-Redding, Justin  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am very concerned that some of the provisions of the latest Merced River Plan may restrict the access of recreationalists, including climbers, to certain areas of the Merced river just beyond Yosemite Valley. I would hope that the park chooses to preserve access to these unique and iconic areas, especially given the low impact that climbers and hikers have. Also, I would encourage the park to maintain ample amounts of low-cost minimalist camping in the Valley, and not privilege expensive indoor lodging. The Park needs to remain accessible to everyone, regardless of means. Thanks so much for your consideration!

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**Correspondence ID:** 297      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Chacon, David  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,19,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To whom it may concern: Regarding your solicitation of ideas to help protect the Merced River I have the following idea. How about limiting cars in Yosemite Valley to only those who have a reservation to stay there overnight? All other visitors can park outside the valley and take a shuttle into the valley. Zion National Park is run similarly. This would reduce automobile exposure in the valley. Thanks

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**Correspondence ID:** 298      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mennig, Ph.D, Jan C  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Park Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?  
  
Beautiful,rugged elevations along the various park routes proves an opportunity for any visitor to ingest the Yosemite experience.  
  
2. What do you want to see protected? all 3. What needs to be fixed? Expansion of campsites Valley Meadow restoration Traffic circulation plan for normal and emergency Fire management policies  
  
4. What would you like to see kept the same? Access Validate the load for the varous sites

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**Correspondence ID:** 299      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Curtis, Steve R  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Sir: I am a native of California--my family has been in Sonoma county since 1840. I am a 52 year old AF Colonel. I mention all this because I am also an avid climber--Nose in a day type, and love yosemite valley.  
  
During my visits, i have been both treated very well, and very poorly by Yosemite Rangers. Some of the staff are helpful and reasonable, others are not. Your problems seems worse than most other parks.  
  
I am retiring, and plan t0 visit as I am able. The interests and use patterns of climbers must he recognized.

1. I would welcome a plan that prevents auto use in the Valley during peak times. However, a public transportation scheme would need to be running 24/7. Planning for adequate seats during peak times would be difficult.
2. Expand camping possibilities rather than limit them. Lengthen check-in hours for the people you serve. Your schemes now force users to drive further, waste time and congest roads.
3. Consider improving paths up to the major formations--washington column, sentinal, etc.
4. For me, as a park user, it appears that the NPS devotes more energy toward limiting park use than expanding opportunity. Reverse these priorities.
5. Your camping use limits are silly. Limiting single stays to a reasonable number of days (5-10???) during peak season could be justifiable. Sincerely, Steven R Curtis

**Correspondence ID:** 300      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Tamay, Susanna  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Hello Mr. Uberaga.

As an environmental engineer and a resident of El Portal I have a few comments for the Merced River Plan:

-El Portal is a rare mix of high density and yet a small footprint, plus many permeable spaces: meaning less driving, more open space. and also good ground water recharge within the community.

Protect El Portal and promote higher density through allowing mother in law apartments and second story additions.

-As stewards of the environment shouldn't we promote bike travel with the installation of bike paths and lanes through El Portal and into the park?

-I would love to instate an "alternative travel day" once a year where only mass transit and human powered vehicles (bikes, rollerblades, pedestrians, etc) can enter the park.

-To further enhance the environmental nature of the park it would be amazing to reinstate rail travel to El Portal and the park.

-As the previous comment is highly unlikely, perhaps there could be a more frequent and useable shuttle system into the park?

-The new El Portal market really needs a public restroom.

-Frequent power outages are an issue in El Portal, lets install a community solar electricity system and back up batteries Thanks for your time and hard work Suzie Tamay

**Correspondence ID:** 301      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Novak, Marsha  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike. - John Muir

I think we require national parks for our psychic stability and sanity. We need national parks because we psychologically need to have a place to go when we can't be here anymore. - Nevada Barr

Superintendent Uberuaga,

I included those two quotes since they embody what my family and myself feel about national parks. We spend almost all of our vacations in national parks and monuments because they are places where we can restore our soul, find peace and get away from the daily grind.

Each year we visit at least one other national park in addition to our Yosemite visits. However, Yosemite holds a special place in our hearts and we want to see it protected not only for ourselves but for future generations.

I have been going to Yosemite since 1987 and have been there over 60 times. Over the years I have noticed that the park is going into a direction that I feel is not only damaging the park but is affecting visitor experience. Overdevelopment, congestion, deteriorating infrastructure, and ineffective management are some of the issues that have had a negative affect on not only Yosemite Valley but other areas of the park. At this time, I would like to address some of the issues that I feel are important. Although this comment period is supposed to be only about the Merced River Plan, I feel that it is time that the NPS look at Yosemite as a whole not just multiple plans that are interrelated or even in conflict with each other. It is time to consider what is good for the park over all.

#### VISITOR EXPERIENCE

What do I consider a good visitor experience in a national park? For me a good visitor experience is when I can enjoy a park without massive crowds and congestion and where visitors respect the park. I want to see the park protected and preserved but in such a way that I can still enjoy activities that are relevant to that park. The availability of affordable lodging either in the park or nearby is important. A good visitor experience also includes opportunities to interact with NPS staff not only in a visitor center or at a Ranger talk but also at trail heads or on trails.

**USER/CARRYING CAPACITY** Having experienced Yosemite during Memorial Day Weekend, it is evident that there are times that there are just too many cars, buses and people, leading to traffic jams and overcrowding not only in the Valley but other locations such as Glacier Point and the Mariposa Grove. Tour buses unload huge groups of people in popular areas such as Yosemite Falls and Tunnel View at one time, causing over crowding. These conditions not only affect visitor experience but are damaging to the park.

Since there are times of the year where overcrowding is not an issue, the Carrying Capacity should not be based on the yearly total of visitors but how many people the park can handle during the busy times/days of the year. Otherwise by midsummer the total allotment of visitors would be used up and no more people could visit the park that year. More studies need to be done on just how many people can be in an area of the park without impacting visitor experience or the environment.

The amount of lodging inside the park is self limiting and people who have reservations in the park have to have guaranteed admission to the park. The issue is how to deal with people that are unable to get lodging in the park, choose to get lodging outside of the park and locals who like to visit the park. The only fair way would be to have a system so that people who travel long distances would be guaranteed entrance. This could be only by advance reservations or a mixture of advance reservation and first come first serve.

#### TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Traffic congestion during busy times is monumental and is due to many issues. Major intersections in the park need to have control in all directions. For example the intersection at Northside Drive coming from Sentinel Bridge needs to have all way stops so that cars turning left onto Northside Drive can easily transition into the traffic. Currently cars have to wait until there is a break in the traffic coming from the right.

Lack of parking spots and pull offs also contributes to traffic congestion. Over the years more and more parking lots and pull offs have been removed which means that people will keep driving around until they find a spot. Elimination of pull offs does not allow people to stop and see things in an unregulated manner. Limiting parking spaces and pull offs is not a substitute for a Carrying Capacity.

Parking in the Yosemite Lodge area has been decreased by bus tours unloading in the parking area that used to serve the Alder, Maple and Hemlock buildings. Part of the parking lot in front of Juniper and Laurel is also restricted to buses during the day. More parking spots were removed when temporary employee housing was put in next to the cafeteria. Despite having less lodging units, there is a lack of available parking for Yosemite Lodge guests, especially during the day. The removal of parking at the Lower Falls area has also increased day use parking and traffic at the Lodge which have a negative impact on guests staying there.

In the last 20 years, the peak in visitation was in 1996 with 4,046,20 visitors. The lowest amount of visitors since the 1997 flood was 3,280,911 in 2004. Until 2009 with a total of 3,866,970, visitation averaged in the low to mid 3,000,000's. Yet, the park is more crowded and traffic congestion has increased.

During this time, there was a reduction in lodging of all types in the park due to floods and rockfalls. The Lodge lost around 250 units, camp sites in the Valley were reduced by almost 43% and Curry Village lost 233 units in the last rockfall. This reduction in park lodging has lead to more visitors having to become day use visitors which, in turn, increases the amount of traffic in Yosemite

Valley.

#### GETTING IN AND AROUND THE PARK

There has been much talk about having visitors park outside of the park and use a shuttle system. Zion National Park restricts private vehicles during the busy season in Zion Canyon and requires visitors to use their shuttle system. People staying in the park can drive to their lodging but no where else in the canyon. Day use visitors to the Canyon have the option of parking at their lodging outside of the park or near the Visitor Center and then take the shuttle. This system works well for Zion because of the large availability of parking outside of the main entrance, the fact that the distance from the staging areas to the Canyon are not long and adequate shuttle service in the Canyon and in Springdale exists.

However, with Yosemite there are many obstacles to adopting such a strategy. There are no areas outside of the park where a large staging area can be accommodated. With the number of entrances into Yosemite, there would have to be multiple staging areas which would require more areas to be developed. Some visitors enter and exit the park using different entrances. Unlike Zion, there are many popular areas in Yosemite besides the Valley so the shuttle system would have to be extensive.

With the distance between staging areas outside of the park and main attractions, it would require much travel time to get to the popular areas. This would cut into the amount of time a visitor could spend actually enjoying the park. Woe to the visitor that finds that they need something from their vehicle and the hours they would have to waste to go back and forth. It would also be impractical for families, the elderly, people with disabilities and visitors staying in the park to manage equipment, strollers, supportive equipment and luggage on a bus. It would also be cumbersome for day visitors to have to continually carry things that they need for picnics and other activities. Therefore, some sort of storage area or lockers would have to be available for their use.

To alleviate traffic congestion in Yosemite Valley, the current shuttle system needs to be expanded, especially during the busy season. A series of small, dispersed and unobtrusive satellite parking areas should be available where people can park their cars for their stay and use the shuttle. Shuttle service to the west end of the Valley should be expanded and limited service to that area available during the slower season. In addition, stops should be added for Valley View, Bridelveil Falls and picnic areas. More shuttles should be added to the Glacier Point Road with stops for trailheads and attractions such as Sentinel Dome and Washburn Point.

The amount of bus tours should be limited for numerous reasons. They bring in more people per hour inundating scenic areas with a large amount of people at one time. This impacts the ability for others to have a quiet and uncrowded park experience. Tour buses diminish air quality, add to noise pollution, require large parking areas, wider roads and become a safety issue when large groups try to make their way across busy intersections.

The two lane, one way system that exists with Northside Drive and Southside Drive should be kept. This not only helps with traffic flow but is also critical from a safety standpoint.

#### DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES IN THE PARK

All unnecessary and inappropriate infrastructures and activities should be removed from the park. Relocation of the DNC corporate offices, non essential employee housing, and the Yosemite Institute outside of the park should be implemented. The number of merchandise shops should be reduced/consolidated. To avoid new development, current structures should be used for activities and services that are essential to the park. The trend to remove something, restore that area and then relocate that infrastructure to a currently undeveloped area must be stopped. All temporary structures should be kept to a minimum and their location reassessed during this planning process.

River access in areas that are suited to human impact need to be retained so that visitors can enjoy the Merced. Recently there has been a trend to fence off areas of the river so there are fewer and fewer places where people are able to sit along the river, fish or go wading. Areas with steep access should have restricted entry while gently sloping areas where there are decreased chances of erosion should remain open.

While the skating rink and Badger Pass should be retained because of their historical significance, the removal of the tennis courts at the Ahwahnee, the golf course at Wawona and rafting the Merced should be considered.

There has been a steady increase of Vintners Holidays, business conventions and other high end special events that are not related to Yosemite Valley or the park as a whole. These events could be moved to Tenaya Lodge or other hotels in the area.

It is time to put an end to overblown projects such as the Lower Yosemite Falls area. What was formally a quiet and more natural experience has turned into something that looks like it belongs in a city park. Projects should reflect what a national park is and not be used to satisfy the whims of corporate donors.

I am concerned about the ever increasing influence of Park Partners such as the Yosemite Fund, Yosemite Association, Yosemite Institute, DNC, etc and the power of some of these groups to control or influence park decisions to their benefit. These groups are expanding the development footprint, cater to only a specific group of people and have the power to have their desired projects bypass public review. In some ways it seems like the Park Partners are controlling the NPS and public input on issues or

environmental impacts are not being considered.

Yosemite Institute is one example of a Park Partner having too much power to influence decisions of the NPS. Despite a flawed planning process, it appears that the NPS is going to allow them to build a large campus/conference center at Henness Ridge. This will impact Carrying Capacity, special status species, and could allow further expansion in that area which is contradictory to the Glacier Point Road Corridor Plan which called for the removal of "intensive development" in the Chinquapin area. It will also increase human activity in Eleven Mile Meadow, affect water and power usage and road safety. The need for the Yosemite Institute to have their campus inside of park boundaries to satisfy their clients wants is clearly against the intent of the National Park system to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein.... for the enjoyment of future generations."

While doing research on the educational programs at other national parks, I found that only two national parks have institutes inside park boundaries with facilities that are comparable to the planned Yosemite Institute at the Henness Ridge site. One of them is Olympic National Park Institute and both they and the Yosemite Institute are run by Nature Bridge who, in addition to educational programs, also use their facilities as conference and entertainment centers. During a walk through of the Yosemite Institute's purposed Henness Ridge site, it was mentioned by a Yosemite Institute employee that the campus would be rented out to outside groups when the facility is not being used by students. It is clearly inappropriate for a so called nonprofit educational organization to use their facilities for anything other than their said educational programs if they are located within park boundaries.

#### OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

Different types of accommodations should be available so people of all economic levels can stay in the park. Lodging prices have risen so high that many visitors can no longer afford to stay in the park. This is compounded by the fact that lower priced lodging such as tent cabins, cabins and camp sites have been markedly decreased since 1997. The former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds have turned into a dumping and construction staging area despite the fact that the park was given \$17 million to restore the campgrounds. To increase camp sites, a small number of sites could be reinstated with the majority of the area restored to natural conditions. The installation of RV hookup sites should be avoided and large RV's should be restricted.

While I am against increasing accommodations to pre flood levels, it would be acceptable for a limited number of cabins with/without baths to be built adjacent to the Aspen, Dogwood and Tamarack buildings at Yosemite Lodge.

I also feel that the contract for DNC should not be renewed. Since DNC took over, there has been a rapid increase of room rates while the quality of service has vastly decreased. It appears that DNC is using it's influence to redirect services to cater to the more affluent visitor. We have found other concessionaires, especially Xanterra, to be able to cater to all economic groups and with a higher quality of service than DNC offers.

#### EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

I would like to see an increase in interpretive walks, hikes, presentations and environmental education for all types of visitors. I feel that it is important for people of all ages to be able to interact with park rangers and other NPS staff. A child who talks to a park ranger could become one in the future.

On my visits to national parks, it is noticeable that some visitors are not aware of what is proper behavior in a park. I am a member of Leave No Trace and have spoken to Pete Devine of the Yosemite Association of the need to have a more visible LNT program in Yosemite. On a recent visit to Yosemite I did notice that there was a LNT poster on a shuttle but feel that more needs to be done.

The past two years we have visited Rocky Mountain National Park and have been impressed with their LNT program. In every park newspaper, trail book, pamphlet, information package and trailhead there is LNT information prominently displayed. In addition, RMNP has an extensive volunteer program with people at every major trailhead and attraction to answer questions and help visitors have an experience that is fun yet, protects that park's resources. One of my favorites are the Chowbusters who educate people about wildlife and help them understand how feeding or touching animals is harmful not only to the wildlife but also to the visitor.

Unfortunately, of all the national parks and monuments that we have visited, Yosemite is the one most in need of these types of programs and an increase in protection of it's natural resources. There is no other place like Yosemite and it needs to be protected for future generations. I hope that you have found my suggestions and comments helpful. Thank your for your time and consideration.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	302	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Sutherlin, Mark				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,02,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Park Planners; Grab a cup of coffee and find a comfortable chair please, because I have a few words to say in this most recent invitation to participate to your current scoping plans, and I cant seem to say them in an abbreviated way, so here goes... To start, I would like to quote something someone wrote this week, when they signed the Save Yosemite Valley Campgrounds" petition of the				

Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition, as follows: Petition signer #1,395: 1:09 pm PST, Jan 27, Rodger Lopez, California, said: National parks are for the people. When you remove affordable lodging from the park you remove the ability for a lot of Americans to enjoy the beauty of Yosemite the way it was intended without spending \$100+ per night. Upper River Campground was reserved for tent campers only. No motor homes, who are now allowed to run their generators at their own discretion, in any auto campsite in the valley. The Valley Plan also calls for the removal of unnatural structures such as bridges stating they impede the natural flow of the river. I guess this impedence is not so obvious to the untrained eye of ordinary campers over the past 100+ years. If we are to eliminate "unnatural structures from national parks then how natural is a copper statue in the middle of a harbor or presidential likenesses carved into the side of a mountain? Where do we draw the line? These bridges are historical structures. When I visited Yosemite for the first time I looked forward to seeing Half Dome and Stoneman Bridge. Along with everything else of beauty in this wonderful place these are iconic to Yosemite. Change is good when change is for the good. Let's not allow politicians in Washington, who may never have been here, make decisions for our park." End quote. This, and many, if not most, of the various sentiments expressed on that petition, located at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/save%20yosemite-valley-campgrounds> express the frustrations and interests of Yosemite's camping guests, past and current. I am in agreement with this nor relates to the unplanned changes in Upper River, tower River, and parts of Lower Pines campgrounds. And, I am against the planned removal of North Pines campground, as is outlined in the now defunct Yosemite Valley Plan. I am glad to hear that park planners are able to revisit former decisions, as it relates to all of the historic campgrounds in Yosemite Valley. I am hopeful that the planners can produce a copy of the 1980 General Management Plans, as it relates to that plans outlines for campgrounds in Yosemite Valley, making far better use of that real estate than did the Yosemite Valley Plan, with the separation of campsites and pulling campsites away from impacted riverbanks. The reductions of campsites was not as dramatic in the GYP, as was planned in the YVP, but, the GYP enabled impacts to be reduced at a much higher rate, because it made use of the former campground areas. Which, as we all know, were not as negatively impacted from the 1997 flood as the former park managers would have us believe, with the exception of impacts to some campsites that would have been removed anyway in the GYP, or sewer lines that the GYP would have replaced anyway. Tourism is not a bad thing, and we all want to appreciate Yosemite. But, some of us want to protect it, even if it means to protect it from ourselves. A few years back, former park managers petitioned congress for money to repair the flooded campgrounds, received the money, but instead restored them back to nature without any public scoping. There was no public scoping, because they knew that the public would have opposed them, though the park put a very pro-nature spin on the move, making campers who wanted to restore the campgrounds to campgrounds sound anti-preservation, which was absolutely incorrect. Campers are generally very pro-preservation, which is why the majority of respondents to the 1980 General Management Plan (GYP) approved the planned setbacks of campsites from the river and the separation of campsites from other sites, and general reduction of campsites overall, but, not to the degree now in place. The former planners, and park managers who made those moves after the flood, where they claimed that "nature did what the public would never have allowed them to do", lied when they said that the campgrounds were completely destroyed, because the flood enabled them to do what they said they wanted to do, two years early, which was to close the campgrounds north of the river. They have never had to explain themselves after that. The only way they could have done this is by misappropriating flood recovery money given to them by congress. Because the NPS demonstrated their power, by never having to explain the misdeed, we can only hope that new planners will consider mistakes of the past, and adhere to the GYP in future planning, regarding to the campgrounds, as was told the YNPS would, when drafting the Yosemite Valley Plan, which they did not follow through with. Since the late '70s the public has suggested that they separate campsites, and pull them back from the river, not only to protect Yosemite Valley, but also to improve the quality of the camping experience. The public never agreed to the removal of as many campsites as were removed in 1997, when the flood damaged the campgrounds. None of us agree to keep campers compacted in small, close quarters, as is the case now in Upper Pines campground, a direct conflict with the entire vision of the GYP and the many years of public input given to the park, over the last 40 plus years. I submitted comments in 1976, as did many, during some of the very earliest scoping studies. What few campgrounds are left, are now no more separated than they were in the past as planners have said that they want to or intend to pack more campsites into that same general area, near Upper Pines, out of sight and out of mind to the tour bus visitors, so that their experience is not impaired by the sight of camping families, = am. against it. I implore you to reuse the old campgrounds for this higher calling, of developing a camping experience that far exceeds any ideals of the past, but, in and as near the river and valley views as possible, without impacting them.

LOWER FALLS: Regarding the Lower Falls belief that the increased result of the "build it Fund, in conjunction with Yosemite has to deal with area, a Yosemite Fund project, it is my foot traffic at the Yosemite Falls area, as and they will come" mindset of the Yosemite the NPS, to me is the biggest problem that moving forward. Those changes were designed to encourage daily traffic. Crowd control management, by expanding services and infrastructures like this, is an encouragement for more to come, as they did. Negative the impacts from more day use visitation is seen as impacting the Yosemite Camping experience, because, camping enthusiasts are seeking less human impacts, not more. To them, more buses, and more day use, is a negative. There are some within the park system who have a misguided view that it is their primary job to accommodate all who want to come, but I suggest this is wrong. I suggest that we should be focused on the quality of the experience first. The park's departure from the vision of the GNP, as it relates to the campground designs they had outlined, has possibly permanently damaged any possibility for an improved, more natural, camping experience, which, of all places in the world, Yosemite Valley should offer. I have a large early photo by Fiske, of the Yosemite Falls entrance, where during the 1870s, I think it was, all you see are horse carriage tracks. We've lost something in the efforts by those in power to accommodate everyone. I wonder if the people in power want always to accommodate people, just to keep their own jobs. 90 percent of the expanded trails at Yosemite Falls have views of nothing but forest. How is that different than what is already paved? The idea that a view of Yosemite Falls will be the result of following the trail is disappointing to those finding that only the Lower Fall can be seen. James Hutchins had it right, when he felt he had the best view of Yosemite Falls from the deck of his hotel over across the river, in the 19th century. Perhaps the idea is that if a paved road exists to get to the place, then access is an entitlement to as many as can get there. We need to be careful what we pave. There are some who like the increased accessibility created at the Lower Falls area. I am not one of them. RESTRICTING VISITATION and USER CAPACITY: If you may recall reading, in the early 1920s they had discussions about either restricting or limiting automobiles in the park. I don't know that it was the automobile that was so much the problem, as it was the limitless access to those taking advantage of modern transportation. Then, cars were seen as the problem. Now, I see the ease of access as the problem. Either way, it comes back to the subject that could have been addressed in those days, in the 1920s, and should have been addressed in the former Merced River Plan, having to do with a "user capacity", which the park decided to toss out of early plans. No one really wants to set limits, but I believe it must happen. I think that planners, and anyone in authority in Yosemite may be afraid to become alienated by the simple mention of the concept of limited access to Yosemite. A park planner who may have agreed with setting a limit, had better not mention it, or the reading public who feel entitled to access will bombard them with hate mail. But, if they don't speak up now, it could be that one day more and more trail will be paved to exacting ADA standards, so as to be accessible to every person, either handicapped or able, simply

because of the entitlement to access many in the public feel they have. There must be limits set. There are limits to everything, I've been told. That is, except discussions about limiting public access to a National Park; even if for good cause.

A user capacity strikes fear in people, as those impacted may see restricted commerce, or it may limit their own access to a park they feel entitled access to. But, Yosemite is such a place that is worthy of such limitations, not only for our treasured experience, but also for that talked about but rarely exercised balance between preservation and recreation. The balance is, and will perhaps always be tilted towards the tourist industry and their commercial interests, or simply seem that way because no one yet has shown the guts to talk about limits. If only we can set the carrying/user capacity limit at a level that makes most people mad, knowing that "mad", is probably a good measure of where the line should be drawn, we may be doing everyone a great service, by improving the quality of that Yosemite experience when they are allowed to visit it. There was a time when Yosemite Valley's visitation was less than 20K a year, which was thought to be excessive. There was a time when Galen Clark blasted the river bed at the El Captain Moraine, which he later regretted, at it was the Valley's wetlands, simply because cattle and horses needed to graze. No refrigerators or cars back then. It was all about access then too. So, roads were improved, and continue to be improved, in order to allow ever more efficient forms of mass transit that followed, and at no point along the way was anyone interested in limiting it, unfortunately. Instead, they always sought ways to increase visitation. I'd like to ask why? Is it really to accommodate all who want to come for good reasons, or are there other reasons, such as commerce that make people want to manipulate park managers to accommodate the masses? The recent court's point that the V.E.R.P. system of governing impacts, was said to be too "reactive" by the courts. They wanted a plan that was "proactive" not reactive. What possible proactive solution is there unless it's going to offend someone? I suggest a limit of 2.5 million visitors a year, though I'd like to see half that. If I'm the first to suggest a limit, hurray! Finally the discussion can get started. Regardless what it turns out to be, higher or lower, these discussions need to begin now. The problem is, no one is willing to step up and state that limiting access is even being considered.

CAMPING: When it comes to camping, the problem is has to do with the view that campers in Yosemite Valley must remain compacted in the old Upper and what's left of Lower Pines campgrounds, while everyone forgets that the park planners once said that the YVP was going to "adhere to" the GMP as a guide to what they would do in the draft YVP, and that campers were going to have an improved, more natural camping experience in the end. They did not do that.

The old GMP plan doesn't need a lot of reinventing. It needs to be put back on the table. No one pushed it off, except for the reactionary park managers at the time of the flood, who felt that they were empowered to circumvent the rules, and erase these campgrounds as if it were a new idea. The fact is, they said they'd like to get rid of all the campgrounds on the north side of the river only a year or two before the flood, but stated that they didn't feel that the public would ever allow it. Well, that's correct. They wouldn't have been allowed to. That's because the public had already been debating with the park and each other over what should be done in the former campgrounds since the 1970s. They would not have liked a new park management to simply walk in and without so much as a word of recognition to former park planners or the involved public, disrupt the entire planning process to do as they please, which, is exactly YOOETENATIONAL what they did.

Most park management are here for a few years at most, and know very little of the plans and efforts that went before them. They see themselves as entitled to make whatever changes they want to make. And, perhaps they are, as we see no apologies from the NPS for the mistakes of the past, even though the court system said their decisions were wrong, along with millions of public dollars they have wasted on defending those mistaken views. And, in the end, in a few more years, there will be more new planners who will perhaps want to reinvent these plans, if we can't get it right now.

We were then hopeful that the prevailing vision of a camping experience, as outlined in the GMP, would be one that would be under the bright stars and within the walls of Yosemite Valley, and not segregated to some forest camping experience, where a shuttle would take us to Yosemite Valley for our four hour Valley tour. Nor would it be a camping experience relegated to the old campground structure, in the former campgrounds that were the most impacted of all, such as North Pines, as is the case now, where campgrounds are not separated, and nothing has improved.

There was a time when that former campground real estate, or at least most of it, was planned to be re-designed, so that the chance to camp there would be an experience that even John Muir would have recommended, and the impacts would be low. The changes many of us had hoped for during the early GMP public input stages of idealistic letter writing, back when many of us found that those in the Park Service were perhaps also idealistic, a time when we all wanted to aspire to a new Yosemite Valley camping experience that would probably set the stage for changes in other parks in a very positive way.

An experience, where camping would be so improved and correspondingly valuable for its natural experience in a setting unlike any in the world, that perhaps a lottery would need to be set up so that everyone could compete for a shot at that experience on a level playing field, perhaps like the one set up for Yosemite's High Sierra Camps now. Which by the way, the YNPS seems to be able to manage well, in case the topic of how to manage limits at a National Park continues to stall this topic from moving forward.

When the campgrounds were removed after the flood, and ropes went up along the riverbanks near the remaining campgrounds, as well as along trails, and boardwalks were erected to corral people onto designated trails, because visitation from day trippers was on the rise, it became apparent that the ideal of the perfect and wonderful Yosemite camping experience was no longer a goal of the then planners within the YNPS.

As long as those people who made that decision to remove the campgrounds worked in Yosemite, names I will not mention here, the planners of that era turned a deaf ear to campers. They had higher ideals, or so they thought, which had to do with changing the park to day use, at the expense of overnight use. At that time, post flood, many of those who felt as I do, simply gave up. They were, and still are, offended by the deaf ears they were given by the park, after all the previous contributions to the planning process that the



public had offered in the past.

Regarding user capacity, I hope we don't find that we still haven't come up with a plan when visitation exceeds six million a year, which I doubt will be long from now? Visitation doubled in the mid '50s over a decade prior, and again in the mid '70s, and again in the mid '90s. I once had those statistics handy, and could probably find them again. Yosemite is on the verge of a major impact surge, as new methods of increased transportation has caused the park to respond to impacts by constructing roped crowd control and other methods of dealing with crowding, in terms they refer to as "management" decisions. Real management will come when limits are discussed and agreed to. Because no one will make the tough decision to limit visitation, I am suggesting for the Yosemite camping experience, the Yosemite day tripper experience will soon be similar to the trip through the Sistine Chapel, where people are shoulder to shoulder, and tour guides explain what it is that people are looking at in several different languages, while other of those people get their pockets picked. The camping experience will be worsened if nothing is done to limit day use on busy days of the year. When Yosemite hit 4 million a year, some years back, and then the switch from mostly overnight campers to mostly day trippers took effect, after the campgrounds were closed, it was then evident that the day tripping Yosemite experience was the new large and unwieldy segment of visitor that would eventually dictate new impacts on Yosemite Valley, and manipulate a new visitor's experience, that once was only thought to happen some time in the future. The future is now, as visitation has recently increased yet again, I read in an article on a back page of one of last month's newspapers. Perhaps you are in favor of a Yosemite experience like that, but few that I speak to are. The problem is, no one is willing to discuss limits, and/or talk about a plan that might mitigate impacts, by any other means than by basic crowd control measures. The Sistine Chapel experience is not one I'd want for Yosemite. And, not one I often speak well of, due to the crowding and waiting in lines. I am reminded of the man who, it is said, once asked John Muir what he would recommend that he do, as he only had about two or three days to see what he could in Yosemite. Muir told him that he should find a rock and sit down, and have a nice long cry. Because, as he told the man, if that's all the time he had available to him, he would not in any way have a chance to experience what Yosemite is, or has to offer, in so many words. I don't recall the exact wording.

Now, the NPS is in charge of manufacturing that "experience", when they erect crowd control measures, while also encouraging tour bus and unlimited day use visitation, while hotels expand in the park's gateway communities accordingly. You planners are in charge of that experience, when you do not directly address how Yosemite visitation should be special, as suggested in the John Muir experience above, which can only happen if visitation is limited. That experience should not be diminished by increased crowding, and tourism must be managed differently, for the reasons you mentioned. Yosemite is the one park most worth visiting, of all National Parks. Yosemite is in a state that is highly populated, while foreign visitation has increased faster than expected, because many from other countries see a U.S. vacation as a bargain, during our economic downturn.

If "management is the answer", what does that mean? I believe it means making tough decisions that only good managers who have authority can make. I think the Yosemite experience needs to be moderated, and visitation limited.

When there are no more seats at the theater, they don't keep selling tickets, as someone once said in reference to Yosemite. I believe the Yosemite experience should be perfected with a visionary outlook, that would actually mean that the NPS would have to limit the amount of people that could come in, so as not to have to erect so many crowd control ropes.

Yosemite's past planners were able to anticipate the current visitation increase, and because they saw it coming, at every opportunity they adjusted "management" decisions to do whatever they could so as to not hinder increases, and instead built many infrastructures that would enable the park to "accommodate all who would come", a phrase often stated by former park superintendent, Dave Mihalic, and mirrored by later park superintendent, Mike Tollefson, when he said he "didn't want to turn anyone away". This was a mistake. We can not continue to manufacture ways so as to accommodate an ever growing population. A National Park, as unique as Yosemite, deserves better, as do those who go there seeking what the park has to offer, also known as the Yosemite Experience.

When former park managers felt that camping wouldn't accommodate the volumes that would soon be visiting the park, they clearly adjusted the Yosemite tourist venue to be favorable to those day tripping masses, well in advance of the throng of visitation that is now coming, and will continue to increase if nothing is done about it. It's about the quality of the visit, and camping can be one of the best ways to get in touch with what a quality Yosemite experience should be. But, the NPS planners of past didn't see it that way. They tossed the carrying capacity from the former Merced River Plan, and moved full steam ahead to build a large expanded entrance road and sewer line from The Valley to El Portal, with money congress gave them to replace the campgrounds after the flood, paving the way for more and larger tour buses to get into the park, on the wider road, with wider turns. Then, they used Yosemite Fund money to expand the Yosemite Falls area, so as to make it easily accessible to easily many times the volumes of people the previous facilities there could handle. They did the same at the Wowona Tunnel View area, and at Olmstead Point, with Yosemite Fund money which is always burning a hole in their pocket. Everything they've done so far, and everything in the Yosemite Valley Plan was designed to enable more people, via mass transit, not to mention larger and more modern facilities at Yosemite Lodge, so that a more elite tourist will be attracted to the park, while campers have been forced to go elsewhere, if they seek a campsite with any separation at all from the campsite next to them. Now that the YVP is deemed obsolete, due to litigation that favored the litigants against the YNP, the "carrying capacity" has to be part of all new planning. But, what about the quality of the experience? What about the campers? What about the money congress gave to the park to replace the flooded campgrounds? What about these new visitation numbers that fit well with the park's already developed infrastructures that were built in advance of, and with full knowledge of, the coming increases to the park as world populations increase. Why does Yosemite Valley have to accommodate all who come, while campers have to go elsewhere?

Because, much of their infrastructures to accommodate all these people were slipped in by misallocated funds from congress that will never have to be accounted for, money for expansion instead of flood repair. And, because of the Yosemite Fund, who is soliciting the public within the boundaries of the park, for people to "partner" with the park, when in fact they are partnering with expanding infrastructures funded by the Yosemite Fund, at the expense of the quality experience, because, by expanding infrastructures, all you do is enable more and more people to be accommodated at one time, the direct opposite of what you should be doing. Moving

forward, if nothing changes, every trail in The Valley will be roped off, and every campsite up for auction on eBay to the highest bidder, as they will be so rare. Part of this has already happened, and there's little that can change it as the powers are already in motion, and many of the infrastructures built.

The NPS seems to have a view that everyone needs to be accommodated, and that they are there to serve. Why, however, is it that all need to be accommodated, at the expense of other forms of visitation that can actually impart a better, more natural visitor experience, such as camping in Yosemite Valley?

Regarding Tuolumne Meadows:

I suggest they do nothing to Tuolumne, except not allow a single tour bus to stop anywhere along Tioga Pass Road. Tuolumne Campground has become overflow for Yosemite Valley, and the result is a different demographic of camper. I suggest not relocating first come first serve campers who show up at the Valley's campground kiosk, to Tuolumne, and let them find it by themselves. This is a place that needs to stay natural, and if these campers were not looking for a natural campground experience, we wouldn't want to disappoint them with the beautiful Tuolumne Campground setting, where nothing needs to be changed, except, perhaps a few less pack mules to service outlining areas. Not that I'm suggesting a complete elimination of them either. It's just that the horse trails to high sierra camps from the Tuolumne Stables could benefit from a lot less impact. I sympathize with those who want to remove them completely, but feel a compromise could be attained.

Cars can be a problem, but are not always the problem. I rarely see that many cars on Tioga Pass road, which is the way welcome into the park, coming down from the north, via hwy 395. The shuttle that can bring people back and forth from the valley, is a good thing. But, tour buses should not be allowed to stop and swarm areas like Pot Hole Dome, Tenaya Lake or the small stores at Tuolumne. They should only be allowed to drive through.

Perhaps Yosemite is doomed to being over crowded, now that people are able to get transportation like that. I'd like to think not. But, it could be one of those cases where, because there are too many people affected by any restrictions, no one will ever make the tough decisions to set a limit.

Yosemite Creek Campground is rarely full, simply because of a six or seven mile dirt road; a perfectly good campground at that. Don't you wonder what Tuolumne would be like, or Yosemite Valley, for that matter, if they removed the pavement over the last six or seven miles to get there? If you've been to Bodie, perhaps you remember years ago when the entire road was unpaved, and the experience was that of a remote place. Now, with only one mile unpaved, it's lost that feeling. I wonder if they created another campground only two miles down the Yosemite Creek campground road, if more people would drive there, than all the way to Tuolumne where they don't have to carry their own water in, and/or sit on a vault toilet. Why not recommend Yosemite Creek if Yosemite Valley is full, rather than encourage them to drive all the way to Tuolumne. In the future, please expand your correspondence that seeks public input to your database of former campers in Yosemite. They love Yosemite, and are also typically very conservation minded. Thank you for the chance to write to you and impart my views, as it relates to future park planning efforts. Best regards,

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	303	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Sutherlin, Mark				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,02,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Park Planners, I wish to add the following comments, as an addendum, to my former comments, as it relates to the current Yosemite scoping study.				

Today, I have had the chance to read, and re-read a copy of a recent Yosemite Planning/Scoping letter given to Yosemite Planners by the Aceto's, of Oakhurst, CA. That letter is so well written, and so accurate in its description of correct values and suggestions, that anything I might say would seem superfluous after reading it. If "God is in the details", the Aceto letter was inspired.

Beginning on page 17, of 32 pages, in the Aceto letter, they so very, very accurately describe how they feel about camping related issues associated with Yosemite Valley. Their letter embodies so many correct views that Park Planners must use it for a guidance tool for this and all future planning.

I begin my partial quote of the Aceto letter here: "Family auto-camping in Yosemite Valley is a nature-focused activity that is often the seminal experience that instills a life-long resource preservation ethic in young and old alike. It is from this idyllic front-country adventure that future climbers, backpackers, hikers, and conservationists are born.

There has been a significant public outcry over the 40% reduction in family camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley following the 1997 flood. The Rivers Campgrounds and a portion of Lower Pines Campground were closed by NPS administrative mandate (a loss of more than 300 sites) even though Congress appropriated \$17 million as part of a flood appropriation package to "restore damaged property to its pre-damaged condition" (U.S. House of Representatives Field Report, 3/97) . Additionally, the Group campground was eliminated. In the meantime, it appears more campers are being squeezed into smaller and smaller sites at Upper and Lower

Pines Campgrounds creating increased opportunities for environmental degradation. Our concern is that allowing such a negative situation to continue will ultimately become the justification to get rid of camping in the Valley altogether as causing too many impacts and being more trouble than its worth.

Particularly troubling is a recent quote concerning camping from NPS Director Jon Jarvis in an interview with the San Jose Mercury (10/06/09) "And he said he'd like to see Yosemite Valley campsites destroyed in a 1997 flood rebuilt out of the valley, on Tioga Road and other locations, rather than in the valley along the sensitive Merced River. "Unfortunately, the public's perception is that Yosemite is just the valley, " he said. "There are plenty of opportunities to end up with a no-net loss of campgrounds."" Such a pro-decisional comment from the top Park Service official is clearly inappropriate and has the potential to poison this entire planning process which has been touted as Merced River Plan Scoping Comments being open and transparent. Additionally, the comment fails to consider the transfer of impacts to another area of the Park, higher elevation/colder temperatures not conducive to camping, and putting additional pressure on day visitation by turning thousands of displaced campers into "day visitors" or commuters to Yosemite Valley from their out-of-Valley campsites.

Acknowledging the value of camping as a resource-focused activity, the GMP proposed 756 campsites in Yosemite Valley of which there would be 684 "family friendly" auto campsites and 14 group campsites; this number already accounted for the removal of 116 sites from along the banks of the sensitive Merced River. Planners more recently appear to be advocating for more walk-in or walk-to sites which may appeal to the strong and healthy but which would be discouraging for the disabled as well as families camping with infants and young children or with grandparents. There are plenty of opportunities in the back-country for walk-in or walk-to sites but drive-in camping is the introductory activity for the novice outdoorsman and should be preserved. Interior Secretary Salazar and NPS Director Jarvis have both indicated a focus on encouraging young people to experience their national parks. An outreach event here or there may raise awareness but until the young person can enjoy the Park with his family in a manner that is not too expensive or too intimidating, his/her interest will not be long-lasting. Family friendly auto camping bridges that gap.

Additionally, campers are self-contained requiring few support services and minimal permanent infrastructure. Unlike year-round facilities, campgrounds are only used seasonally allowing an opportunity for the resources to regenerate.

As planners begin to discuss the camping component for the new Plan, we strongly encourage consultation with members of the camping community an advisory council of sorts. There is much to be learned from those who have been camping in Yosemite Valley for generations. It is also critical for the NPS to tap into camping reservation databases to inform campers about the opportunity to participate throughout development of the new MRP. The camping public, the largest group of visitors to the Park, has been disenfranchised from the comment process for much too long.

As alternatives are developed in the new Merced River Plan, we hope that the Park will present choices with respect to the quantity and mix of camping the land can sustain. We trust the following will be specifically addressed: Campsites less tightly configured.

Drive-in tent only campgrounds separate from RVs.

Limits on length of RV campers considering the fragility of the resources (23' as the limit used at Mariposa Grove rather than allowing as large as 40' RV towing an extra vehicle-65' trying to maneuver in a campground).

Separate dog campers from non-dog campers as was done in the 50s and 60s.

Expanded camping opportunities (Rivers, Lower Pines, North Pines). More (smaller) campgrounds with fewer sites located in various "pockets" around the Valley.

Possibly rotating campgrounds annually or adjusting the length of the season giving the land an opportunity to recover.

Replace Ahwahnee cottages with camping opportunities? Reduce Yosemite Lodge development and replace with camping opportunities? The Plan also must eliminate the current management practice of allowing Park Partners and volunteers to camp in the public campgrounds, thereby reducing the number of sites available to the public."

I apologize if it appears that I am trying to put an exclamation mark of my own at the end of such a magnificent letter by the Acetos, as this is not the intent. There is no reason for me to attempt to reinvent their words, and I do not have the ability to do so. I only wish to put an exclamation mark on my admiration for the correct science and good logic represented in their comprehensive letter. (!)

Of prime interest to me is their well stated comments about camping related issues, and their recommendations as they relate to how best to determine a numeric carrying capacity limit to visitation in Yosemite. They have clearly given much thought to these, and all topics represented in their letter during all the many years they have been close to, and contributed to, Yosemite planning issues.

Their various suggested strategies which relate to the development of a numerical user capacity determination are so well thought out, that I see them as a clear and obvious road map for Yosemite's planners to follow, as Yosemite's destiny is so important. We may never ever again get a chance to rethink mistakes, if any, made in this current planning process. So, it is very critical that this topic be followed through to its rightful end. I hope that end result, the carrying capacity limit, a number to be determined after much consideration, will be a somewhat restrictive, and well managed, even if it means that my own visits to Yosemite must be curtailed

due to those limits.

The goal of those limits should be to enable future generations to get a chance to see Yosemite for what it should be, perhaps once was, and what it could again become. We have never seen Yosemite as it could be, and we implore the Park's Planners to begin this process only after much pre-planning consideration. For those who are looking for a short planning process, I suggest they not participate. Yosemite is too important for a process that might not be well thought through, as was the case during the former planning process.

The quality of the Yosemite experience, and important to me, the Yosemite Camping Experience, really does depend upon good stewardship of this decision by park planners. It's the right thing to do, for Yosemite's future guests, and for the preservation of a healthy Yosemite, unspoiled for future generations, and unspoiled by excessive human impacts. These are important decisions that should not be rushed. Thank you, Truckee

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**Correspondence ID:** 304      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Miller, Stan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Ms. Brunnell, With regards to the Merced River Plan, I appreciate the time and effort it takes to read and incorporate comments from the public. I first came to Yosemite to climb the magnificent granite walls. Over the next several years, I became acutely aware of both the remarkable world influencing history and current significance of Yosemite climbing.

All visitors sense the climbing history. I bet you have heard 100 times non-climbers exclaim with amazement, "They climb that?" Scaling the walls is definitely an exemplary activity that separates and identifies Yosemite. The pull of Yosemite climbing and its history affects people world wide, as demonstrated by past and present visitors from other nations.

That climbing should be valued as one of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values seems obvious.

At issue is access. To protect climbing as a part of Yosemite, climbers must be allowed to visit the park and trek to the base of the routes. Park accessibility only requires primitive, low impact camping. Route accessibility only requires permission to walk along the existing trails from the river floor.

Thank you for your time and efforts. Please help recognize climbing as an Outstanding Remarkable Value and push for access in our beautiful National Park. Best regards, suburb, Beaverton, OR

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**Correspondence ID:** 305      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ager, Joel  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). I first visited Yosemite Valley in 1980 and have returned regularly ever since, now sharing its unique virtues with the next generation.

Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite Valley is perhaps the most important rock climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities. For this reason climbing should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values."

Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value (in fact, it is world class) and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 306      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Young, Tye  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Kristine Bunnell, Dear Sir/Madame - Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). I have made a few edits here to show thoughtfulness but do feel the generic response provided below highlights our applicable concerns. Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities. Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan. Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address: ? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program. Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities: ? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels. In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. We all need outlets: venues for expression and gratification to God and nature, for the opportunity to participate in life and to live it abundantly. Climbing, hiking and access to nature (in Yosemite and the region) allows us that venue. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process. Sincerely Billings, MT

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**Correspondence ID:** 307      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Robinson, John  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**  
**Received:** Feb,01,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:**

Dear Kristine Bunnell, I live near Sacramento and am 65 years old so have been enjoying the park for many years. I started rock climbing when I was 45 years old and since then have climbed in many places in Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne meadows area. I have been up El Capitan and Half Dome many times. In fact I plan to rope solo El Cap this spring and, if I make it, I may be the oldest person to do so. Personally I feel that restricting access to Yosemite climbing would be a tragedy. With the nations growing population (and considering America's growing waistline, especially kids) we need more not fewer opportunities for recreation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities. Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address: ? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program. Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities: ? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

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The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

Elk Grove

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**Correspondence ID:** 308      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Halladay, Jason  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** The text below is obviously a form letter from the Access Fund of which I am a member. I'm not a fan of form letters, but it does make some very valuable points. Ive only been to Yosemite a few times to climb but climbing was my main motivation for my visits.

I urge your office to consider the importance of climbing at Yosemite--Yosemite is one of the most important climbing areas in the world. Ok, on to the form letter stuff that you've probably already read...

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

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In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

Los Alamos, NM

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	309	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,02,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Kristine Bunnell, Thank you for allowing me to comment on your upcoming plans. To start with, I would like to provide my personal comments, followed by my support for the form letter comments below provided by the Access Fund.				

I have made two trips to Yosemite Valley for 5-day climbing vacations. I have stayed both times in Curry Village, where I have been amongst non-climber users. These have included very noisy, large school groups on both occasions. While I think it is essential that

urban kids are exposed to the beauty of natural areas, they need more strict supervision as they were littering and wasting water on a daily basis. I also wandered through one of the camping areas near Curry Village, where the campfire smoke was thick and uncomfortable. We used park transportation when we were able to, so that we could get to the trailheads we needed, but an early start on Half Dome prevented us from being able to use the shuttle. Some important components to consider in your new plan might include:

1) Strict rules on use and behavior by large, generally high-impact groups. T1 might include increased instruction on leave no trace principals for the leers of such groups and requirements that they teach these principles during their time in the park. (I'm not sure how to enforce this though) 2) Decreasing private car access to the Valley while ramping up the shuttle system by adding more options for stops at hiking/climbing trailheads, longer hours (4 AM to midnight), and increased buses. If not already using them, all buses should be "green". 3) Strict limits on campfires. Much as people like to roast their own marshmallows, all the individual campfires are damaging to the environment and peoples' health. Perhaps a nightly ranger-built central campfire could be offered as an alternative to individual campfires for those who must have one to call it camping. Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code. Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels. In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

Salem

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	310	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Webster, Kaija				
<b>Received:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Dear Kristine and YNP Policy Makers, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Merced River Plan. As an outdoor education professional at a university, climbing instruction is the main part of my job. I have heard that classic climbing areas in Yosemite may be at risk for closure and am alarmed at the prospect. My university is in the midwest and many climbers here view Yosemite as Climbing Mecca, a place they dream about visiting one day to enjoy the natural beauty and the historical, classic rock climbs. They make plans to bring their children and grandchildren to climb there one day. I hope the park considers the value that so many people throughout the nation and the world place on the historical climbing and camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley. I hope future park plans preserve these precious resources. Thanks again for your time and your work on this issue. Additional specifics are found below. Cordially,				

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities. Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code. Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River



Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels. In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

Duluth, MN

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**Correspondence ID:** 311      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Mar,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** National Park Service, Along the river should be an area for families. After "the flood of the century" many camp sites were eliminated. They should be replaced! A section for RVs should be provided with electricity if the occasional use of a generator bothers campers. The reservation service is broken. On trying to use when it opens the valley will be full but there are always rental RVs using the sites. Somehow many people seem to get in before the established reservation time.

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**Correspondence ID:** 312      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Durkee, George  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I'm writing in regard to the Merced River Plan. I am not hugely concerned with the existence of the High Sierra Camps. I think they serve a useful purpose in getting people into the backcountry and, because they are already established, should be allowed to continue.

However, I am extremely concerned about water quality as a result of pack stock use and, to a lesser extent, human use. Recent studies have shown a huge potential for impacts to water quality, from both pathogens and nutrient loading as a result of manure and urine deposited in or near river or riparian areas.

I specifically draw your attention to the following studies. The first one, in fact, was from data collected on the Tuolumne/Glen Aulin trail and measure the amount of horse manure deposited per mile as well as the amount of Giardia and Cryptosporidium cysts potentially able to enter the drinking water supply. Other studies look at how much Nitrogen and Phosphorous may be available as nutrients in river systems and lakes in the eutrophication process.

These effects have not been studied in Yosemite and it is critical that you consider their impact on the Merced River ecosystem and on recreational uses as part of your planning process. Although I suspect the effects are less, it's also critical you look at the human caused sources for giardia and crypto. The latter should include both recreational hiker use and the effect of the sewage systems of the High Sierra Camps on water quality.

Here are recent references:

Water quality and the grazing animal R. K. Hubbard\*,2, G. L. Newton and G. M. Hill \* Southeast Watershed Research Laboratory, USDA-ARS, Tifton, GA 31793 and and Department of Animal and Dairy Science, University of Georgia, Tifton 31793

INVESTIGATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT National Park Service, Yosemite Packstock and Microbial Water Quality Project, Principal Investigator: Mr Edward Atwill 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004

Twain Harte, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 313      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Whitmore, George  
**Outside Organization:** Tehipite Chapter Yosemite Committee Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** The following comments are submitted on behalf of the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club. The Tehipite Chapter encompasses all of Yosemite National Park. Thank you for this opportunity to make suggestions. We trust that you will find our comments to be of use in your efforts to protect the visitor experience and the natural resources of Yosemite National Park, and that you will give our comments full consideration.

These are scoping comments for the Merced River planning process.

#### PRINCIPLES

Unless a good set of principles underlies the scoping process, it is unlikely that a good set of issues will be identified for analysis. We urge that the NPS develop a set of principles to guide this planning process before it continues any further.

After much consideration, we have developed a list of eleven principles for planning and managing Yosemite, which is listed below. While the concept of user capacity is not specifically mentioned with each principle, it is implied (is inherent) with practically all of them.

(1) The overriding goal for the planning and management of Yosemite National Park should be the preservation of nature for future generations. This means the protection and preservation of natural processes, natural environments, and natural ecosystems. Within these confines of protecting nature, we need to allow people to enjoy, marvel at, and use the park so long as they do not interfere with other visitors, natural features, or the natural processes that govern the park.

(2) The 1980 GMP goal of allowing natural processes to prevail should govern, and in many cases override , all other ideas for "restoration", construction, housing, parking, and use by visitors.

(3) When areas which are subject to rockfall hazard and flooding are removed from consideration for development, it leaves very few places in Yosemite Valley which are "safe". Major floods have occurred on an average of once every twenty years over the past 100 years, and damage from rockfalls has extended well beyond the rockfall hazard zones delineated by maps which have been used in the past. Rockfall poses a greater risk to public safety than seasonal flooding. The narrow confines of Yosemite Valley's make it a difficult place to manage large numbers of people during any type of emergency (such as wildfire, flood, or rock slide). (4) People should be free to enjoy the Park in whatever way they choose, so long as it does not interfere with others or harm the resources. A statement in the NPS's 1994 Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study (ATFS) says, "Perhaps the greatest drawback of remote staging would be the loss of visitors' personal freedom to experience portions of Yosemite at their own pace and in their own way." (Remote staging referred to satellite parking lots, with mandatory busing into Yosemite Valley.)

(5) Yosemite cannot be all things to all people. Its attraction can prove fatal to the preservation of its resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. It is finite, and cannot absorb an unlimited number of cars or buses---or human beings.

(6) One way of reducing demand for unlimited access is to avoid providing services or goods which have no relationship to the reasons for which the Park was established, and presently exists.

(7) As part of the effort to build a more effective constituency for Yosemite, the Park needs to be visitor-friendly across a wide spectrum of society. Allowing it to become a preserve for the wealthy will ultimately lead to a loss of support, and the degradation of the Park.

(8) The NPS does not operate in a vacuum, nor do any of the constituent advocacy groups. The wishes of society need to be taken into account. Otherwise the NPS and the constituent advocacy groups will lose their credibility, and Yosemite will lose its dedicated defenders. (9) Yosemite does not need new development. New construction in the Park, if it is to occur at all, should be limited to presently developed areas. It should not go into areas which are recovering from past damage (since practically all of Yosemite Valley has been subjected to development at one time or another, this stipulation is quite important). Except for temporary ones, existing structures generally should be retained. Replacing them with new construction usually drives up the cost to the visitor, shifting the visitor demographic still further toward those who are well-to-do. It also locks in the presence of the structure, and tends to make it less likely that the structure would be removed if it were decided that the presence of the structure was not appropriate. This applies to visitor services, administrative offices, as well as employee housing.

(10) Because every activity which occurs in Yosemite has a very dedicated constituency, it becomes almost impossible to get rid of anything once it has become established. Therefore, if a development or activity was begun or constructed in the past and/or should somehow be removed or discontinued, retention or re-establishment should be undertaken only after thorough study, and only if it would be in the best interests of the Park. Just because a structure has been in the Park for 100 years or was there for several years before does NOT mean that it should remain or be put back.

(11) Related to #10, there needs to be a re-appraisal of the approach to preservation of cultural resources. Something is out of kilter when a pile of old broken toilets at Union Point is treated with the same, or greater, deference as evidence of pre-European Native American activity. The principle is probably that evidence of human activity prior to 1850 should be treated with greater care than

evidence of activity since that time. Put another way, the older the evidence, the greater the value which should be placed upon it.

## PROCESS

A. NPS APPROACH TO SCOPING HAS SKEWED PUBLIC COMMENTS IN THE WRONG DIRECTION: The following four questions have been consistently raised by the NPS throughout the series of public scoping meetings: 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? 2. What do you want to see protected? 3. What needs to be fixed? 4. What would you like to see kept the same? We believe that the emphasis placed on these four questions has skewed the public responses for this scoping process toward favoring the status quo. Not one of these questions suggests that perhaps something should, could, or might be changed. Even Number Three implies fixing something that is broken, as opposed to changing it, and there is an immense difference between "fixing" and "changing".

Perhaps the questions might have elicited more useful responses if they had been phrased so as to inquire how the visitor thinks Yosemite should, could, or might be changed to make it better. ("Better" could be defined as "what is best for the rivers, the trees, the bears, as well as for the humans who value them.")

In view of the clear direction received from the Ninth Circuit Court, change in Yosemite is expected, and indeed has been mandated. Given the condition of the Park---and the immense investment of time, money, and human energy in past planning efforts---it is high time that planning for our national treasure should take an entirely new direction. In fact, it could be argued that approaching the subject as in the past, yet expecting a different result, fits an oft-quoted definition of insanity.

But we believe that it is still possible to salvage something useful from the huge body of well-intentioned comments received from the public over all these years. This would require analyzing each comment from the perspective of how it relates to what is best for the rivers, the trees, and the bears---as well as to the humans who value them. If we did not value these things, national parks would not exist.

## B. YOSEMITE VALLEY IN ITS ENTIRETY IS AN ORV.

Yosemite Valley in its entirety is an ORV. The NPS makes much of the fact that different ORV's can be in conflict with one another. This problem would be vastly reduced if it were acknowledged that the single most outstandingly remarkable value in the entire course of the Merced River is Yosemite Valley in its entirety. Not just certain scenes, not just certain features, not just a certain distance from the ordinary high water mark, but the valley in its entirety. And the Valley in its entirety is clearly river-related, because it would not even exist had not a primordial Merced River, flowing across a primordial plain, started incising a valley as that plain was gradually uplifted. At times during that valley formation the river was frozen into a glacier, but it was still a river, flowing onward and carving the valley that we now know.

Planning should be approached in a holistic manner. That means looking at the Valley as a whole, not just its different component parts one by one. To break the Valley up into several different Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV's) interferes with using a holistic approach. Merced River planning workshops conducted in the past by the NPS have agonized over the conflicts between protecting one ORV compared to another. Those conflicts would be greatly reduced, and the planning process facilitated, if it were acknowledged that Yosemite Valley in its entirety is an ORV.

## C. TUOLUMNE RIVER PLANNING PROCESS SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A GUIDE.

The NPS has often stated that they figured out how to do a Wild and Scenic River Plan on the Tuolumne, and all they have to do now on the Merced is replicate what they did (and are doing) on the Tuolumne. We could not disagree more. Most of the (publicly visible) work on the Tuolumne was done prior to the Ninth Circuit ruling on the Merced, and well before the Settlement Agreement on the Merced. That ruling, and the SA, changed everything about how Yosemite is supposed to do a Wild and Scenic River Plan. There is absolutely no reason to think that work done prior to the ruling and the SA has any validity.

## D. THE BASIC INTENT OF THE 1980 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN MUST BE REAFFIRMED.

The 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) acknowledged the concept of limits. The 1980 GMP, while it was not perfect, nevertheless was breathtaking in its acknowledgment that you could have too much of something.

That concept MUST be reaffirmed if a new MRP is to be compliant with direction given by the courts.

And the main reason it needs to be reaffirmed is because the 1992 Concession Services Plan (CSP) drastically altered the direction established by the 1980 GMP. As of today, the GMP exists only as a document which was seriously altered by the 1992 CSP.

As the result of massive public involvement, the 1980 GMP established a "natural processes/reduce congestion" direction, contrary to many years of planning prior to that. But the 1980 GMP was an aberration. The vested interests started chipping away at it, and the 1992 CSP was the turning point, reversing the GMP and heading back in the direction of development. It was all downhill from there, with the (now invalid) 2005 MRP finally explicitly eliminating the concept of limits which had been put in place by the 1980

GMP.

The CSP amended the 1980 GMP, and started driving everything back in the direction of development, and away from the direction which had been established by the 1980 GMP. However, since this was done by amendment, and since the present MRP process can amend the 1980 GMP, it will be possible to amend the CSP which, in turn, had amended the 1980 GMP.

E. ALL OTHER PLANS WHICH AMENDED THE 1980 GMP.

Just as the 1992 CSP needs to be amended to bring it into line with the original intent of the 1980 GMP, this would be true of all other plans which were adopted subsequent to the 1980 GMP.

F. CONCESSION SERVICES CONTRACT.

The Concession Services Contract needs to be extended, not re-negotiated.

The CS Contract is due to expire on 30 September 2011. This is well before the anticipated Final MRP will be adopted. It would be impractical for a concessioner and the NPS to enter into negotiations for a new contract without knowing what the MRP, and the amended CSP and GMP, will call for. We strongly recommend that the present CS Contract be extended as necessary, and that all attempts to write a new contract be suspended, until such time as newly adopted and amended plans provide some certainty as to the requirements which will exist during the term of the next CS Contract. A failure to do this will cast a pall over the present planning process, just as the 2000 MRP process was flawed by the fact that the Valley Implementation Plan/Valley Plan had already been written.

G. ROLE OF PRIVATE DONORS.

Private donors should not be allowed to dictate how Yosemite is developed or managed. The recent merger of Yosemite Association and Yosemite Fund is an action which will impact planning and management of Yosemite. A broader issue to be addressed in the MRP planning process is how to ensure that planning and management decisions will be made based on what is best for the Park, rather than on what someone with deep pockets wants. In some ways, this issue tends to over ride all other considerations, because there is a long history in Yosemite of money being the main driver. Put another way, the corrosive influence of money, and how to guard against it, needs to be addressed in the planning process.

H. HENNESS RIDGE EDUCATIONAL CAMPUS.

Our comments on the Henness Ridge Draft EIS did not state that we were opposed to the project, but did raise a number of issues of concern. Now that it is clear that the YVP is rescinded and most planning is going back to square one, perhaps the Henness project should be re-assessed. There are clear connections between this project and considerations of user capacity issues in Yosemite Valley. Planning for Henness has moved forward, and is now pre-judging decisions which need to be made as part of the MRP process. We are not saying that Henness should be abandoned, but we are saying that planning for it needs to be incorporated into the MRP process, rather than proceeding independently.

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SPECIFIC ISSUES

Following is a list of comments on specific issues which pertain to management of Yosemite. Most of these comments can be phrased as issues which the scoping process identifies for study during the planning process. That is the spirit in which the comments are offered--they are suggestions as issues to be studied. As the planning process moves forward, and as these issues are investigated and discussed, we might end up taking positions contrary to what appears to be suggested below. It seemed easiest to present everything in simple terms, but with this disclaimer.

----- OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VISITORS

1. The old Yosemite Valley Pan (YVP), which was rescinded, called for a reduction from pre-flood numbers in ALL categories of overnight accommodations with the exception of the Ahwahnee. Some categories were reduced more, and some less. It might be useful to determine the proportional reduction of each category---for example auto camping was reduced "x" per cent, whereas Housekeeping was reduced "y" per cent, and Yosemite Lodge was reduced "z" per cent. (The Ahwahnee need not have been exempted from the reductions, because there are several "cottages" which are separate from the main hotel structure. The cottages greatly expand the footprint of the Ahwahnee complex. Retention of the cottages in the YVP was part of the YVP pattern of reducing lower-cost accommodations while keeping or increasing more costly accommodations. Whether the cottages should be retained should be addressed as part of this new MRP process.)

2. Should the numbers be increased or decreased in any category? (Campgrounds, Housekeeping, RV sites, tent cabins, hard-sided

no-bath cottages (WOBs), motel-type rooms, Yosemite Lodge, Ahwahnee, Ahwahnee cottages)

3. Should there be more low cost lodging and camping opportunities?

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

4. The focus should be on which (how many) employees need to be housed in the Valley. In spite of a huge increase in employee housing with the new units west of Curry, we did not notice reduction of any pre-existing units elsewhere.

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CAMPING WITH PRIVATE VEHICLE ACCESS 5. The presently abandoned Upper and Lower River campgrounds should be restored to natural conditions, and their use as construction staging areas should cease.

6. North Pines Campground and concession stables. In the YVP, the NPS proposed to close North Pines Campground and remove the concession stables. They also proposed to invade presently natural and undeveloped areas with new campgrounds (between Upper Pines and the river, and along the road to Happy Isles). It would make much more sense to remove the stables (as previously proposed), keep North Pines, and extend North Pines into the area presently occupied by the stables. There is also some low-grade employee housing in that area which could be removed, and the area used for an expanded North Pines Campground. This would obviate the need for invading natural areas while also getting rid of some extremely ugly, high-impact facilities. 7. RV hookup sites were formerly proposed in the Upper Pines and Lower Pines campgrounds. They would establish a new precedent, as such hookups do not presently exist in Yosemite. Having seen the impact of large, hook-up supported, RV "camping" facilities in other parks, we question the wisdom of heading down that track in Yosemite Valley.

8. The main issue is the SIZE of the RVs., not whether they are provided with hook-ups. There needs to be a limitation on the size of vehicles permitted into Yosemite Valley, and into the campgrounds. This is clearly a capacity issue.

WALK-IN CAMPING 9. Currently there aren't any walk-in camp sites except for the Backpackers Campground (across Tenaya Creek from the North Pines campground).

10. The YVP called for a walk-in campground in the area between Upper Pines and the river. Although there has been human use of this area in the past, the area is recovering and appears to be in a natural condition. It is an island of peacefulness surrounded by development. The campground proposal should be abandoned because it would obliterate the only remaining natural land in that area.

11. Should there be an allotment of campsites in the Valley for campers who do not arrive in personal autos? How should free shuttles operating in the Valley serve these campsites, i.e. how often, at which hours?

12. Walk-in campgrounds, if any, could be managed in such a way as to encourage the use of public transportation as a means of arriving in the Park.

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YOSEMITE LODGE 13. Should Yosemite Lodge should be in its present location, or even in the Valley at all?

14. The previous Yosemite Lodge Redevelopment Plan proposed a realignment of Northside Drive (NSD) around and south of the Lodge adjacent to wetlands. If constructed, the new alignment would pass through the prime resource/visitor interface between Yosemite Lodge and views to the south, notably Sentinel Rock, as well as the river wetlands. The present Northside Drive (NSD) alignment passes through significantly less sensitive Valley resources near the talus of north side cliffs and does not divide the visitor from the high quality Valley features and scenic vistas that exist south of the Lodge complex.

15. The stated reason for this proposed realignment was to eliminate traffic congestion caused by pedestrians crossing NSD at the Yosemite Falls intersection. Addressing user capacity may in itself alleviate the need for such an undesirable road re-alignment. 16. Because of the supposed problem, a pedestrian underpass or overpass at this intersection has been considered. An underpass would not be acceptable because it would entail substantial excavation on the approaches and underneath the existing road. An overpass would have a major visual impact. We feel that the NPS claim of unmanageable pedestrian/vehicle conflict at this location was bogus, and there were other reasons for wanting to route Northside Drive next to the wetlands. I am at this intersection frequently, often during the period when everyone is leaving the Valley, and I have rarely seen congestion. On the few occasions when it does occur, conditions are not severe enough to warrant the extreme measure of routing Northside Drive next to the wetlands on the south side of the Lodge. 17. If it is really believed that something must be done, a pedestrian-activated signal light, with a delay to avoid an excessive accumulation of waiting vehicles, should suffice. No pedestrians, no light, and traffic flows smoothly on the existing roadbed. Some within the NPS have claimed to be aghast at the idea of a traffic light in the Valley. But most of the time the light would not be on, and the alternatives would have vastly more impact than a light. -----

DAY-USE Overnight accommodations are self-limiting. When the sleeping spaces are reserved, no more reservations are sold. But

the management of day-use has never been attempted.

18. While everything seems to work out OK most of the time, occasionally there is serious congestion. At a recent NPS meeting, staff spoke of "one hundred days of gridlock" which supposedly occurs every summer. This is a gross overstatement---even during the summer, gridlock occurs only at certain times and places. Even then it is "congestion", not "gridlock". Most of the time there is not a problem. It would be a serious mistake to impose restrictions continuously in order to deal with a problem which is intermittent. 19. Perhaps it is possible to manage the movement of people and vehicles in such a way that the present numbers would not have as much impact as they do now. The NPS has never attempted to manage use other than by eliminating parking and/or closing roads or gates. Methods which are more visitor-friendly should be the first consideration. A good planning process should be capable of exploring the possibilities.

20. Words such as "limit", "reduce", "quota", "restriction", etc. are politically charged and carry a lot of baggage. And for good reason, because the connotations which accompany those words are not good ones. Words such as "management", "regulation", "reservations", etc. still carry some baggage, but at least it is not as burdensome as that which the other words carry.. The second set of words reflects a more positive mindset. We don't need to use terms which many people find especially provocative, and we need to avoid the mindset which leads to those words. We bring this up only because we have noticed a problem with choice of words at some of the public workshops conducted by the NPS. 21. The use of a quota system is probably not necessary. There are ways of managing use so as to achieve a numeric limit without setting up turnstiles and counting devices. It involves distinguishing between "active" and "passive" management. Active management involves the "traffic cop" approach, which should be avoided. Passive management means getting people to do what you want them to do by getting them to want to do it., and is clearly to be preferred.

22. If present use patterns were to change, it is possible that the present annual number of visitors could be accommodated, but with less congestion.

23. How is congestion to be defined? On an annual basis, for the Valley as a whole? Or on an hourly basis, at specific sites? Or in some other way? There are ways of addressing excessive visitor impacts other than by keeping people out.

24. We support, at such times and places as it may be needed,,a day-use reservation system for vehicles in Yosemite Valley.

25. Should individuals who arrive by public transportation be granted an exemption from any reservation system that would address user capacity?

26. A day-use reservation system ENSURES access. It is assumed that there would be a first-come-first-served component, and that people would not be turned away simply because they did not have a reservation. If there is space available, people should be able to enter the Valley whether they have a reservation or not. But with a reservation the visitor would KNOW he or she would get in. It seems that reservations should be available for those who want them.

27. Ideally, a day-use reservation system for vehicles would be supported by the gateway commercial interests. The possible role of the gateway interests in the implementation of such a system should be investigated.

28. The recently announced reservation system for the Half Dome cables offers an opportunity to try one form of congestion management. We urge that this experiment be conducted with an open mind, and there should be no hesitation in adjusting the plan as necessary to make it compatible with what the public wants, while still recognizing the basic problem of too many people at one time in one place.

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TRANSPORTATION (CARS, BUSES, ROADS, TURNOUTS, AND PARKING)

29. Cars vs buses. It is not practical totally to eliminate private autos from Yosemite Valley, and there should be a blend of public (buses) and private (autos) transportation. There are a number of reasons for this. Not the least of these is social equity. If cars were banned, it would be more expensive for families to visit. It would also be impractical to have family picnics and camping because it would not be possible to carry the equipment and supplies while still managing a bunch of kids. Even without camping or picnics, it is very difficult to manage strollers, cribs, diapers, bottles, etc. on a bus. 30. And, since it would be financially impractical to justify operation of a full-service bus system during periods of low visitation, the Valley would be inaccessible at night and for much of the year. That doesn't mean the number of cars could not be reduced. But please do not replace the problem of too many cars at times with the problem of too many buses at times, and inaccessibility at other times.

31. The 1980 GMP intent to eliminate all private autos from Yosemite Valley should be re-considered, and an amendment considered. The presence of that provision in the GMP has been the source of much of Yosemite's controversy and problems of the past 30 years.

32. If the concept of free shuttle buses were expanded beyond the Valley---facilitating access to Wawona, Glacier, Crane Flat, Tuolumne Meadows, and other areas---it could potentially significantly reduce vehicular congestion outside of the Valley.

33. Improved in-Valley shuttle vs. road congestion. Increased shuttle service throughout the Valley for those who wish it, including to west Valley destinations, would provide an alternative to private autos.

34. Improved parking vs. road congestion. If there were adequate parking (unobtrusive, small, dispersed parking lots), along with an adequate in-Valley shuttle system, much of the traffic congestion which sometimes exists would be reduced.

35. Should public and private buses serving the Valley be equipped with bicycle carriers in order to allow visitors the possibility of getting around the park on bicycles rather than depending only upon limited free shuttle service? 36. Keep the one-way road circulation system 36.a. Specifically, retain the Ahwahnee Meadow road (between Curry and The Village). 36.b. Specifically, retain Northside Drive between Yosemite Lodge and the El Cap bridge. 36.c. Specifically, retain the one-way function of Southside Drive between Sentinel Bridge and the Curry four-way intersection.

37. Maintain Valley roads at their present standards. Widening encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles.

38. This specifically applies to the remaining portion of "Segment D". This is the section of El Portal Road which runs west from Pohono Bridge to the recently re-constructed section near the intersection of highways 120 (Big Oak Flat Road) and 140 (El Portal Road). 39. Satellite parking lots vs. small, dispersed parking lots. The YVP proposed having a major satellite parking lot along each of the three western entrances. For a combination of reasons, this idea ultimately was found to be impractical. Not the least of the problems was the large number of bus trips, and the expense, of moving people into and out of the Valley over such large distances. It seems that a better approach would be to have a number of unobtrusive, small, dispersed parking lots scattered throughout the Valley, and then encourage people to leave their cars in a parking lot and use public transportation in the Valley. That would mean having an adequate in-Valley shuttle system which would cover the entire Valley. During periods of low visitation, the shuttle operation could be reduced, and people would rely more on their cars.

40. At present, parking at the Ahwahnee Hotel is not adequate for the level of use occurring at the Ahwahnee. If the planning process should determine that more parking is needed in the vicinity of the Ahwahnee, the open area immediately east of the present parking would be ideal for a small dispersed parking lot. 41. Retain visitor roadside parking along the "El Cap straight" at El Cap Meadow. But eliminate it at the junction between the El Cap bridge and Northside Drive, where the visual impact is much greater. The area between the bridge and Northside Drive should be limited to administrative parking, to be used only during helicopter operations in El Cap Meadow. Parking farther west along El Cap straight should be retained because it has vastly less visual impact than does the parking between the bridge and the intersection.

42. It is extremely important to facilitate the viewing of Yosemite's incomparable resources. That means people have to get off the road and stop. Restricting roadside parking to designated turnouts could be extremely limiting, as there are just not that many turnouts at present, and the NPS has tended to eliminate some of those. If roadside parking is to be limited to designated turnouts, then many more turnouts need to be created. A less formal and less regimented approach which involves less asphalt would be preferable. [The intent of the rescinded YVP was to eliminate all roadside stopping, which is not acceptable.]

TRANSPORTATION (INTERSECTIONS) Several intersections contribute to congestion because of their poor design, thus they are related to capacity. Improved design of these intersections could significantly reduce backing up of traffic.

43. The 120/140 intersection. Traffic coming in on the Big Oak Flat Road backs up at the stop sign because of difficulty anticipating what the El Portal Road cross-traffic, which does not stop, will do. Needs to be re-designed, possibly utilizing the area occupied by the small parking lot to create turning or merging lanes. It should NOT be necessary to encroach upon the river bed.

44. Yosemite Lodge/Yosemite Falls intersection. See above under "Yosemite Lodge."

45. Bank four-way intersection. Confusing and dangerous because traffic from three directions stops, but traffic from the east does not. Traffic from the other directions waits to see what traffic from the east will do, resulting in needless backing up of traffic. Make it a four-way stop.

46. Offset intersection between Camp Six parking and Village. Confusing design results in congestion because drivers are uncertain of each other's intentions. Convert to a conventional four-way cross intersection. There is heavy pedestrian traffic at this intersection. The idea of a pedestrian-activated signal light (suggested under Yosemite Lodge discussion) could be used here, also. (This is assuming that re-design of Camp Six parking and re-design of Curry Village would retain the offset intersection. The intersection could be re-designed as part of a re-design of the entire area.) -----

#### EL CAPITAN MEADOW

47. The Settlement Agreement permitted the NPS to proceed with planning for the El Capitan Meadow area as a separate process, apparently not as part of the Merced River planning process. To plan for it separately would seem to be a violation of the direction from the Ninth Circuit, and for the SA to provide otherwise seems inexplicable. In the interest of avoiding replication of effort, and achieving a holistic approach to a new MRP, planning for this area should be incorporated into the MRP process.

48. There have been long-standing proposals to address the impact of people walking out into El Cap Meadow. Much of the activity in the meadow is prompted by a desire to watch rock climbers on El Capitan. Most of El Capitan Meadow is dry, thus the impact of

people walking in it is minimal. The problem at El Cap Meadow is not severe enough to warrant the intrusion of an extensive boardwalk system. Any boardwalk system, if it were to accommodate the viewing needs of those watching rock climbers, would have to be quite extensive, and visually intrusive.

49. It is possible for the "solution" to be worse than the "problem". Not just at El Cap Meadow, but when looking at many other issues in Yosemite. Boardwalks are visually intrusive, and should be considered only as a last resort.

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#### OTHER ISSUES

50. We strongly support return of as much of the Valley to natural conditions as possible.

51. There should be a removal of visitor activity and infrastructure not consistent with NP purposes or resource protection mandates.  
52. This includes and may not be limited to golf courses, tennis courts, artificial ice rinks, etc..

53. Some people feel that the number and size of merchandise shops currently located at Curry, Yosemite Village, Yosemite Lodge, and the Ahwahnee is excessive. Some people also feel that the quantity and type of merchandise offered for sale is not consistent with the goal of protecting the park resources and the quality of the visitor experience. Others feel that such shopping experiences are an integral part of what a visit to Yosemite should entail. Since this does relate to user capacity and the quality of the visitor experience, it probably should be addressed in the planning process, and we are identifying it as a scoping issue.

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54. Removing/relocating obsolete, inappropriate and unnecessary infrastructure would allow moving much of the day use parking in Camp Six to more appropriate locations away from the river and closer to areas in the Village presently occupied by corporate offices, warehouses, the automotive garage, and other developments.

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55. Interpretive walks, hikes and presentations geared for all ages should be increased.

56. Compliance with the Principles enumerated near the beginning of these comments would require a ban on rafting. If not banned, the number of rafts currently allowed on the Merced River should be significantly reduced to mitigate view shed impacts and protect riverbank resources and stream bottom biota. The riverbank is doing to be degraded no matter where the put-in and take-outs are, unless it is on a sandy beach. The riverbank at Stoneman Bridge is being damaged, and would need to be inappropriately "hardened" if it were to continue to be used as a put-in site.

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57. Reduce NPS stock use to minimum essential levels and eliminate concession stock and stables to reduce stock waste and pollution and to minimize other stock related impacts to resources.

58. The High Sierra Camps are maintained with stock pack trains, which have a severe impact on the trails. What issues should the planning process address re. the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The Glen Aulin HSC is an issue in the Tuolumne River planning process, and all HSC's should be considered together rather than one by one. The 1984 Wilderness legislation/Committee Report said that the status of the HSC's should be reviewed. This is the logical time to comply with that Congressional direction, since it has not been done previously.

We believe there is a distinct possibility that appropriate review would conclude that the High Sierra Camps should be removed.

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#### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

59. There are exotic trees at various points throughout the Valley. Some of the more notable ones are the sugar maple across from the chapel, several apple orchards, and several giant sequoias. Since these are part of the history of the Valley, and they are not invasive, there seems no reason to remove them.

#### SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

60. If there is undesirable social interaction, be it between visitors or between staff and visitors, the Park will seem more crowded, so



it is clearly a capacity issue. Therefore, ways to make the Park more visitor-friendly need to be addressed in the MRP process. These could include placing more emphasis on education, and less emphasis on writing citations. "Your speed is....." billboard signs are vastly more acceptable than traffic citations as a means of controlling speed. In a sense, the NPS is in the "hospitality industry", and it is vitally important to remember to look at things from the visitors' perspective. Our experience with other national parks suggests that Yosemite is behind the curve on this. POLLUTION OF VARIOUS TYPES

61. Pollution of all types is related to capacity because it tends to create a sense of impinging development and crowding. If there is visual blight, it makes the Park seem more crowded. If there is noise, it makes the Park seem more crowded. If the visitor is aware of air or water pollution, it makes the Park seem more crowded. Therefore, we believe that all of these need to be addressed as part of dealing with capacity issues.

#### 62. VISUAL POLLUTION.

Hopefully the upcoming Vista Management Plan will address this.

See 65.c. below.

#### 63. LIGHT POLLUTION.

Needs to be addressed.

#### 64. NOISE POLLUTION.

Address need for regulation of decibel emissions. On a group basis as well as an individual basis. This would apply to Harley tours. (Noise from one vehicle might be within the standard, but if there are a number of them, as a group they might exceed the standard.)

65. AIR POLLUTION. 65.a. There are times and places where particulate pollution is not acceptable. To the extent that this comes from wood fires in campgrounds or inside human structures, the contribution of those sources needs to be analyzed. It is possible that wood burning in the form of campfires, or ambience fires, or even in providing heat, needs to be regulated or eliminated. 65.b. Particulate pollution from wildland fires, be they controlled or otherwise, needs to be considered in a different way than is presently done. Under present guidelines, the pollution is often harmful to human health. Mitigation of that needs to be implemented to a greater degree than has been done thus far 65.c. In addition to impact on human health, the impact of wood fires (both "civilized" and wildland) on visual resources needs to be considered differently than has been the case. The impact on scenic values has often been unacceptable. For those who go to Yosemite frequently, it doesn't matter. But for those who go there once in a lifetime, it can be a huge problem.

#### 66. WATER POLLUTION.

Inasmuch as we are involved on a volunteer basis in assisting the NPS with data collection for the Merced River's water, we are aware that there has been an ongoing program to monitor water quality. However, there needs to be more public awareness of the extent of this program. It appears that the program perhaps needs to be expanded, both seasonally and geographically, to cover a greater portion of the Merced watershed.

67. ASPHALT POLLUTION While any type of pavement constitutes an intrusion, asphalt seems especially offensive because of its color and toxicity. In those places where a hardened surface is deemed appropriate, alternatives to asphalt should be considered. 68. WAWONA

The bad feelings which some Wawona residents continue to have toward the NPS have their origins so far back that many present NPS staff probably do not have an understanding of the situation. And some newer residents of Wawona do not seem to be aware of the history. A better understanding of the background probably is necessary in order for any planning in Wawona to be productive.

The golf course continues to be an anomaly within the Park. Were the area in a natural condition now, it would be unthinkable to convert it to a golf course. Whether the golf course qualifies for retention because of historic considerations is a question which should be investigated. The future status of the golf course clearly needs to be addressed by this planning process.

#### 69. EL PORTAL

Administratively, El Portal is somewhat of an enigma. While technically not part of the Park, it is administered by the NPS. But other governmental entities also have jurisdiction. Hopefully this planning process will clear up some of the confusion, rather than adding to it.

At the time the El Portal Administrative Area was established by transferring federal lands to NPS jurisdiction it was assumed that it would be a "sacrifice area", where facilities and activities which were not acceptable in Yosemite Valley could be placed. However, that was more than half a century ago, and there has been a vast change in our sense of values, and in what we know. It is now

recognized that El Portal has unique cultural and natural values which are seldom found in river canyons at that elevation on the west slope of the Sierra. It is particularly rich in archeological sites. Even though it is technically not part of Yosemite National Park, protection of El Portal's cultural and natural values is mandated by the Wild and Scenic River designation. (We might add that it is also mandated by common sense, totally aside from any legal mandates.)

In the 2005 MRP documents, areas on the south side of Highway 140, between the highway and the river, were zoned for development. This occurred in spite of the fact that the problem had been pointed out during the draft stages of the documents. The NPS did nothing to correct the error, saying, "You know that we would never develop there." We urge that the zoning maps be corrected this time to make it clear that development will not occur on the south side of Highway 140, between the highway and the river.

In 2005 there were also problems with inadequate delineation of wetlands. Again, we urge that the problem not be repeated. The presence of the petroleum storage facility in what clearly was at one time an overflow channel of the river is problematic. We see no evidence of measures to contain possible spills. How the river can be protected from the proximity of these petroleum products needs to be addressed.

The fact that the NPS issues occupancy permits only on a year to year basis has provided many homeowners with a disincentive to keep their properties in good condition. It appears that providing a greater degree of certainty as to future use of a property would likely result in improved upkeep of the property. Since the historic aspects of Old El Portal likely constitute an ORV, the maintenance of that history is a proper subject for the MRP.

#### 70. MERCED LAKE

Comments are above.

#### 71. TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Comments are above.

#### CONCLUSION

Thank you for seeking public scoping comments on this project. We trust that you will find our comments to be useful, and will give them full consideration.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	314	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Adair, Greg				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Friends of Yosemite Valley Conservation/Preservation				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	These comments are submitted on behalf of Friends of Yosemite Valley and Mariposans for the Environment and Responsible Government. Our members use and enjoy Yosemite and the Merced River and all its natural wonder. For over a decade we have sought a protective plan for the Merced River and its values and look forward to working with the National Park Service (NPS) going forward.				

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We appreciate the spirit of openness with which the NPS has initiated this planning process. We hope that the NPS will enthusiastically embrace this unique opportunity designing a plan with specific measurable goals and objectives that will truly protect the Merced River and its environs while improving the quality of the visitor experience. Following some initial comments regarding the scoping process, we focus on the need for a well-articulated user capacity methodology. We then organize our comments around the three legs of user capacity as defined by the still valid 1982 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) Guidelines:

the quantity of recreation use which an area can sustain without adverse impact on the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing character of the river area, the quality of recreation experience, and public health and safety.

I. The Scoping Process. We have some concerns about the content of 1) the scoping meetings; 2) the absence to date of transparent participation by scientists in the scoping process; 3) the need for public education; and 4) values.

A. Public Meetings. Scoping has been described by NPS as a process: "solicit(ing) public ideas on what the scope, or extent of analysis, should be in the plan/environmental impact statement (EIS)." (E-Newsletter 14 October 09). At the recent Open House meetings conducted for Merced River Scoping, a lot of attention was directed (or misdirected) to questions, which may lead to skewed results for the purposes of scoping: ? What do you love about Yosemite? ? What do you want to see protected? ? What needs

to be fixed? ? What would you like to see kept the same?

We are familiar with these questions from earlier planning efforts. While they may enable easy access for many people to give some opinion, we are concerned that these questions encourage people to focus on the status quo, rather than enable the public to consider what may need to be different. We observed many people lowering their sights to the "like / dislike" range because of these questions. A person might answer these questions as: "I like Yosemite Lodge, leave it there for my use", or "expand horse use, expand camping", or variations on these, like many we actually heard at meetings. These might make sense if this process was about site planning. But (in the vein of the Lodge example), if the question were really about scope and limits of the Plan, scoping should ask very different questions, such as: "How should the CMP approach land use in the East End of Yosemite Valley?" This might lead to answers germane to the scope of the plan, such as: "I think this plan needs to fundamentally reconsider land use in Yosemite Valley. NPS should open up the question of continued use of Yosemite Lodge in the alternatives, including removal of that facility. Other facilities in East Yosemite Valley ripe for reconsideration include these which degrade views /river enjoyment such as?" Or maybe "the natural riverine system and its free flow need to be re-asserted as in each and every current and future land use decision."

We suspect the status quo has implied itself into scoping to date. We hope the NPS will interpret open house comments beyond their face value, and try to glean useful perspective on appropriate visitor experiences from beyond answers framed in response to the status quo.

#### B. The Role of Experts in the Public Process.

We are concerned that there was no obvious presence of user capacity experts or other scientists in the scoping process which we observed. It was agreed in the Settlement that experts would be involved from the beginning of the process, and we are unaware of what role the experts have taken since the inception and in relation to scoping. As the NPS works towards a public plan involving the Park's core resources, and numeric limits on use, we feel it is imperative that experts be engaged and present in the public process. According to the Settlement Agreement, "NPS hired as primary consultants Bo Shelby, Doug Whitaker, and David Cole, recognized experts in user capacity, to work directly with [Kristine Bunnell] in developing the new Merced River CMP. These experts will be involved in the planning process from the beginning? [Kristine Bunnell, Jim Bacon], and other NPS staff will work directly with these experts in implementing tasks." Planners stated they have met with the experts on at least two occasions (a couple of days in both August and October). The public has not been informed of what occurred at these meetings. What recommendations did the experts make? What recommendations did Park planners accept or reject and why? Did the experts approve the 4 questions on the comment card which served as a primary component of the public scoping sessions? If the experts were to be involved in the planning process from the beginning, it would have been helpful for them to attend the public scoping sessions, to launch a discussion of user capacity and get feedback directly from the public. We recommend that the experts post their recommendations followed by the planning staff's responses on the MRP website so the public can feel a part of the on-going user capacity discussion.

#### C. The Importance of Engaging and Educating the Public Throughout This Process.

The Park should use its voice and resources to educate the public about the goals of the new Plan, and about the importance and possibilities presented by the use of numeric capacity. There is a possibility of negative reaction to limits on use in Yosemite, as for some time in the past this concept was not embraced by the Park at all. This needs to be rectified. Beyond the development and completion of the plan lies the realm of public acceptance, perceptions, and politics. Ultimately at stake is the institutional capacity of Yosemite to move in a new direction over successive administrations. An early headwind of public misunderstanding and disapproval could predetermine the outcome. We have seen good and progressive use of numeric capacity systems at many public parks and lands, places where the public both accepts and embraces the concept and limits. We suspect that Yosemite will need to work intentionally to create acceptance of limits, and other elements of the new plan. We feel the time to begin is now. We are not media experts. We think that when stories are positive, and tell of a future where a person's best experiences of Yosemite are decoupled from the worst ones (crowding, lines, lack of access and peace in overburdened places), people will accept the idea of limits on use as desirable. We suggest that Yosemite staff seek meetings with California editors as a start, and work on other media outreach (web-based, informational DVD, interpretive talks, TV travel programs).

At scoping meetings, planners mentioned that there would be numerous workshops held in advance of releasing the Draft EIS. What plan does the Park have for documenting/distributing the information gained from these workshops and will there be any way to track how the input actually helped shape the new Plan? Though the internet is a terrific vehicle, many folks may not have access to it, and others still have very slow "dial up," making it difficult, if not impossible, to download large documents. It is important for the public to understand the value of their participation in these.

D. This Plan and Process Should Consider Articulating a Set of Values. The development of a statement of Values for this plan may be an important step. The GMP did this, and its Goals stood as a beacon for environmental progress at Yosemite during three decades of growth, construction projects, and reversing trends. We think a statement of values was very important in the creation of the vision of the GMP. And so, what are the core values this Plan seeks to promote? What will be the role for the public in the articulation of such a statement of values? Has the effectiveness of the public to respond to scoping so far been hindered by NPS inquiry into each person's individual values as opposed to the shared values to be articulated around protecting the Merced's ORV's and the visitor experience? This Plan has an opportunity and a challenge if articulating its values clearly.

#### II. User Capacity Methodology.

There needs to be a clear and objective methodology used to determine user capacity. It is crucially important the NPS forge a consensus with the public about limits in achieving shared goals. Transparency and objectivity are the way to do this. Such

methodology must be consistently applied to the decision-making process, throughout the Plan and to all tiering projects, to ensure protection of the ORV's and free-flow of the Merced River area, the quality of the visitor's recreation experience, and public health and safety.

Since establishing a numerical capacity is a major part of this planning effort, the process for collecting statistics must be refined. The current method of relying on underground mechanical counters at the gates and elsewhere that (when operable) are unable to delineate between visitors, employees, and vendors other than by a formula established in 1994 needs to be reexamined for validity. Consider the following statements made by NPS staff over the past four years as recorded by the NPS Public Use Statistics Office: "Tioga Pass counter broken, BOF [Big Oak Flat] counter broken for last 11 days"; "South Entrance and Big Trees counter out for 7 days. Badger Pass counter out for 30 days"; "BOF traffic counter now uses correct inbound figures. Used lane 2 in error from beginning/installation. Inbound/outbound reversed, but now corrected"; "Arch Rock traffic counter was out 14 days"; "Arch Rock, Badger Pass, & Tioga Pass traffic counters look like they're still having problems"; "Traffic counters at Arch Rock, South Entrance, and Big Trees appear to be out-of-order; traffic counts are estimates only"; "Arch Rock and Big Trees traffic counters were out all month; South Entrance and Badger Pass were out some of the month"; "Broken counter at Arch Rock". It would appear that visitation counts appear to be highly unreliable. This needs to be fixed without delay.

Citing 1999 public testimony to the California Transportation Commission from Peggy Kukulus, then-Executive Director of the Yosemite-Sierra Visitors Bureau, with respect to 1998 visitation statistics through the South Entrance: "Yosemite says 1,284,967 visitors pass through Highway 41 to and from Yosemite. Caltrans says that 1,714,770 visitors pass through Highway 41 to and from Yosemite. That's a difference of 429,803 visitors. It's a difference of 148,208 vehicles. Who is wrong? Whose calculations are off? Do we believe Caltrans figures? Do we believe the National Park figures? I have had numerous conversations with the department which calculates Yosemite's visitation counts in Denver and have heard on numerous occasions how the actual traffic counters on 2 of the major entrances into Yosemite have not been working for more than a year. Even the Denver statistician was concerned about how averages from other gate counts were manipulated into complete "guesstimations" to plug into other entrance counts."

### III. Define Outstandingly Remarkable Values to Ensure No Adverse Impact on the ORVs and the Free-flowing Character of the River Area.

The NPS needs to focus on and clearly and thoroughly define the ORV's in this Plan. These should be expressed in a straightforward manner which may be easily understood, accepted, and supported by the public.

We have long argued that the central purpose of the Merced Plan is to articulate a management strategy to protect and enhance the ORV's for which the Merced was designated. We have said that a core problem so far is that the ORV's did not drive previous Merced plans. A central problem to this day is a lack of clear definition of the Merced's ORV's.

In reviewing various WSRA guidance documents, it is acknowledged that there is no "official" definition of ORV. However, there is common agreement that an ORV should constitute the very best of the best and that it be river related or river-dependent. To the extent that the Park Service is comparing the Merced River and its ORV to anything regionally or nationally, it should identify specifically what is used as the basis for comparison. For example, do visitors travel great distances specifically because of a particular ORV because it is something not available anywhere else? Visitors come from all over the globe to view the Scenic and Geologic ORVs associated with Yosemite Valley/Half Dome, El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall, Yosemite Falls, etc. These iconic wonders are world-renowned. Are other values ecologically important in a regional or national context?

Recognizing the importance of ORVs, the WSRA Interagency Commission (2002) published the following management directive: "Thoroughly define the ORVs to guide future management actions and to serve as the baseline for monitoring." Such a definition should include \* documentation and justification for selection, \* denoting goals for protection, and \* specifying how management prescriptions would achieve stated measurable objectives. Descriptions should be in easy-to-understand language so as to be meaningful to a scientifically challenged public.

The NPS needs to begin by focusing on the ORV's to be protected in this Plan. That work has not been done, but it must be. The 2008 ORV Report is far too general to be of any real use in this Plan. It lacks substance. That report and the former per-segment ORV lists lack details of the resources. They do not specify what goals NPS has for the ORV's. They do not say what measures will be matched to specific protection goals. NPS should focus its efforts on the directive of the Interagency Commission. There must be clear and objective methodology that can be explained to the public and consistently applied.

A. Resolve ORV "Conflicts." An oft-repeated statement that ORV's may be in conflict appears as a potential barrier to providing adequate protection for any of them.

NPS must begin with the correct frame of reference: ORV's should be expressed in a hierarchy. At the top, the Plan must emphasize the natural, scientific, scenic, and the native cultural ORV's or setting. As stated in Section 10(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the "primary emphasis shall be given to protecting [the River's] esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features." Recreation as value within this scheme of values is dependent on the other values; it is not so much that "recreation" in and of itself is a particular ORV to the Merced River, but rather that clearly defined recreational activities, which are both exemplary in a regional or national context and dependent on the river's unique values determine ORVs.

In terms of resolving "conflicts," the Plan needs to identify the specific measurable goals and objectives for each ORV so as to guarantee their protection within each project and plan. If, for example, the Recreation ORV at times appears to conflict with natural (and native cultural) ORV's, the Plan will need to work from a defined strategy, which includes: ? Defined ORV's, with explicit goals

and objectives for their protection and enhancement. ? Defined visitor experience. ? Defined "quantity of recreation use an area can sustain without adverse impact on the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing character of the river area?. and quality of recreation experience."

In evaluating perceived "conflicts" between recreation ORVs and other ORVs, the plan should always first acknowledge that the recreation ORVs are not ORVs without the natural ORVs and to the extent the natural ORVs are degraded, so too is the recreation ORV. The plan should also allow for enhancing the "recreation ORV" to sometimes mean reducing the amount of that recreation that is allowed based on the strategy stated above.

As for perceived conflicts between natural ORV's, perhaps NPS should consider looking at these first within larger ORV "settings" or framed within broader concepts, which we will address next.

B. The Question of "Broader" ORV Settings or Concepts. In each of the examples below, some is known about what are the most salient individual features of the ORV's. In some cases more study is needed. By inviting broader and more inclusive ORV definition, we do not mean to diminish the importance of individual elements, nor suggest that they should fade from focus. On the contrary, we have said many times that these features (rare and endangered species, rare plants, cultural and archaeological sites, etc.), virtually all of the important features noted in prior reports, need more study and more definition.

The following suggests an approach to ORV definition. Posed as questions, we hope these will help define the scope of this plan, and assist the NPS in defining the Merced's ORV's:

? Should the entire Yosemite Valley be considered as an ORV? If not, why not? Isn't it true that the history of visitation to Yosemite has focused on the Valley, that the wealth of poetry and artistic reference to the Valley as a whole indicates its uniqueness; that the Valley location has taken on significance as the site of a sort of pilgrimage and place of awe experienced by travelers from the whole world? Doesn't this point us to WSRA's guidance for consideration as an ORV?

? Should Yosemite Valley, El Portal, and Wawona be considered as cultural ORV areas, sets of important sites and features within a whole and indivisible cultural landscape? Aren't these really landscapes? Shouldn't we consider Native American subsurface and surface antiquities, sacred places, ancestral burials, where culture and use of the land and resources of native peoples' continue today (and will continue into the future)? Isn't it better to consider these factors as co-related spatially, and continuous across time?

? Should the scenery of Yosemite Valley as a whole be considered an ORV? What really is the argument for dividing the Valley scenery into small scenic sub-sets for WSRA protection, if the whole is not explicitly included in the protection strategy?

? Should the entire 81 miles of the Merced River be studied and evaluated as a comprehensive living ecosystem, as the primary artery of Yosemite National Park?

Many actions have dealt with the River in small segments, even down to linear feet of shoreline, as part of numerous stopgap measures. Planners need to view the River as a complete free-flowing system. In so doing, planners should adopt a long-term vision, of a free-flowing river not controlled by rip rap, fencing, bank stabilization, re-vegetation, diversions, road construction, and other human interventions, but rather a living, changing, free-flowing river. Should the riverine system as a whole, and the river's free flow be the "Hydrologic ORV" itself? We suggest this as a reflection of values and management perspective, and not as a new land-use dogma. But when we look at how the River has formed the special nature in Yosemite, it seems that the hydrologic ORV is really applicable everywhere that the river makes wet. As stated by David Cehrs, a registered geologist and a certified hydrogeologist with years of experience with Yosemite:

"The NPS does not seem to be cognizant of the fact that the river has infinitely more power than the NPS does and the river will do whatever it wants, whenever it wants to any and all anthropogenic structures within Yosemite Valley." "Within the confines of Yosemite Valley the Merced River is a meandering river. The meandering Merced channel migrates laterally across the Valley floor and over time the channel occupies all locations within the Valley, talus slope to talus slope, and this action forms the floodplain. Channel migration is natural river behavior and is the result of river hydraulics within the channel curves. Water moves faster on the outside of the channel curve and slower on the inside of the channel curve. This results in erosion on the outside of curves and deposition on the inside of curves; the resulting deposit is called a point bar. The top of the point bar deposit is the floodplain. Most of the Yosemite Valley floor (river channel, floodplain, meadows, wetlands) is formed from the meandering river point bar deposits reworking past Valley floor glacial sediments with the additional input of new Sierran derived sediment; the remainder of the Valley floor is formed by alluvial fans from the tributary side streams entering the Valley, for example Yosemite Creek. Old Merced River locations can be located by their remnant oxbows observable on portions of the Yosemite Valley floor. The oxbows are abandoned channel meander curves."

The entire Valley has been a part of the River System during thousands of years. The entire Valley will be part of the river system during the next thousands of years. Isn't the river within Yosemite Valley, first falling freely over cliffs, and then meandering freely across a U-Shaped Valley at once unique, exemplary, and worthy of status as an ORV in its entirety? Beyond Yosemite Valley -- at Wawona -- isn't the inclusion of the Wawona Meadow and the creek a similar case? At El Portal, isn't the inclusion of all that the river touches a similar case? Isn't the free flowing river - as a whole - the best place to contextualize "individual" aspects of hydrology for the Wilderness segment, and the Gorge also? We are sure that there are salient features within segments of the River which make up the uniqueness of the river, but we think the proper frame of reference for these features is the natural river itself as

an ORV.

C. End "Net Gain" as a Rationale for Land Use and Management Decisions. Decisions in past plans and projects as to which ORVs are protected and which are pushed aside using the "net gain" argument appear to have been made in an arbitrary and inconsistent manner. The NPS based decisions on existing commercialization and infrastructure as well as laying the groundwork for future, perhaps already funded, projects. We think the "net gain" idea ignores the legal requirement to protect and enhance ORVs. There has never been any justification to allow irreplaceable resources bartered against others. We have said many times that "net gain" is grossly wrong when irreplaceable resources such as native cultural and archaeological resources are involved, for example. The same logic should be extended to all ORVs.

D Clearly explain the relationship between the selection and the protection of ORVs and the nondegradation standard and how the Park applies that standard.

As stated in Section 10(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the "primary emphasis shall be given to protecting [the River's] esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeologic, and scientific features." The 1982 Interagency Guidelines go on to state that "each component will be managed to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated, while providing for public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values." This is referred to as the nondegradation standard. WSR then provides examples of possible River values such as scenery, recreation, fish and wildlife, geology, history, culture, and other similar values but the primary emphasis still rests with the esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeologic, and scientific features.

There are many examples of "disconnect" which followed the lack of a plan since designation:

WSRA mandates 'Scenic' and 'Esthetic' as primary emphasis elements. 'Scenic' is also an ORV for the segment of the Merced River corridor in East Yosemite Valley. Yet, the Yosemite Fund was allowed to construct a restroom that looks more like a mini-lodge, and a grandly oversized bus stop structure that looks like a monument to the Yosemite Fund's private architect as part of the Lower Yosemite Fall project. The many suburban bus shelters further clutter the Valley landscape in obvious contradiction of protecting the scenic ORVs. The ORV was not intended to enhance the quantity of small visible structures scattered around the valley. Many small projects destroyed Native American cultural sites, and the NPS allowed the desecration of subsurface archaeologic deposits in the Falls project area including the prehistoric/historic village of Chief Tenaya. The utilities crossing at Camp 6 wreaked havoc on a wetland. Other projects at El Portal and in the Merced Gorge have negatively impacted the Merced River's ORV's, and the impacts are still present.

It is the responsibility of the NPS to move the management of the Merced WSR away from short-sighted projects like these and their damage, and to move into an era of systematic protection and enhancement of ORV's. ORV's need to be described comprehensively and with the necessary detail. As for past damage to these values, NPS should prepare a plan that establishes that these wrongs will not be repeated, and will describe these areas so that the harm caused will eventually be remedied to the extent possible.

Future decisions must be consistent across the board, based on clear and objective standards and methodology. Past public frustration (even outrage) has occurred when decisions appeared to be arbitrary administrative mandates based on the whims of special interest groups, political agendas, "desires" construed as "needs," or just the effect of having money to be spent.

This plan must embrace the consistent application of the nondegradation standard in all future management of the Merced.

E. The Park Service must provide documentation of baseline resource conditions along with an on-going program for monitoring.

A 2002 technical assistance paper published by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Interagency Commission states as a management directive: "To achieve a non-degradation standard, the river-administering agency must document baseline resource conditions and monitor changes to these conditions." Such a scientific base of information would need to document the resources that are to be protected and preserved in the park; the condition of those resources; any changes in condition over time; and actions needed to ensure preservation (Natural Resource Challenge Action Plan, 1999).

This new River Plan must first demonstrate adequate scientific study within the corridor to establish baseline conditions.

Studies should be developed and used to establish the location, the interrelationship, and the essential geography of the ORV's in a detailed way. This is another example of the necessity of good communication with the Public as a key to success. We know there are important data gaps concerning key elements related to the status of the ORV's. We suspect that in the area of hydrology, biological study including studies for birds, raptors, ducks, owls, bats, amphibians (including foothill yellow legged frogs), as well as wetlands, seasonal streams, meadows, and river hydrology there needs to be a clearer and more complete picture of the status of resources. This will also be true of sensitive resources, including sensitive cultural resources not disclosed to the Public, though the NPS should know of these and rigorously protect them.

The public needs to be engaged in this process as well. Aside from an occasional newspaper article, there has been little to no communication with the public concerning resource conditions along the Merced River corridor. For example, in 2004, the NPS urged the Court to allow them to proceed with data collection studies that included installation of 110 ground water monitoring wells and soil pits; collection of tree coring samples; geotechnical subsurface exploration and wetlands delineation; and debris flow research. There have been no updates to the public as to how those activities are proceeding, or their results. In fact, a FOIA request for the results of the debris flow research was denied because the Park Service claimed it had decided to leave it in "draft" status,

thereby exempting it from FOIA. This lack of disclosure leaves the public unknowing, and undermines a transparent process.

The public will be in a far better position to offer comment on this plan if the status of resources in the Merced corridor related to the ORV's is clearly communicated.

We are also concerned that the NPS will be using impacted situations as the resource "baseline" (as in our comments on the effects of construction in Yosemite since designation, and in the absence of a plan with limits.) In many instances, conditions have been allowed to deteriorate due to poor management oversight. For example, the Park arbitrarily removed the group campground after the '97 flood; even though there is a Park rule of up to 6 people in a campsite, groups of up to 30 have been using individual campsites for lack of anywhere else to go and there has been no enforcement of the existing rule. Trampling, overuse and radiating impacts in an area caused by as many as 30 people in a campsite vs. 6 people, multiplied over 10 years, has most certainly caused resource deterioration.

The Park Service should assume responsibility for a failure to provide oversight and enforcement before using the current impacted state of affairs to justify more regulation and reduced opportunities. Managers should set out to pro-actively rebuild a visitor experience that benefits all through a balance of restoration, proper sites for large and small groups, and enforcement.

Another example is the concessionaire's raft rental operation. Excited rafters race down to Stoneman Bridge to put their raft in the water and then wait for the gigantic diesel bus followed by a box truck to drive through sensitive Sentinel Beach picnic area to pick them up and bring them back to the rental facility. This Plan should re-evaluate allowing the concessionaire to operate a busy raft concession that accelerates severe erosion of the river bank alongside Stoneman Bridge; drive huge diesel vehicles through peaceful Sentinel Beach, wiping out picnickers enjoying natural quiet (who apparently aren't of the same financial priority to the concessionaire) while ultimately degrading the entire area. Though the concessionaire may profit from rentals, concessionaire profits should not determine park policy. Although the degrading impacts are put forth as examples of resource degradation to be blamed on visitors, this is really a situation of "cause and effect" initiated by the Park's concessionaire and allowed by the National Park Service.

An immediate improvement in resource conditions would be noticeable if managers would just enforce the rules that are already on the books as an evaluative first step before implementing more draconian (and punitive) measures. Such management oversight and enforcement could begin right now while the Plan is being prepared.

The NPS should establish the "baseline" for resource conditions as it commits now to such obvious first steps. A sound scientific base of information with respect to resource conditions and monitoring is the first step. The Park cannot achieve the non-degradation standard mandated in WSRA without such documentation. Is there sufficient information available to enable the planning process to proceed with integrity and transparency? In order to do this work transparently, the Park Service should note where it has enough information and where it does not. Where the NPS lacks information, it should describe how it will remedy the shortfall and when.

As an aside: Not all visitors coming to Yosemite have the keen eye of the scientist. And though visitors deeply love Yosemite and want to see it protected, they may be viewing resource concerns raised by the NPS through a different lens of urgency. Consequently, it will be very important for planners to bridge the gap by seriously considering who will actually be reading and commenting on the yet-to-be-developed plan. Most likely, the audience will comprise few biologists, hydrologists, anthropologists, historians, or other scientific experts. But readers will definitely include "experts" in the kinds of activities experienced at Yosemite that have shaped their lives and are the source of life-long memories. Therefore, it is critical that explanations of resource conditions both existing and desired be explained not only in clear, easy-to-understand language but in a way that the reader can relate the information to what s/he likes to do on the ground. The dots need to be connected between ORV's, management prescriptions and visitor experiences; if not, this Plan will face the same difficulties as other plans where the public perceives the Park is just using the science, ORV's, etc. as an excuse to do what management wanted to do all along. That's not to say the Plan should be a public relations document, but it definitely needs to keep the reader in mind.

F. The Biologic ORV needs particular specificity since it is often a primary determiner of land use and the ORV that is most frequently used as justification to take front country management actions (i.e., restrictions, regulations, etc.).

The NPS needs to identify the features of the Biologic ORV with specificity, and include description of the health of entire systems. We urge the Park to include not only updated lists of Special Status plants and animals, and to survey and map related habitat, but also to define where these species exist within reasonably healthy systems, and why the systems are healthy (or not). Thoroughness and specificity will provide a foundation of needed detail for proper decision-making.

What occurs in this segment that must be preserved because it doesn't survive or cannot survive anywhere else--whether regionally or nationally OR even along another segment of the Merced River further downstream/upstream?? What condition is it in now and what are your goals and measurable objectives for protection? The plan needs to look at the protection of riverine systems and ORV's more broadly.

For example, the Valley has recently supported the return of Harlequin ducks but it is likely that noise effects are a negative pressure on them. (Ornithologist Ted Beedy, personal communication). What current and projected threats exist to the creatures in the systems the Plan will describe? What management actions are proposed to maintain the health of these systems, and to enhance them? Another example is the biological health of Wawona meadow with respect to avian species. And a recent paper by R. Beschta and Ripple describes the connection between the decline of black oaks in Yosemite and the loss of cougars because cougars are shy of people. What measures can be taken to bring back the predator so that the deer populations do not continue to prevent the

regeneration of black oaks in the Valley?

The NPS should also approach the Biologic ORV from the perspective of visitor experience. What do visitors experience of Yosemite's biological life which represents the best of the best regionally or even nationally? The recent return of the Harlequin ducks surely qualifies, but also the opportunity to see species that may only occur rarely elsewhere. There are also swallows, bats, owls, eagles, and much more which persist in Yosemite in a way which is sadly disappearing elsewhere in the Sierra. Is it that what makes up this ORV is unable to survive anywhere else? This description of uniqueness should form a sort of inner circle of the Biologic ORV definition.

As the NPS describes these things, proper consideration of the projected effects of global warming on these environments must be a factor in description and future management decisions. What effects will a warmer or altered climate have on wetlands, seasonal water tables, the accumulation and release of snow pack?

Because of the accessibility by road and trail to relatively unique and undisturbed biologic areas, isn't the ability to see and to some extent experience such rare things part of the ORV?

Is what constitutes this ORV limited to special status species? The "access" Yosemite provides both by road and trail to relatively healthy Sierran environments raises a further question of whether non-special-status species perhaps compliment the Biologic ORV. Visitors especially enjoy being able to observe bear, deer, squirrels, birds, raccoons, coyotes, and other more visible and recognizable species. How does management of the biologic ORV impact those species? Isn't visitor connection to them related to the experience of a relatively biologically- healthy place containing things far more rare?

How have land-use changes over the decades affected the biologic ORV? What is different now about wildlife health and survival (not just special status species) that could demand greater regulation and restriction? Terrible destruction occurred when the sewer line was forced across the River at Housekeeping. We documented substantial riparian and river habitat disruption and destruction. There was addition of a new (different, more substantial) new sub-surface impediment, which probably altered the flood regime. At the time we suspected this meant the actual destruction of a unique wetland in Yosemite Valley. What is the status of the wetland today? We have the same kinds of questions for many other areas, and believe the NPS should understand and demonstrate how land use, (and crowding) has affected species, while seeking to find new management strategies to heal past errors.

There is a disparity as to how the NPS addresses impacts. The huge impacts caused by infrastructure projects were readily accepted while impacts from family camping and other traditional uses are more tightly regulated and opportunities eliminated: Since most of the controversy over development and access appears to be in Yosemite Valley, it would be helpful to spend a lot more time explaining the importance of the Biological ORV in this particular segment, and describing what does and does not make up the ORV.

Support for the Biologic ORV will largely be based on the Park's ability to communicate in simple, easy-to-understand language about its purpose and how it might actually improve the visitor experience and the activities visitors enjoy. Once the ORV is properly defined, it MUST be consistently applied the River's values cannot be ignored based on the priority of the day.

All ORVs should be clearly defined, mapped, their status described in detail, and their current and anticipated needs/trends identified.

G. Resolving the controversy concerning Yosemite's lineal descendants (Paiute / Miwok) is critical to adequately defining the Cultural ORV and ensuring its protection and enhancement. NPS should strive throughout this plan to protect the cultural heritage and connection of native peoples to Yosemite.

Yosemite is the cultural center and home of the descendants of native people with cultural connections dating back thousands of years. Park documents make note of some of the tribes who made their home in Yosemite. Historic memory and language are further connections to this ancestry. However, some significant errors in recordation need correction.

The Paiute people have ample documentation validating their ancestral ties to Yosemite. The Park Service appears to be ignoring them. This is unacceptable.

At the same time, Park managers sign cooperative agreements with, hire as site monitors, and rely heavily on negotiations with the American Indian Council of Mariposa County/AICMC (Southern Sierra Miwok). As we understand, from the Paiute perspective, the National Park Service is committing "cultural genocide" against their people by refusing to accurately reflect their ancestral ties in the Park's historical archives. We do not claim expert knowledge of the role of archives and documentation in the establishment of native peoples' rights on their lands, but we are aware of the foundational role this plays. The resolution of the Paiute claims is imperative. There was hope for resolution when Acting Superintendent Uberuaga announced the following study as reported to the Associated Press:

"Yosemite National Park will review its visitor brochures, information booths and historical archives to ensure that local tribes' ancestral ties to the treasured landscape are accurately reflected. Acting Supt. Dave Uberuaga last month requested the sweeping reexamination of the park's tribal relations program, including an oft-visited American Indian replica village built near Yosemite's falls. National Park Service officials say no other park has undertaken such a broad review of its storytelling about the sometimes



brutal confrontations that helped create the country's cherished preserves." (AP, May 2009)

There have been no further updates as to whether the study has actually been launched, what outside experts were contracted to perform the reexamination, the methodology, or if there has been any resolution. Meanwhile, shortly after the study was announced the Miwok/AICMC (with support from the Yosemite Fund) were allowed to break ground on a new Indian Cultural Center. Such an action would appear to predetermine/unduly influence what was supposed to be an independent study.

This unresolved disregard was especially visible during construction of the Yosemite Fund's Lower Yosemite Fall project, which resulted in the desecration of subsurface archaeological deposits in the project area including the prehistoric/historic village of Chief Tenaya. The controversy was further escalated when the Park Service advanced a project a few years ago, which was stopped by the Court pending further communications with the Paiute lineal descendants, and legitimate concerns persist about the Park's plan to use heavy earth-moving equipment and invasive construction techniques in an area of known burials. There are real concerns about the potential release of toxins including mercury into the Merced.

We think the NPS needs to resolve this ongoing controversy with the Paiute without delay, and before the River Plan can suppose that it grasps the complexity of native cultures in Yosemite. We are very supportive and appreciative of the process Superintendent Uberuaga started; we ask that it continue to resolution under Superintendent Neubacher.

Cultural ORVs concern both ancient and living native people in Yosemite. As we said above, the NPS needs to account for the native landscape and time and place of these cultures - past and living - in defining the cultural ORV. Cultural ORVs are unique among ORVs in that once a cultural site is destroyed or desecrated it is considered to be an irretrievable loss. WSRA mandates that 'Archaeologic' and 'Historic' are primary emphasis elements; therefore it is imperative that the Cultural ORV be clearly defined with goals, measurable objectives, and management prescriptions that explain specifically how the agency will protect the archaeological, historic, or cultural values of the Merced River Corridor. Some parts of the ORV are specific to the Paiute culture; the NPS should acknowledge them. Native American values must be embraced by the Park and embedded in park plans. Tribal representatives (not just those employed or contracted by the Park Service) must be included as a critical part of the planning team as a highly valued resource.

We think much can come from recognition, respect, and communication. We have been privileged to meet and become friends with some of native people of Yosemite, and nothing of Yosemite has enriched us more. Will the NPS take the time to record the stories and life histories of Yosemite's native people today, and those of the living elders? This Plan must take preservation of their cultures to heart, and elevate this intention within the system of protecting ORVs.

H. The Recreation ORV must receive special attention in this Plan: In light of the 9th Circuit ruling, this ORV should prioritize the protection and enhancement of low impact and resource-focused activities conducive to the National Park experience, and the experience of natural and cultural ORV's. Higher amenity recreation, including profit-driven and commercially based recreation (e.g., raft/boat rentals, trail rides, special events, etc.) should be de-prioritized in this plan. Equestrian use should be newly evaluated.

In order to broaden our understanding of Recreation as an ORV, we researched approximately 50 Wild & Scenic Rivers to see how this Value is handled at other sites and in other plans, if available. Some of these rivers were managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the US Forest Service which operate under a multiple use mandate; we also reviewed the 32 rivers managed under the more protective mandate of the National Park system. Though each river unit has been designated for its unique characteristics, we searched for a common theme that could be applied to determine what makes Yosemite special. Here are some thoughts.

In the high country, Yosemite hosts numerous trails that showcase 13,000-foot peaks, dozens of lakes, canyons and granite cliffs and cross land "blessed with the mildest, sunniest climate of any mountain range in the world." These trails include a segment of the Pacific Coast Trail which was designated one of the first scenic trails in the National Trails System, and is considered one to be "finest mountain scenery in the United States". Yosemite also hosts a 37-mile segment of the John Muir Trail which begins at the east end of Yosemite Valley and ascends in the view shed of such classic sights as Vernal Falls, Nevada Falls, Half Dome, Cathedral Peak, and more. Largely through the efforts of the Sierra Club and LeConte, the trail was constructed for recreational purposes to make the area accessible. It would seem that appropriate recreational activities in this "wild" segment of the Merced River Corridor would be hiking, backpacking, fishing, possibly non-commercial equestrian use, primitive camping, viewing scenery, wildlife observation, nature study, and photography; a true wilderness experience in a scenically diverse river setting with opportunities for solitude while developing a deeper relationship with nature. For example, citing some parameters from a version of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: "Primitive settings are characterized by an unmodified natural environment of fairly large size. Interaction between users is low and evidence of others is minimal. The area is managed to be essentially free of man-made "improvements" and facilities. Experiencing isolation from sights and sounds of humans is probable. Opportunities for independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skills abound and present high degrees of challenge and risk." As the Merced River drops into world-famous Yosemite Valley, its gentle meandering beneath towering granite cliffs and scenic waterfalls enables visitors to enjoy a spectacular front country experience. While many people use the river for traditional recreation activities, others see it as an opportunity for spiritual growth, inspiration, or meditation. Low impact activities along the river corridor include water play, sunbathing, exploring the rock formations, picnicking, fishing, bird watching, photography/ videography, painting, writing or just appreciating nature and enjoying the scenery and peacefulness of the river. In addition to the river-associated activities, users like to hike on the natural trails along or near the river or access one of the multi-use trails in the East end. Drawn by the scenery, there are opportunities to explore and photograph the spectacular falls, float the river, and camp or picnic on its banks. Self-guided and economical access, including by private vehicle and shuttle, enables visitors to enjoy scenery, with the freedom to explore nature on their own terms, while still experiencing solitude within this world-renowned environment. This is scenic viewing at its best where all of the senses are engaged the opportunity to listen to the sounds of the river and the wind blowing through the trees, to smell the freshness of the great outdoors, to see the natural dark night sky filled with stars and maybe even witnessing a moonbow, to feel the soil beneath our feet and the weather and to do so in the absence of the elements of suburbia with the bustle of

crowds.

The sun shines not on us but in us, The rivers flow not past, but through us? The trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies as well as our souls, and Every bird song, wind song, and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song? --John Muir Such activities should provide an opportunity to relieve stress and to get away from a human-built environment; preferred activities should be resource dependent (e.g., wildlife viewing, nature study, hiking) with opportunities to see, hear, and smell natural resources and occasions to enjoy periods of solitude; modest evidence of development, human activity, and natural resource modifications but harmonious with the natural environment; presence of others is expected and tolerated with encounters ranging from low to moderate; conventional motor vehicle use is permitted on paved, graveled, and unsurfaced roads; settings should offer a sense of independence and freedom over comfort and convenience; The challenge and risk associated with more primitive types of recreation are not very important; practice and testing of outdoor skills are important. As the River leaves Yosemite Valley, it drops another 2000 feet as it roars through the rugged Merced River Gorge. Classified as "scenic," road access enables visitors to enjoy sightseeing, picnicking, photography, exploring the rock formations, waterplay in favorite tucked away swimming holes, fishing, bird watching and other low impact activities while appreciating the scenery and powerful dynamics of the river.

Though the above description is far from complete, it's an effort to capture the soul of the Yosemite experience'an experience where the visitor leaves a bit changed, coming away with something out of the ordinary upon departure, something much deeper than a trinket purchased at a store. This is what makes the Yosemite experience "outstandingly remarkable"something not just that one does, but something that is done to one.

The CMP should define the Recreational ORV along lines we have described. But the new CMP must also distinguish between ORV Recreation and non-ORV recreational activity. Low-impact, resource focused activities of the Recreation ORV must be protected from the profit-driven commercialized experiences and activities ongoing in Yosemite. As the 9th Circuit noted: To illustrate the level of degradation already experienced in the Merced..., we need look no further than the dozens of facilities and services operating within the river corridor, including but not limited to, the many swimming pools, tennis courts, mountain sports shops, restaurants, cafeterias, bars, snack stands and other food and beverage services, gift shops, general merchandise stores, an ice-skating rink, an amphitheater, a specialty gift shop, a camp store, an art activity center, rental facilities for bicycles and rafts, skis and other equipment, a golf course and a [High Sierra Camp] dining hall accommodating 70 people. Although recreation is an ORV that must be protected and enhanced, see 16 U.S.C. ' 1271, to be included as an ORV, according to NPS itself, a value must be (1) river-related or river dependant, and (2) rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context. The multitude of facilities and services provided at the Merced certainly do not meet the mandatory criteria for inclusion as an ORV. NPS does not explain how maintaining such a status quo in the interim would protect or enhance the river's unique values as required under the WRSA. As WSRA guidance documents have cautioned, river "classification is often confused with outstandingly remarkable values." For example, a river classified as recreational does not imply that the river will be managed or prioritized for recreational exploitation. It is understandable that the Merced River segment in East Yosemite Valley was classified as "recreational" by virtue of the evidence of human impact along its shorelines. However, we continue to be concerned that the classification will become justification for prioritizing recreational development (e.g., raft rental facility, RV hook-ups, etc.) along the Merced River Corridor, often to the detriment of a properly considered Recreation ORV and other ORVs.

The new plan should explore the questions: "at what point does too much use of the recreation ORV diminish the ORV itself?" Relatedly, this Plan should explain: What is the quantity and mix of an activity that an area can sustain without adversely impacting this ORV as well as the other ORVs, the quality of the experience, and public safety? When does one person's recreational interest intrude on another person's right to solace? Can an activity be mitigated to the level where it only impacts those in the immediate vicinity of the activity? What guidelines will prevent an activity from reaching critical mass where it can potentially impact nature, history, and large volumes of people? We believe that commercializing informal activities significantly increases impacts: This plan should explore the option of de-commercializing activities and sales of things such as raft rentals, bicycle rentals, commercial trail rides, fishing/backpacking rentals and sales, and "green dragon" loop road scenic tours. The Plan should explore what would happen to the quantity and mix of recreational opportunities merely accommodated and properly managed for those who supply their own equipment. That is, this Plan should explore the model of a non-commercial Yosemite.

Does the current park practice of site hardening and erecting fencing and other obstructions to contain and control large volumes of people impact the individualized, self-guided experience free from the bustle of crowds? The plan should explore allowing greater freedom of movement in a system managed to promote a more autonomous and direct experience. The plan should address what levels of noise drown out the sounds of the River and the wildlife. NPS should look at noise from tour buses, RVs, RV generators, loud radios, supply trucks, motorcycles, loud partying, barking dogs, construction in the name of Park "improvement". Does the smell of diesel fumes or the stables'byproducts from activities that serve a few impact the sensual experience of the many? Is the future of Yosemite to be a "nature center," or will it continue on the path to becoming a "profit center"?

--- Most Equestrian Uses Should be Eliminated in the Merced

In addition, this CMP should look take a new and careful look at the use of all horses in the Merced watershed. In the past we have not opposed individual use of horses in the Park, mostly because they seem to be few, and because we support freedom of choice. As described below, there are many far greater and more obvious horse impacts arising from commercial horse use (which we oppose) and management use (which we think must strive towards its minimal use and impact). All horse uses in the Merced should be evaluated in this plan to determine whether they are appropriate.

In order to protect ORV's, we think the CMP needs to directly consider removal of all horse impacts in terms of water and soil quality, vegetation, introduced weeds, and effects on songbirds. The negative impacts are well studied: Derlet and Carlson (2006) described water pollution from stock at Yosemite, which introduced disease carrying pathogens to the water. The new Merced Plan needs to consider a zero-commercial-horse and zero-management-horse scenario for Yosemite. We think this plan can and should

eliminate commercial horse use in the Merced River corridor. The question of how many horses are essential and irreplaceable in management should be thoroughly considered. For a de-minimus remaining number of horses which may be required, NPS should require feces collection any and all horses.

The CMP should consider the impact of commercial trail rides on trail-walking visitors, and consider the impacts of horses in terms of smell, and in terms of the biological pressure on songbird populations from cowbirds at stables. The question must be asked: do commercial trail rides support protection of the Merced River's "esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features" or do they exist for the benefit of the concessionaire and a few visitors? It seems that any time an activity is commercialized, the impacts increase greatly. Though riding a horse can be enjoyable, it's an activity that is commonplace in numerous other locations. Is it appropriate in the highly valued resource area that is the Merced River corridor? The smell, the proliferation of "road apples" along the trails, cowbirds, the development footprint required to operate a stable-dependent activity are all issues which need to be reevaluated in determining protection of the river environs. This plan should consider, and we advocate, the removal of commercial trail rides. The commercial stables at Yosemite Valley and Wawona should be closed.

The study of ongoing impacts to wilderness values by the High Sierra Camps was previously requested by Congress in 1984: but the NPS never did anything about that. The HSCs persist today, and whatever the impacts may be now, whatever the impacts on wilderness values and on the values of the Merced WSR may be, these impacts are tolerated. We have heard rumored that some on staff have pondered whether the Merced Lake HSC is somehow an "ORV", "historic", or should for un-defined perhaps nostalgic reasons be grandfathered into this plan as an ongoing use. This is NOT acceptable. We do not believe that adopting the status quo is the basis for analysis in the protection of the Merced's values. The NPS should eliminate the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp and restore the site.

The NPS should in this plan describe the impacts of commercial horse use and the privileged wilderness-hotel guests supported this way at the Merced Lake HSC (The Plan should simultaneously consider related use of NPS sock in management in the Merced). If the HSCs were removed, the full area could be designated wilderness, as it should be. The plan should consider this area if these impacts were eliminated. What are the impacts on water quality, soils, vegetation, scenery, noise levels; what are the possible impacts on sensitive amphibians, and fish? What are the effects on the experience of hikers and backpackers? With respect to hikers and backpackers, is it reasonable to build a user capacity for this reach of the river around a set of (horse/ tent-hotel) impacts that are probably ten times the impact of foot travelers whose use is already rationed? We do not think so. We ask that this plan explore that issue. Could more visitors have a better and more resource-focused experience overall if the use and management related to the HSC were ended? We advocate the removal of the Merced Lake HSC and the restoration of the site.

This plan should also consider the removing all of the HSC's, given that their use is within one commercial system, and in light of the fact that the Tuolumne CMP is presumably considering their removal.

NPS needs to describe the needed number of horses, if any, which are essential to management at the Yosemite Valley and Wawona districts. The needed level - including a "zero level" scenario for horse use by managers - should be considered in this plan. Is there really a need for mounted patrols, or is it possible to lessen or eliminate this? What are the impacts on scenery, soils, and water quality from NPS stables? Is it possible to manage the Merced from districts with no horse-mounted patrols? The Plan needs to ask this question honestly, and consider termination of this use. We recommend that this Plan terminate this use. We know the Park Service is proud of its mounted ranger program, and visitors are excited to see a mounted ranger and these individuals provide a positive public relations role within the Park. However, it is objectionable when a horse dumps its load in the middle of a busy walkway, the mounted ranger rides away leaving the smell and the flies behind for visitors to step around.

We are not clear on the use of the small training arena/ paddocks in Yosemite Valley in the vicinity of the Awahnee, but we understand it is used Service-wide for equestrian training. The Plan should see to the removal of this use from the Valley and the restoration of the site in this Plan.

#### IV. Define User Capacity To Ensure No Adverse Impact on the Quality of the Recreation Experience.

A. The Park Service needs to clearly define the visitor experience before it will be able to objectively evaluate the quality of that experience.

Visitors come to Yosemite to experience nature; for refreshment of mind and spirit; to participate in activities that refresh and recreate; and for activities that renew one's health and spirits by enjoyment and relaxation. Opportunities enabling that spirit of renewal are the essence of visitor experience. Consequently, the visitor experience and its intrinsic relationship to the esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features or "core values" of Yosemite Valley and the Merced River corridor must be clearly defined.

It is impossible to objectively evaluate/measure any adverse impact on the quality of the visitor experience (as required in establishing user capacity) if that experience is not defined. Interestingly, the 1980 General Management Plan defined the "Park Experience" as "programs for doing, thinking, dreaming, and being in relationship with Yosemite's resources" (page 22). The GMP goes on to state that the "visitor experience will consist of opportunities for educational and park-related recreational pursuits such as walking and hiking, backpacking, and Merced River floating;" "activities such as picnicking, hiking, and camping, which take advantage of the park's natural features?are the most appropriate uses?"

Resource-focused opportunities unique to a national park setting, based on resource preservation as opposed to resource exploitation, provide the framework for such a definition (e.g., camping is a resource-based activity that requires minimal permanent infrastructure

vs. the multitude of services and facilities required to support upscale lodging and bus touring). Past planners have stated that the visitor experience is "whatever the visitor wants it to be." That is true only in the absence of a plan which is required to protect the visitor experience.

NPS cannot use "whatever the visitor wants it to be" to evaluate or measure the visitor experience. Such a vague description will only facilitate the special interest feeding frenzy which has taken place in Yosemite Valley. Concessionaires have carried on the 'want' versus 'need' debate for more than a century. But using the Recreation ORV as a guide, the Merced River Plan can finally provide the foundational backbone that will guarantee true protection and preservation of Yosemite.

Perhaps a template or filter can be configured to help narrow the focus on the types of activities/facilities that exemplify the national park experience. Words like nature-focused or resource-focused; affordable to the average American; family friendly (across the whole spectrum of family from infants to elderly grandparents); "uncluttered by piecemeal stumbling blocks of commercialism" and fragments of suburbia" (1980 GMP); freedom to explore/freedom to just "be"; rustic; etc. Couple that with the GMP definition of "doing, thinking, dreaming, and being in relationship with Yosemite's resources." Every activity/facility can then be evaluated for appropriateness using the template as a filter.

Another way to say this is what we said above: whereas the Planning Team can see as we do that the WSRA promotes a vision of the Visitor Experience which gives value to nature-focused experiences and activities traditional to national Park visitation, and differentiates this from "all experience." The Plan should consider what is going on in Yosemite through the filter of WSRA's values. The NPS could use public comments received to glean some of what needs protection and enhancement in the visitor experience.

B. The current contract for concessions at Yosemite is due to expire, enabling a new bidding process. Therefore, the new River Plan should be free to make decisions as to what's best for the River Corridor rather than tied to contract specifics requiring a "reasonable profit" for the concessionaire.

Alarming, during the writing of these comments, the following was published on the website Fedbizops: "Added: Jan 08, 2010 2:32 pm The National Park Service intends to issue a prospectus for proposals to provide hospitality services including Lodging, Food and Beverage, Retail, Auto, and Other Services within Yosemite National Park. The planned release of the solicitation in April, 2010, has been delayed and will occur later in 2010. A notice will be posted to the Federal Business Opportunity site thirty days prior to the release of the prospectus. The existing Concession Contract between the National Park Service and the existing Concessioner expires on September 30, 2011."

We disagree completely with the Parks' intention to solicit or create a new contract at this time. We urge the NPS to rescind this notice and any subsequent solicitation until after the Merced River Plan is complete. It would not be wise to enter into a new contract for concessions in the absence of defined user capacity and appropriate facilities, as any such commitment could likely predetermine provisions in the plan. We urge NPS to proactively publish and make it clear to all potential bidders - including Delaware North - that the level of services projected for these types of activities in Yosemite cannot be determined at this time. The NPS should publicly state that adoption of the Merced River Plan may significantly affect the levels of services in the Park for activities which conflict with the protected values of the Merced WSR.

Yosemite Park remains one of the most lucrative contract opportunities in the company's Parks and Resorts Division. However, replacement of lost facilities cannot drive decisions in the new Merced River Plan. Delaware North certainly has the option of not bidding on the new concessions contract if what is determined to be appropriate in the new Plan (which will also amend the expiring Concessions Services Plan) fails to fit the company's profit structure. In sum, the Park needs to first determine the actions of this Plan, and then see what and how much of these commercial services are needed.

Recalling a 1997 article:

"In 1993, Delaware North landed a 15-year contract to manage food and lodging at America's oldest national park. The government and Delaware North negotiated a deal that gives the concessionaire a little more freedom in the park in exchange for a higher percentage of revenue being returned to the park. Under the new contract as much as 20 percent of revenue Delaware North derives will go to the government. However, much of that money will be funneled directly back to the park to improve facilities. "We see this as a win-win situation," Jacobs says. "It is an opportunity for us to 'exploit' the natural assets of the park in a way that actually complements the park, instead of harming it." ("Jeremy M. Jacobs: Delaware North's Intrepid Captain Loves 'The Thrill of the Deal'", by Paul King, Nation's Restaurant News, January 27, 1997.)

"Exploit the natural assets." "Improve facilities." "gives the concessionaire a little more freedom in the park in exchange for a higher percentage of revenue returned to the Park." Such a mindset has been the source of ongoing concern as the public sees the Park transition more and more to event visitation catering to well-heeled visitors while becoming less and less affordable to the average American family. Acquiring one park contract after another, it appears that Delaware North has greatly expanded its influence and is redirecting the mission and policies of the National Park Service toward a more elitist, commercialized, and homogenized experience rather than the more traditional back-to-nature experience associated with a National Park. This Plan should explore the creation of a very different park experience, and leave the bidding open to an entity with a different vision, and a different idea about profit-making

Clearly defining the visitor experience is the first step in deciding what facilities are needed. There is a direct correlation between facilities and revenue generation; the concessionaire claims to want to "improve facilities" (which of course facilitates higher prices and increased profits), but the question should be does the Park even need those facilities. Do swimming pools, tennis courts, pizza

parlors, bars/liquor outlets, gift shops, snack stands, art center, ice rink, equipment sales/rentals, in-room TV, Wi-Fi, RV hook-ups, etc. contribute to the uniqueness of Yosemite Valley or are they intrusive "fragments of suburbia"? And perhaps more importantly, planners must ask if facilities support protection of the Merced River's "esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features" the primary emphasis elements of a comprehensive river management plan?

Past plans claim to be responding to "visitor demand for expanded or additional services." The new Merced River Plan must set objective guidelines for what commercial services and facilities are needed, as the Concessions Act requires moving beyond the "want" vs. "need" debate and instead focusing on what is most protective of the river corridor. Planners need to participate in the exercise of viewing Yosemite Valley as a do-over. If one could start from scratch, what facilities would be the justification for "needed" facilities, where would they "need" to be placed, and what would justify the decision? Such an exercise should not only include just an evaluation of visitor facilities but also debate the "need" for an elementary school and the few students it serves vs. the footprint required, amount of NPS and concessionaire housing in the Valley, the Court, the NPS and concessionaire stables, and more everything should be "on the table." Establishing the concession service contract before these issues are addressed in this Plan would be wrong.

C. The new River Plan should establish a base level of services to be provided and then decide on the base level of employees' NPS and Concessions' needed to provide those services.

Employee numbers are very difficult to track. New employee dorms added 217 concessionaire beds in the Valley with the promise to remove the "trainwreck", and housing behind the Post Office yet nothing has been removed. Only more has been added with concern that still more will be needed.

A significant issue at Yosemite is the perceived "need" for so many concession employees housed in the Park, in no small part because the concessioner puts workers on split shifts. The timing of a split shift means that a person cannot really live outside the park. This issue should be addressed in considering the number of employees needing permanent housing in Yosemite. It must be addressed now, before there is a new contract for concession services, and before the NPS reaches conclusions about housing in the Park.

As stated in GAO Report GAO/T-RCED-98-35: "Each park that provides housing is required by the Park Service to have a housing management plan. This plan is to identify the park's need for housing, the condition of housing, and an assessment of the availability and affordability of housing in nearby communities. The agency requires that the parks update their housing management plan every 2 years so that it reflects the current need of the park." What is the status of Yosemite's compliance with this system-wide requirement?

The Report goes on to state that "In accordance with Office of Management and Budget guidance, the Park Service is authorized to provide park housing to seasonal employees in all locations and to permanent employees (1) whose position description requires them to live in the park to provide needed service or protection or (2) when adequate housing in the local community is not available."

Interestingly, a follow up GAO Report GAO/T-RCED-99-119 revealed: "at Yosemite National Park, the contractor determined that, based on agency criteria, the park needed 69 units for staff to respond to after-hours incidents. However, in revising the results of the contractor's assessment, park managers more than doubled this number to 175 housing units. They did this in order to have what they thought was an acceptable number of employees who could be called back to duty during the middle of the night, when there are typically no staff on duty, or during unusually busy periods of the day. The park managers indicated that the park needed the additional 100-plus housing units because it was difficult to get staff to respond to after-hours incidents. These managers said that the park normally must call about four off-duty law enforcement staff or other staff in order to get one to respond to an after-hours incident. The Yosemite park managers' views are not consistent with the direction of the Park Service's policy that encourages parks to minimize its employee housing. In this case, there may be other options for the agency to address its after-hours needs other than providing this amount of housing for example through using shift work to cover the off-duty period."

The Park should develop a comprehensive operational study evaluating how many employees both NPS and Concessions are needed to perform a base level of services. Such a study should include analysis of seasonal needs, split shifts, how many people does an employee really represent, needs of single employees vs. employees with families, cost-benefit evaluation of shoulder season activities vs. employees required, emergency response criteria, and more. Another component of the study should evaluate how many employees both NPS and Concessions should have housing in Yosemite Valley based on the nature of their job function. It appears that the current practice locates employees based on vacancies in existing structures rather than evaluating whether those structures (or employees) are even needed at all. The operational study also needs to analyze the environmental, economic, sociological and sprawl-inducing impacts of not reducing the number of employees but merely moving them to sensitive outlying communities such as El Portal and Wawona.

Each employee (single or with family) needs housing, food, water, parking place and/or transportation, HR services and more, requiring an increased development footprint while adding to the overall capacity in the park. At present, it appears that 80% of the development footprint in the Valley is in support of the 20% of visitors and residents who stay overnight in the park. A reduction in employees would become an opportunity to reduce the development footprint while streamlining operations and reducing impacts. We think the Plan should explore such a reduction tied to reductions in Hospitality and Food Services as part of this plan.

D. The national park experience is NOT a resort experience. The marketing of recreation and tourist experiences at Yosemite should be de-emphasized while the NPS creates better and more space for autonomous and self-directed individual and family nature-

focused activities.

Enjoy magic from dawn to dusk. Make yourself at home in a cabin, or stay in secluded campsites for tents and all types of RVs. Hike winding paths, explore nature trails on horseback and have the time of your life in the great outdoors among hundreds of acres of natural beauty. Savor a variety of dining options including sit-down meals, cool drinks and quick snacks to go. Have some rustic fun in the great outdoors with recreational activities for the entire family. Escape to the rustic charm of a Resort that recalls the majesty of the grand National Park Service lodges from the Great American Northwest with a soaring split-log lobby, eight stories high, honoring American craftsmanship and artistry. Pools, beach, banking services, camera rental, guest services desk, children's activities, credit cards accepted, dining, snack bar, laundry facilities, lounge/bar, kennel, shopping, water rentals, bike rentals, fishing, horseback riding and pony rides, campfire sing-a-long. Buses (Motor Coach) service the resort both internally taking guests to the attractions and externally transporting guests to the Ticket and Transportation Center.

The previous description promotes Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground at Walt Disney World. Compare that to a cached DNC website promoting Yosemite:

Encompassing 1,170 square miles, an area the size of the state of Rhode Island, this unique destination offers both expansive wilderness as well as the guest services and amenities you would find at a year-round resort. This site is managed by Yosemite's primary concessionaire, Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts at Yosemite, Inc. (DNC at Yosemite), which provides the majority of visitor services in Yosemite National Park, including lodging, food and beverage, retail operations, transportation, tours and recreation services.

There's so much to do at Curry Village, you might find it hard to leave to explore the rest of Yosemite! Food and Beverage Services - the Curry Village Pavilion serves all -you-can-eat buffet style breakfast and dinner service daily. Other seasonal options include Taqueria, Pizza Patio and Bar, Curry Ice Cream Stand and Curry Coffee Corner. Gift Shop - Sundries, newspapers, gift items, magazines, books, posters, snacks and ATM machine. Swimming Pool - Outdoor swimming pool with showers and changing rooms. Amphitheater - Ranger/naturalist programs, slide presentations and scenic movies. Yosemite Mountain Shop - Offers extensive inventory of camping, hiking, and climbing goods, dehydrated food and snacks. Tour & Activities Desk - Obtain information or arrange for tours, transportation, Yosemite Mountaineering School classes, horseback or mule rides and other activities. Curry Recreation Center - Standard bicycles in all sizes may be rented for the day or by the hour. Rafts may be rented from mid-May to mid-July. Yosemite Mountaineering School - Rock climbing instruction, guided hiking and backpacking and rental equipment are available. Cross-country skiing instruction and rental equipment are available November to April. Transportation - Free Valley shuttle service to various locations in the park is accessible, including winter service to the Badger Pass Ski Area. Ice Skating Rink - Open daily from late November to early March, the outdoor ice rink also offers skate rentals and instruction. Nearby Activities - Guided tours, stable rides, rock climbing, hiking, fishing, photography and ranger/naturalist programs, snowshoeing, downhill skiing and cross-country skiing are all located nearby.

Is the goal of the visitor experience to encourage the public to spend TIME in direct interaction with the resource or spend MONEY at the resource?

A resort is usually privately owned and challenges the manager to design activities that will enable the enterprise to stay in business. Resorts are not subsidized by the taxpayer but must generate their own revenue based on what the market will bear; if visitors don't come, the resort goes under. National parks are publicly funded by taxpayers and owned by the American people; regardless of the number of visitors, the parks will always be funded. Transforming our national parks into concessionaire resorts creates inherent conflicts of interest ranging from capacity issues to preservation to revenue generation. What do Bracebridge Dinners at \$400 (now expanded to 8 evenings rather than 1), Chef's Holidays, Vintner Holidays, etc. have to do with the central mission of a national park other than increasing revenue for the concessionaire. Why is Yosemite Valley promoted as a place to hold conferences other than to increase revenue for the concessionaire? And all the while the increased level of services, employees, and infrastructure required to support such resort-style activities takes its toll in wear and tear on Park resources frequently during the off-season when the Park needs time to regenerate from busy summer use. If a visitor is desirous of resort-style services and activities, there are facilities in the gateways outside the Park that can accommodate that lifestyle. And finally, how do these programs and activities fulfill the goals of experiencing Yosemite free from the "fragments of suburbia" and "being in relationship with Yosemite's resources," not to mention affordability for the average American? Interestingly, the 1980 GMP clearly states: "Space in the Valley will not be allocated for resort activities, since they are not directly related to the significant resources."

E. Commercial raft and bike rentals and their impact on the river environs need to be thoroughly analyzed.

There is no mention in the GMP of a full-blown concessionaire rafting operation. In fact, no such operation even existed in 1980; but in 1982 the Park's concessionaire (Yosemite Park and Curry Company) saw an opportunity to transform a casual visitor activity into a mass-produced, organized, paid attraction.

As detailed in Yosemite, The Embattled Wilderness by Alfred Runte (pages 213-216), use of the Merced multiplied three- or fourfold between 1982 and 1986 as a result of the explosive growth of commercial rafting. In a report dated March 1, 1986, the division identified twenty-four separate issues affecting Yosemite's air, water, vegetation, and wildlife. In Yosemite Valley, the issue posing special problems was rafting on the river. The current high use levels have resulted in extreme crowding, aesthetic impairment for those wishing to view the Valley from the riverbank or from the Valley rim, litter problems in the river and along the banks, increased trampling and volunteer trails through meadows and erosion on riverbanks, and increased pressure to remove trees in the river on which rafts become entangled and those on the riverbank that may fall into the river.' Accordingly, the division proposed limiting company rafts to 90 per day and not more than 20 per hour.' Without those limits, the report concluded, issuing a subtle reminder about the alleged purposes of Yosemite National Park, 'the visitor experience in central Yosemite Valley will

continue to shift away from quiet appreciation of the natural beauty of the flowing river, the meadows and riparian vegetation, and the scenic vistas toward a more amusement park atmosphere in which the recreational activity itself becomes the focus of attention.[emphasis added]. Confidential Report to the Superintendent, Division of Resources Management, Yosemite National Park, "Natural Resources Management Issue Statements," March 1, 1986, p. 9, Yosemite Park Office Records.

And though the GMP mentions providing a facility for bike rentals, did it envision the expanded operation that exists today? The proliferation of bikes, largely exacerbated by a robust rental program, has led to increased pedestrian/bicycle conflicts, a perceived need for more multi-use asphalt trails, vehicle/bicycle conflicts, off-trail resource damage, and more. When visitors bring their own bikes, not only are they familiar with their equipment but there is a greater chance they are more skilled at riding. All too frequently, bike renters haven't ridden a bike in years coupled with rental equipment they're not used to; this poses an additional safety risk when sharing a narrow bike path with pedestrians. We have repeatedly experienced being almost run over by bikes and the disruption of hearing "behind you" every two minutes and having to move off the trail.

The Park Service should be able to develop guidelines that accommodate visitors who bring their own bikes or their own rafts/tubes. It's the overblown commercial rental opportunities, pandering to impulse decision-making, that appear to have tipped the scales to the disadvantage of the resources and the visitor. Conversely, if rentals are not available, or very limited, visitors self-select their participation in a recreational activity based on whether or not they've chosen to go through the hassle of bringing/supervising their own equipment. The visitors themselves voluntarily reduce the impacts as opposed to the Park issuing more restrictions. Though rental opportunities may be profitable for the concessionaire, they expand the development footprint while enabling a shift away from quiet appreciation of the natural beauty "toward a more amusement park atmosphere in which the recreational activity itself becomes the focus of attention."

-- Limits Are Needed on Tour Busses: A similar concern relates to the greatly expanded number of commercial tour busses entering the Park. We recognize that some people wish to focus their visit to Yosemite on a scenic tour, and perhaps only stop to see one "natural wonder", and to purchase a few trinkets and / or eat, then roll on. As we said, this Plan should not begin by acknowledging what people want, but rather the question of the quality of visitor experience. The unregulated nature of commercial touring activity, and the disruption to scenery, air and sound quality from the mammoth busses within the Park is significant. NPS should establish the nature of the visitor experience this plan will protect, and set limits on the numbers of tour busses allowed in the Park, acknowledging their negative impacts.

F. Family auto-camping in Yosemite Valley is a nature-focused activity that is often the seminal experience that instills a life-long resource preservation ethic in young and old alike. A close corollary to this is walk-in camping, which offers a bit more independence from the car for some. It is from the idyllic and traditional front-country experience of camping that future climbers, backpackers, hikers, and conservationists are born.

There has been a significant public outcry over the 40% reduction in family camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley following the 1997 flood. The Rivers Campgrounds and a portion of Lower Pines Campground were closed by NPS administrative mandate (a loss of more than 300 sites) even though Congress appropriated \$17 million as part of a flood appropriation package to "restore damaged property to its pre-damaged condition" (U.S. House of Representatives Field Report, 3/97). Additionally, the Group campground was eliminated. In the meantime, it appears more campers are being squeezed into smaller and smaller sites at Upper and Lower Pines Campgrounds creating increased human-bear conflicts, law enforcement conflicts, and greater opportunities for environmental degradation. We have grown concerned that allowing such a negative situation to continue will ultimately become the justification to get rid of camping in the Valley altogether.

Particularly troubling is a recent quote concerning camping from NPS Director Jon Jarvis in an interview with the San Jose Mercury (10/06/09): "And he said he'd like to see Yosemite Valley campsites destroyed in a 1997 flood rebuilt out of the valley, on Tioga Road and other locations, rather than in the valley along the sensitive Merced River. "Unfortunately, the public's perception is that Yosemite is just the valley," he said. "There are plenty of opportunities to end up with a no-net loss of campgrounds." Respectfully, the process for deciding on the types and levels of appropriate use along the Merced WSR is still before us in this process. A pre-decisional comment from the top Park Service official has the potential to poison this entire planning process, and is inappropriate. The comment fails to consider the transfer of impacts to another area of the Park, the issue of higher elevation/colder temperatures not conducive to camping, and the corollary problem of putting additional pressure on day visitation by turning thousands of visitors into "day visitors" or commuters to Yosemite Valley from their out-of-Valley campsites, adding pressure on parking space, while adding to traffic an pollution in the Valley.

We think this Plan should, without pre-judging the issue, honestly explore the quantity, mix, and location for camping in preferred locations including Yosemite Valley. The out-of-Valley locations should not be central considerations to this plan, nor should they influence this plan from the background, until the main issue of use in the Merced corridor is dealt with.

The GMP acknowledged camping as a resource-focused activity. It proposed 756 campsites in Yosemite Valley. Of these, 684 would be "family friendly" auto campsites and 14 group campsites; this number already accounted for the removal of 116 sites from along the banks of the Merced River. Friends of Yosemite Valley feels that the NPS needs to initially understand differentiation within the public who camp. There are important demographic differences, and ability differences which need to be considered within a range of uses from car-camping to walk-in camping (we do not see nearly as much to comment on with respect to Wilderness areas in the Merced, with the exception of our comment on the Merced Lake HSC). The Plan should and continue to provide an ample number of sites for the disabled as well as families camping with infants and young children and with grandparents, for whom drive-in camping is the most common mode.

The quantity of camping and the quality of the experience should be considered alongside the question of the "footprint" of overnight

hotel-and-restaurant visitation in Yosemite Valley and Wawona. We think the plan should consider that there is a limited amount of space in these locations, and these types of overnight visitation actually compete for it, although inertia disguises this as a somehow "natural" allocation of a limited resource. The question of how much land will be devoted to these uses should be open and fully explored in this Plan without respect to the current distribution.

We have long favored camping to resort-style infrastructure. Campers are self-contained requiring few support services and minimal permanent infrastructure. Unlike year-round facilities, campgrounds are only used seasonally allowing some opportunity for the resources to regenerate. Scenic effects are different, but they benefit from the effect of impermanence. We think that the de-emphasis on and/or removal of hotel infrastructure through this should be explored when making decisions about camping.

As planners begin to discuss camping as an activity component for the new Plan, we encourage consultation with members of the camping community an advisory council of sorts could be a benefit. There is much to be learned from those who have been camping in Yosemite Valley for generations. The NPS should also tap into camping reservation databases to inform campers about the opportunity to comment on the new MRP.

As alternatives are developed in the new Merced River Plan, we hope that the Park will present choices as to the quantity and mix of camping which the land can sustain. We trust the following will be specifically addressed: Campsites less tightly configured? Drive-in tent only campgrounds separate from RVs? Limits on length of RV campers considering the fragility of the resources (23' as the limit used at Mariposa Grove rather than allowing as large as 40' RV towing an extra vehicle= 65' trying to maneuver in a campground)? Separate dog campers from non-dog campers as was done in the 50s and 60s? Expanded camping opportunities (Rivers, Lower Pines, North Pines)? More (smaller) campgrounds with fewer sites located in various "pockets" around the Valley? Possibly rotating campgrounds annually or adjusting the length of the season giving the land an opportunity to recover? Replace Ahwahnee cottages with camping opportunities? Reduce and/or remove Yosemite Lodge development and replace with camping opportunities? The Plan should eliminate the current management practice of allowing Park Partners and volunteers to camp in the public campgrounds, thereby reducing the number of sites available to the public.

G. The new Merced River Plan should contain and consider as part of the planning process an in-depth analysis of the recreational patterns of low income and non-Anglo populations.

Any discussion of user capacity, which as defined includes the quantity of recreation an area can sustain without adverse impacts on the quality of the recreation experience, MUST include an in-depth examination of the recreational patterns of low income and non-Anglo and minority populations. Past plans have stated that "It is generally believed that low-income and minority visitors to the park are underrepresented in the total visitor population. However, the overnight accommodation and recreation patterns of low income and minority park visitors have not been studied in detail. As a result, the impacts on low-income and minority overnight and day visitors cannot be analyzed quantitatively. It may be assumed that visitation patterns of low-income visitors tend toward the more inexpensive methods: day visits, camping, housekeeping, tent cabin rentals?" How can planners begin to make decisions as to how (and how many) visitors will be able to visit and/or overnight in Yosemite Valley without this important information especially at a time when the Park Service is trying to encourage greater participation from previously underserved populations. And if managers are not even knowledgeable about the recreation patterns of these populations, how can they be expected to adequately evaluate whether user capacity determinations are having an adverse impact on the quality of their experience?

Previous plans document that "the largest percentage of visitors to Yosemite National Park (26%) have an annual household income greater than \$100,000. The smallest proportion of visitors (5%) have an annual household income of less than \$20,000. By contrast, in the State of California the largest percent of the population (37%) has an annual income below \$20,000. The data illustrate that people from low-income households are largely underrepresented in the population of visitors to Yosemite? This is true on both a statewide and regional basis."

As a publicly funded entity, the national parks must serve ALL Americans. It appears that many of the plans and policies now advocated in Yosemite are resulting in economic discrimination especially for the day visitor. One can't help but recall another Delaware North quote: "I think we would be looking at full-service kinds of parks. I don't think we would be so interested in day-tripper kind of parks." ("A Sharper Focus;" Buffalo News, 10/3/99) Previous plans, including the 1980 GMP, advocate mass transit tourism. By controlling the manner in which day visitors access the Park (mass transit), separating these visitors from their rolling storage lockers (i.e., their personal vehicle), will the concessionaire be offered a way to make "day trippers" more profitable? (Studies have acknowledged that bus passengers spend more money.)

Quantitative studies with respect to recreational patterns of low-income and non-Anglo populations are critical to future land-use decisions and user capacity determinations and must inform all alternatives presented in the new Merced River Plan.

#### V. Define User Capacity to Assure No Adverse Impact on Public Health and Safety

A. The new Merced River Plan must include updated information and maps concerning rockfalls, debris flows, and other geologic hazards as integral to siting of facilities.

The very definition of user capacity requires that decisions about the quantity of recreation use be considered in terms of avoiding adverse impacts on public health and safety. Such a discussion must include a comprehensive reevaluation of rockfalls, talus zones, and shadow zones as they relate to the River Corridor. It is irresponsible to dismiss rockfalls as a common occurrence in the Park



when geologists are fully aware of areas where the dangers are greatest.

In reference to the Curry Village area, a 2007 USGS Report states that the "rockfall hazard was underestimated when the USGS developed a map of rockfall potential in Yosemite Valley to support the NPS Yosemite Valley Plan." It goes on to state that the potential for debris flows to damage facilities in the Curry Village dormitory area appears to be fairly high; "however, dormitory planning, contracting, and construction schedules could not accommodate the slowly accumulating evidence from models, field work, and landslide events of potential hazards." The report concludes that "unpredictable landslides might occur in many regions, especially within Curry Village in Yosemite Valley." "Examination of recent landslides and subsurface trenches in the western section of Curry Village has indicated that in some places landslide deposits extend further than the current talus slopes above Curry Village, thus facilities are more vulnerable to landslide hazards than originally assumed." (USGS Open-File Report 2007-1378: Staircase Falls Rockfall on December 26, 2003 and Geologic Hazards at Curry Village, Yosemite National Park, California)

The above-referenced report goes on to state: "Subsurface trenching in the proposed dormitory area indicated that unrecorded debris flows and flyrock from rockfall reached the dorm area and noted that a stream channel mapped in 1934 had been filled by a debris flow. Other evidence of rockfall into the shadow zone appeared when excavations for dorm building foundations encountered a 15-foot long boulder two feet under the surface and again when tons of flyrock and rockfall boulders were removed for building foundations. On Oct. 25, 2005, a rockfall from the cliffs above sent flyrock well into the new dorm during construction with only one minor injury." We are aware that this rockfall damaged one building under construction at the time, which is now inhabited. It is troubling to imagine that Park managers may have placed dormitory planning, contracting, and construction schedules ahead of the safety of human life even with significant problems occurring during the construction phase. This employee facility is an ongoing threat to its inhabitant, as we said from before the time of its completion. The Park should at minimum make public this information so that the employees can make informed decisions about their housing options. We think NPS should consider other options including removal of overnight facilities located in the rockfall zone.

Previous planning documents (even before the October '08 rockfall) have stated, "redevelopment of facilities within the common area of Curry Village (which includes Curry Pavilion, the historic visitor registration, retail facilities, and employee facilities such as housekeeping, maintenance, and employee lounge facilities) would be within the rockfall zone. All of these facilities are considered standard occupancy [nonessential structures], except the Curry Pavilion? The retention of Curry Pavilion in the rockfall zone would result in a local, long-term, moderate, adverse impact to public health and safety." Meanwhile the Park recently invested considerable funds to rehabilitate the historic visitor registration facility within the rockfall zone. And though YI students narrowly escaped injury from the October 2008 rockfall, their temporary relocation still requires use of the Curry Pavilion within the rockfall zone. A 2000 Geotechnical Engineering Report in support of a seismic study for the Ahwahnee Hotel states "recent studies in the area suggest that the hazard of rock slope and related phenomena at the site might be sizeable." It goes on to recommend that the "hazard of rock fall be assessed on a more site specific basis?" And currently, the Miwok Indian Cultural Center is under construction in another area of the Valley that is also sensitive to rock fall.

In a narrow valley where nearly all land is classified as a highly valued resource, it would seem that any structure determined to be "nonessential" should be removed altogether. Furthermore, there should be no guarantee that accommodations lost in the 2008 rock fall event will be replaced. Planners should err on the side of caution in this plan; facilities should be removed from hazard locations. Though such decisions will impact the concessionaire's ability to make a profit, decisions about the number and future siting of facilities must not be driven by revenue production.

Detailed, updated rockfall studies and maps must be included and analyzed in the new Merced River Plan. This information is integral to development of user capacity requirements (which explicitly state no adverse impact on public health and safety) in advance of any site specific planning. It remains very difficult to understand why there is more attention paid to flooding hazards where there is greater opportunity for advanced notice than to a rockfall event which provides no notice at all.

With respect to flooding, the Park should review and disclose its emergency plans for winter extreme floods such as the one in 1997. What warning system will be used in Yosemite for this? What evacuation procedures? We think that excellent emergency planning for these events should positively influence land-use decisions. We believe that the possibility of advanced warning of floods in Yosemite is one argument against the trend to inconsiderate removal of campsites.

With respect to transportation evaluation, the NPS should look at the implications of accident and evacuation for multiple injury scenarios involving busses.

B. There needs to be a correlation between numerical capacity in a box canyon and the ability to safely evacuate should a major emergency occur.

East Yosemite Valley is a box canyon. Past plans have directed visitors to the easternmost end of the canyon. The number of visitors that can be safely accommodated must be considered in terms of how they can be evacuated in an extreme emergency. How do those visitors arrive by bus? By private vehicle? Private vehicles are easier to evacuate from the Valley and pose less interference to incoming emergency vehicles than buses. Also, buses would have to wait for all of their passengers to board before leaving a threatened area, putting larger groups of people at risk in an evacuation situation. If the vast majority arrives by bus, how many buses are needed to evacuate and where will those buses come from and what kind of lead time would be required? What exit routes will be available? There should be a direct ratio between the number of visitors that can be accommodated vs. the ability of the NPS to successfully carry out evacuation plans.

The new Merced River Plan should include a risk management component which includes evacuation strategies that relate to a

numerical user capacity determination.

C. Access to and from Half Dome within the Merced River corridor must be included in the Wilderness System for determining user capacity.

NOTE: Although we wrote the following comment before NPS announced brand new management steps to limit peak numbers of Half Dome travelers, we feel the comment is still relevant. We approve and welcome the recent change, but we request that the NPS immediately remove the ill-conceived day-use permit fee, which sets a terrible precedent for park day use activities

The existing Wilderness Permit System does not include day visitors. But the number of day visitors desiring to access the Half Dome cables is adversely impacting public safety from the start of the trailhead, along the granite staircase, right on up to the top of the Dome. Recent deaths have magnified the situation resulting in numerous articles and photographs documenting the wall-to-wall crowds at this "attraction." The very presence of cables (i.e., handrails) implies that this adventure must be safe. The Half Dome "hikers" have somewhat unwittingly accessed a 5th class cliff, although they are not connected to the cliff, and an eventual fall will not be arrested. The danger of a misstep or a fall appears to increase with crowding. People get impatient, walk outside the cables, and the situation deteriorates it seems.

It is objectionable that climbing the Half Dome cables is promoted by the concessionaire as almost a "rite of passage" with t-shirts/sweatshirts proclaiming the visitor "made it to the top;" entire church groups reserving weekends to make the annual trek, widespread publicity, and more. The new Merced River Plan needs to ensure there are no adverse impacts to the quality of the visitor experience, and to public safety with respect to the number of day visitors coupled with overnight visitors desiring to climb Half Dome. An interim limitation is probably in order. And in the short term, even before the Plan decides matters of visitor experience, safety, and capacity, has the Park considered offering the Half Dome-hiking public use of the simple harness-plus-two-daisy-chains-with-carabiners used by climbers in the Alps (Via Ferrata)? If NPS foresees liability issues with directly providing the gear, why not consider making its use mandatory to the hikers, while providing information on where to purchase it? Or, why not give preferred access to those willing to get the gear and use it?

We are not eager to impose new restrictions, and we believe that restrictions on personally initiated resource-focused activities should be valued and protected in this plan. But we have been horrified by the deaths on the Half Dome cables in recent years, and feel something must be done immediately.

#### VI. The New Plan Should Address the Park-Wide Transportation Component

Previous plans, guided by the 1980 GMP, support implementation of the NPS vision of converting the Valley from auto-touring to mass transit tourism, even though environmental rules and regulations as well as technology have drastically improved since 1978. We do not believe a wholesale technology and visitor-use-pattern shift from cars to mass transit will achieve the environmental benefits for Yosemite which boosters have claimed, especially absent zero emission technology coupled with small vehicle size. We believe the negative environmental effects of using mass transit will be great, and the down-side to visitors would outweigh potential benefit. Conversely, we are inclined by our experiences to recommend that the Transportation component of this plan be focused primarily on the management and continued use of private automobiles with limits.

The foundational element of transportation system design is user capacity. In a recent (11/15/02) report, "National Park Service: Opportunities to Improve the Administration of the Alternative Transportation Program," a U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation substantiated that each NPS busing proposal is supposed to address non-construction alternatives (i.e., simple remedies such as traffic management that would not involve road widening/realignment, bus depots, etc.). Additionally, each proposal must mandate park capacity data (i.e., user capacity) to guarantee that a bus won't bring in more people than what the user capacity will allow.

Returning to the basic definition of user capacity as the quantity of recreation which an area can sustain without adverse impact on 1) the outstandingly remarkable values and the free-flowing character of the river area, 2) the quality of the recreation experience, and 3) public health and safety the concept of mass transit based tourism adversely impacts all three.

1) With respect to the outstandingly remarkable values and the free-flowing character of the river area we are greatly concerned with a legacy of study and reportage on record at Yosemite on the need to widen roads, create transfer stations, and otherwise re-engineer the asphalt of the Park. Already irreversible damage has occurred due to the widening and realignment of El Portal Road. In 1999 that project destroyed historic, cultural, hydrologic, and biologic ORV's. A primary purpose of the project as stated in the EA was to meet the "long-term need for buses to use the road as part of a regional transportation system" (i.e., YARTS). And should there be a decision to carry forward the conversion to mass transit, Park resources will be at even greater risk as the development infrastructure needed to accommodate buses continues to expand. Such a decision would trigger unforeseeable realignment impacts along the 41 corridor, and huge impacts from construction in Yosemite Valley, impacts at entrance stations, and impacts that would also reach into the gateway communities. Prior plans for mass transit assumed visitation growth without end. Recognizing that buses are capable of transporting more people per hour than private vehicles, the radiating impacts of busload after busload of visitors loading/unloading will result in toxic hot spots caused by trampling, noise, diminished air quality, and on-going environmental degradation within the park. Transit would create a system wired for and having the values of growing visitation; both public and private funded transit relies on increasing fare recovery for viability. The Park has already stated that the justification for allowing the obtrusive oversized bus stop structure adjacent to Yosemite Falls clearly not in keeping with the 'scenic' ORV as noted, id. 'was to accommodate increased bus traffic to the Falls. As stated in a 1994 Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study: "potentially higher levels of particulate and nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions would be generated by high volumes of bus travel on park roads;" "increased noise

levels on park roads and in the Valley would be associated with high volumes of bus travel."

If it adopted a move to mass transit, the NPS would begin to face difficult decisions about visitor choice and impacts on local Park environments. Decisions would arise about the park-wide network of formal and semi-formal pullouts which allow auto-tourists to stop to see a view, access a trail, or commune with (or respond to the call of) nature. Would these be abandoned (negatively affecting visitors' choice)? Would they be accessed by busses (negatively affecting the locations)? How would snowplows and busses pass each other if such a super-sized system were in use on snow days? What would happen to drivers and busses in a scenario where the system is seasonally discontinued or minimized? Would such a system create a new layer of "essential" and necessary-to-house employees? There are so many negatives, yet an under-analyzed vision of containing, controlling, and ultimately commercializing movement of visitors through adoption of mass transit lives on. A negative effect of this is that simpler, better ideas without the technocratic appeal of mass transit do not receive proper attention.

Planners might be interested in reviewing a 2009 report, "Environmental assessment of passenger transportation should include infrastructure and supply chains," (based upon work supported by UC Berkeley Center for Future Urban Transport, and the University of California Transportation Center). The report acknowledges that "Governmental policy has historically relied on energy and emission analysis of automobiles, buses, trains, and aircraft at their tailpipe, ignoring vehicle production and maintenance, infrastructure provision and fuel production requirements to support these modes" with the automobile receiving the greatest attention while buses, rail, and air have received little focus. Researchers found that total life-cycle energy inputs and greenhouse gas emissions contributed an additional 63% for onroad, 155% for rail, and 31% for air systems over vehicle tailpipe operation. Inventorying criteria air pollutants showed that vehicle non-operational components often dominated total emissions. Life-cycle criteria air pollutant emissions were between 1.1 and 800 times larger than vehicle operation. Ranges in passenger occupancy could easily change the relative performance of modes. The report can be found on-line at: [http://www.iop.org/EJ/article/1748-9326/4/2/024008/er19\\_2\\_024008.html](http://www.iop.org/EJ/article/1748-9326/4/2/024008/er19_2_024008.html) Utilizing simple and effective traffic management strategies coupled with a consistently applied, scientifically and objectively determined user capacity to inform planning decisions the entire issue of mass transit tourism needs to be reexamined from a life-cycle as well as a Yosemite-specific environmental perspective based on facts.

2) The adverse impacts of mass transit tourism on the quality of the visitor experience are well documented. "Because of the serious drawbacks of remote staging for valley access," the 1994 Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study discarded the concept as a viable option because "the cost, visitor confusion, visitor delay, information challenges, and management difficulties associated with operating remote valley staging areas would be substantial. In return, the benefits would be minor, consisting of moderate decreases in vehicle traffic along sections of park road that are not congested. Perhaps the greatest drawback of remote staging would be the loss of visitors' personal freedom to experience portions of Yosemite at their own pace and in their own way." As far back as the 1988 "Feasibility Study Relating to Increased Bus Traffic in Yosemite," then-Superintendent John Morehead warned Congress that "increasing the number of buses in the park would increase the number of bus passengers who represent an older, slightly wealthier, and a non-family unit, and would cause a resulting decrease in the number of traditional families, especially those with children, who rely upon an automobile to travel." Additionally, previous plans documented at great length the adverse impact which busing would have on the quality of the recreation experience for day visitors. The entire issue of mass transit/assembly line tourism needs to be reexamined.

3) And finally, as discussed above there are public safety concerns with respect to mass transit tourism from both an evacuation perspective as well as a single accident perspective. A bus going over an embankment can require life-or-death medical attention for 40 or more people all at one time. What, if any, medical facilities are available in the gateway communities or the Park to handle large numbers of people? Are there airlift capabilities beyond 1 or 2 helicopters? How many ambulances are available? Will emergency vehicles even be able to access an accident competing for space on narrow, winding, 2-lane mountain roads? Transportation workshops need to include emergency personnel (e.g., Sheriff, CHP, medical, fire, Caltrans, US Forest Service personnel, etc.) from throughout the region (e.g., local communities, Fresno, Merced, Modesto, etc.) who would be called on for assistance in a multi-casualty or catastrophic incident. Their expertise would be invaluable to the development of a park-wide transportation plan.

Additional thoughts to be considered in discussions about transportation:

? Unlimited day visitation is frequently cited as the core of the capacity issue. It would seem that before the NPS can design a plan to manage day visitors, it would be important to know more about who the day visitor is. Guests staying inside the gates at either a campground or lodging, but outside the Valley, who want to visit the Valley for the day? Residents (with guests) living inside the gates (e.g., Yosemite West, Wawona, Foresta) visiting the Valley for the day? A gateway local? A gateway hotel guest? An in-Valley overnighter who checks out of a campground or lodging facility in the morning but doesn't leave the Valley until later in the day? A prospective in-Valley overnighter who comes into the Valley early in the day and checks into a facility later in the afternoon? A tour bus making a brief stop in the Valley on the way to somewhere else? An employee or Park Partner (or family members/guests) living outside the Valley but who goes into the Valley for work or to access services? YI students and staff? Visitors from San Joaquin Valley communities wanting to visit or picnic in the Park for the day? Attendees at day-long meetings (e.g., Gateway Partners, Planner for a Day workshops, Open Houses, etc.)? Vendors? ? The park is not unlimited. This Plan should reduce resort-style services and programs which have no relationship to the reasons for which the Park was established (e.g., Chefs Holidays, Vintner Holidays, conferences, multiple Bracebridge Dinners, expanded shopping opportunities, etc.). Fewer programs can result in fewer visitor impacts as visitors who desire those events may seek them out elsewhere. ? The NPS has never attempted to manage visitor use other than by eliminating parking and/or closing roads or gates. There needs to be a broad-based discussion thinking "outside the box" rather than just playing "musical chairs" with parking spaces. Reduced opportunities for dispersal results in more and more people confined to an ever-smaller area heightening the perception of crowding. ? There needs to be an enforced length limit on RVs in high visitation areas such as Yosemite Valley. 40' RVs towing an additional vehicle can total 65' and will take away 3 or 4 parking spaces from other visitors. Perhaps the 23' limit that is used at Mariposa Grove would be a place to start using the premise that vehicles must be able to fit into one parking space. ? Ideas about Valley Road closures so far have been ill considered. Environmental benefits are not provable, and at first glance appeared to outweigh benefits claimed in prior plans. The Plan should maintain the two-

lane, one-way circulation system as it exists today rather than converting roads to two-way. Keeping both Northside Drive and Southside Drive open is critical from an emergency standpoint. Converting Southside Drive to a 2-way, as discussed in previous plans, would entail widening and realigning; additionally, Southside Drive is in the shade most of the winter resulting in greater opportunity for icing/forcing all traffic to that side of the Valley would only increase the risk of accidents. Well-managed private vehicle access to Yosemite Valley and throughout the Park is environmentally, economically, and sociologically superior to previously proposed bussing schemes and barring evidence to the contrary, should be retained as the primary mode of travel. The environmental harm and benefits to whatever transportation model is considered by NPS must be carefully evaluated so that NPS does not assume a burden where impacts far exceed the park's capacity. To date, the evidence shows that sedan-style vehicles associated with auto touring have far less impact on Yosemite's resources than oversized RVs and busses. To the extent that a rigorous study reveals that park shuttles can expand choice and alleviate some problems in the park, it is key to remember that small busses are to be preferred over large ones, and using the most efficient energy source, to avoid exposure to toxic chemicals in particular. The Plan should explore strategies resulting in better coordination of tour buses including a reduction in numbers. The Plan should evaluate the need for, size of and proper placement of parking in Yosemite Valley. NPS should evaluate the relative impacts of using small, dispersed, unobtrusive parking areas served by a fast, fun, and friendly in-Valley shuttle system in contrast to the Camp 6 parking lot model. The Plan should consider increased electric shuttle service throughout Yosemite Valley. NPS could implement an aggressive "Ride the Valley Shuttle" campaign. Because of the disproportionate environmental allowance already made for visitors using full service hotel visitation, NPS should restrict overnight visitors to an assigned parking location once in the Park until departure. Requiring YCS/NPS employees to "bus" to work is recommended. Requiring NPS employees to "bus" to work or at minimum carpool is recommended. Informing day visitors to leave their vehicles parked until such time as they are ready to leave the Valley is recommended. The plan should explore strategies for using traffic management personnel more effectively, more broadly, and more visibly. Road widening, realignment, relocation, or increasing the number of lanes should not be an option. If this were an approved planning principle, we think that much of what we have said specifically about busses and RVs in Yosemite would retain focus and pertinence. Yosemite Lodge logistics need attention. The area is currently overwhelmed with buses and the parking lot is not large enough to serve both hotel overnights and day visitors wishing to access an overabundance of Lodge services (e.g., food, bike rentals, gift shops, swimming pool, etc.). Lodge patrons who have to pay \$200/night for a room find they can't even get a parking space until evening when the lots empty out. A similar situation exists at the Ahwahnee. To the extent these overnight accommodations would remain, the plan would need to coordinate overnight guests with parking, to eliminate the current problems. NPS should explore creation of a traffic management working group as part of your 15-workshop Transportation Forum. This working group would include shuttle bus drivers, patrol rangers, gate fee personnel, road maintenance, and other employees who have experience working directly with visitors "on the ground;" such individuals often have a wealth of ideas to improve traffic management/ circulation (e.g., signage, parking locations/management, traffic circulation patterns, etc.). A mandatory employee transportation program must be explored that is the financial and administrative responsibility of the Park or Concessionaire or Park Partner as employers. In designing such a program there needs to be an examination of ways to reduce split shifts, avoid staggered start times, and otherwise consolidate work schedules, etc. Employees commuting to Yosemite Valley using their private vehicle for convenience currently occupy parking spaces that are designated for visitors. Visitor parking must have priority over employee parking. Lodging guests in the Valley typically receive a tag to hang on the mirror of their vehicle guaranteeing them a parking space. They should be advised that this parking space is theirs for the length of their stay and that they will not be allowed to park their vehicle elsewhere in the Valley for the sake of convenience; that in-Valley shuttles are available for their use. That way an overnigher won't take away limited parking available to day visitors. The same kind of tag system should be used for campers. Coordinate NPS media releases during periods of peak visitation. If Memorial weekend is the most crowded weekend of the entire year, why promote it further with widespread press encouraging people to come see the waterfalls at that time? If people want to see the falls, they will come on their own. Additional hype just makes a busy situation that much more difficult to manage. Most of Yosemite is uncrowded most of the time. Any transportation solution must deal with the Yosemite as it is, crowded only in specific areas, for a very small percent of the hours, on a small percent of the days and generally between May and September. If the mythical problem of year-round gridlock is targeted for solution a great deal of money will be wasted, the experience of visiting Yosemite will be ruined, and environmental impacts will be increased dramatically. Previous studies have revealed that as many as one-third of day visitors enter the Park through one gate and exit through a different gate. Any transportation plan needs to consider this travel pattern so as not to add more vehicles to the road should visitors have to backtrack. A primary reason visitors go straight to the Valley is because that's where all the roads lead; that's where the "official" Visitor Center is located; and that's the first place where visitors can actually park and ask a question without feeling rushed. In effect, the NPS is sending everyone down to the Valley exacerbating the traffic management situation. While we reject construction of new grandiose fantasy arrival stations, replete with the IMAX theatres mentioned in prior plans, NPS should consider a greater welcome component at each of the gates. The goal should be to offer visitors a sense of arrival to the Park, and enough information to be on their trip in Yosemite on their own terms from that point. This could also be helpful in better dispersing visitors. Visitors could clarify/confirm their lodging reservations and locations (e.g., Yosemite Lodge vs. Yosemite View Lodge; businesses often put "Yosemite" at the front end of their name to gain attention leading international visitors to think anything that says "Yosemite" must be in the Park); receive assistance planning their itinerary, perhaps taking advantage of attractions on their way down to the Valley instead of finding out what they missed after the fact. (Interesting how many times visitors were unable to get answers at the South Entrance due to the line backing up and drove all the way down to the Valley because that's what they thought they were supposed to do, only to learn that they would have to drive all the way back up to see Mariposa Grove, or the Pioneer History Museum, or Glacier Point; though there are signs along the way that direct people to these attractions, visitors often don't understand their significance when first arriving in the Park. Information distributed at the gate usually isn't studied until the vehicle is parked and passengers are settled.) Explore making one of the lanes at the gates for passes only; perhaps at certain locations visitors could enter a very small Welcome Center to purchase a pass inside which would give them quicker throughput rather than having to go back out and wait in a traffic line. We suggest planners consult with gate employees for other ideas to speed up throughput as well as to gather input on the kinds of assistance most frequently requested. What's happening at the gates directly impacts what happens in the Valley, but also Wawona, and Tuolumne.

## VII. Related Communities and Other Activities Must Be Evaluated in the New CMP.

### A. User capacity Decisions must Consider Surrounding Gateway Communities.

Decisions made by the Park concerning user capacity also affect the surrounding gateway communities. Once user capacity in the Valley has been determined, the new Merced River Plan must also include an analysis as to how those numbers differ from historical

visitor use as well as the socioeconomic impact on the surrounding region. Whether it's 10 million visitors or 3 million visitors all must travel through one of the four corridors into the park, and many will use the services and infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, roads) within the gateway communities. The Park has a responsibility to evaluate prospective policy changes in light of how those changes might actually advance sprawl and environmental degradation outside its boundaries. Bus access to the Park will force counties to consider infrastructure changes from the standpoint of road safety and maintenance, economic survival, fire and emergency measures as well as other perspectives. The transit system to Grand Canyon' South Rim some years back is an example where the Interior Department worked at cross-purposes with the Gateways, a cautionary tale (even though some people thought this was a "success!"). Local communities and governments need to be intimately involved in the decision-making process as adjacent Federal land use policy is developed.

Likewise, the U.S. Forest Service needs to be intimately involved in the decision-making process as an adjacent Federal land unit. Any reduction in capacity or facilities within Yosemite National Park has the potential to increase overflow activity in the Sierra National Forest, the Stanislaus National Forest, and the Inyo National Forest.

B. Consideration Must be Given to Wawona. There has been significant focus on the Merced River as it flows through Yosemite Valley. An equal amount of energy must be focused on the South Fork of the Merced River as it flows through Wawona. We have mentioned that the overall hydrology of this area, and the related biological facts at Wawona Meadow suggest a broader situation of the key values there. Also of concern is the large maintenance yard alongside the River, as well as any future plans for expansion of Park Operations within the South Fork river corridor. Will NPS decisions be directly responsible for advancing commercial sprawl and environmental degradation within the historical community of Wawona? There has also been rapid expansion of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI) and the number of individuals it serves, adding to capacity issues in Wawona. We are concerned that this could lead to an implicit acceptance of a campus/research center, based on the faculty acquiring more grants, generating publicity, etc. and using public land (Yosemite) as its drawing card, for K-12 programs, retreats, etc.. These are similar uses as those promoted by YL .

C. Consideration Must be Given to El Portal. Likewise, significant energy must focus on El Portal. As previous plans have stated: "The El Portal archeological district contains 17 known sites. Prehistoric human burials in both isolated locations and in cemeteries, along with burial objects, have been identified. Recent archeological research (Hull et al. 1999) indicates resources in El Portal may represent some of the earliest human occupation and use of the Merced River corridor, dating possibly as early as 9,500 years ago. El Portal also may contain the best-preserved archeological resources from the protohistoric and early historic periods associated with American Indian cultural change. Although modern development has significantly changed the landscape and has destroyed archeological deposits in many places, much could be learned from these resources." An interpretation of NHPA by Chief of Resources Niki Nicholas that "NHPA allows digging up as long as there is mitigation. Some of the areas most suitable for development from a construction standpoint are those that include ORV's" is of concern. Cultural resources are not renewable.

The entire Merced Canyon is full of natural and cultural resources that are unique, especially in comparison to the rest of the now over-developed western slope of the Sierra. This new planning effort is a great opportunity for the NPS to foster a holistic view of the Merced River west of the park boundary and beyond, to begin to coordinate better with the community of El Portal, its homeowners, as well as all the various entities and agencies involved with the Merced River (Caltrans, the Mariposa County Unified School District, the BLM, Mariposa County, and the State of California). This better collaboration would ensure that the Wild and Scenic Merced River is protected adequately throughout the Merced Canyon and not just within the boundaries of YNP. The wetlands and archeological sites within El Portal are highly valued by residents and local Native Americans and should be discussed with the El Portal community so residents have the information they need to participate productively in this planning process. Such collaboration between the NPS, community members and other agencies would result in better communication for the entire Yosemite community and more consistent use of river protective practices by homeowners and all of these agencies throughout the Merced Canyon.

The NPS needs to have an accurate count of the population of El Portal before any discussions of where to house employees. Previously, Mariposa County has been unable to provide an accurate year-round population number for El Portal—especially with the addition of all the apartments in El Portal and single family homes in Rancheria. It would seem this should be a major river capacity issue since all the sewage from Yosemite Valley flows through El Portal and gets mixed with the El Portal sewage then released back into the W&S Merced. It would be important to get an accurate count of how many toilets and showers are in El Portal now, including at the hotels.

A problem seems to arise over and over in looking at El Portal, situated as it is "in the shadow" of Yosemite Valley, and the Gorge. Its landscape is humbler to the eye. Biologically, culturally, and in terms of regional biological and cultural integrity, it should not be separated from what the NPS seeks to achieve in this Plan, but rather given careful study and protected in with the same definite steps and rigor used in the rest of the Merced corridor.

#### VIII. The New CMP Must Evaluate Reasonable Alternatives.

The new Merced River Plan must include a reasonable range of alternatives. For example: increase protections and enhancements of the Merced Wild and Scenic River's ORV's; require vehicles to fit the size of existing roadways rather than expanding roadways; restore certain lodging areas to natural conditions; retain and rehabilitate a larger proportion of the low-cost overnight units; remove a large proportion of the highest-cost overnight accommodations; retain well-managed private vehicle access system with limit on tour buses; increase in camping with respective decrease in lodging; reduce the overall levels of commercial activity in Yosemite including full-service hotel accommodations, restaurants, and retail; not add additional development to areas in the Park outside Yosemite Valley.

As the Plan discusses the "kinds and amounts of public use which the river area can sustain without impact to the values for which it

was designated," it should offer the public a range of choices within the alternatives. For example: perhaps an area could support 'x' amount of camping or 'x' amount of day use including picnicking, or 'x' amount of lodging, etc.; such choices would be supported by studies that "will be made during preparation of the management plan and periodically thereafter."

**IX. Restriction on the Role of Park Partners Must be Evaluated Within the Context of User Capacity. A. The Presence of Yosemite Institute Must Be Carefully Assessed.**

1. The Yosemite Institute Should not be granted a "permanent home" in Yosemite Valley. Though the 1980 GMP states that "special facilities will be provided for students," there is no mention about the scope or location of such facilities, nor that they will provide a "permanent home" for any specific program. This idea is stated in a series of recent communications by YI and NPS respectively, noted below. (We will also address this in a separate letter of concern). NPS has a responsibility as a matter of good faith and the terms of the Settlement to correct this.

First, it appears the NPS has begun to clear the way to allow Yosemite Institute to build a large campus/conference center at Henness Ridge. This is unfortunate, because that process was flawed in that it has no adequate plan from which to tier, and has not reopened a scoping period in light of planning changes for the Merced. Perhaps the temptation is to wrongly substitute a "geographic" sense of the Henness Ridge's isolation from the Merced corridor to expedite this. NPS should withhold decision on Henness Ridge because; 1) the development will permanently affect the user capacity of Yosemite Valley which students will continue to access. 2) the EA for Henness Ridge does not properly tier to a plan for Yosemite Valley and it leaves significant local environmental and safety issues unresolved; and 3) the public has had no opportunity to comment on in light of decisions for Yosemite Valley and other environments within the Merced WSR.

If Henness Ridge were built, the Institute would already have a "permanent home" within Yosemite National Park. This group most certainly would not need two "permanent homes." On a temporary "emergency" basis only, the Institute has been allowed to use the Boystown facilities at Curry Village. However, YI Directors recently sent out a letter to their member schools stating:

"We are happy to report that we have found a short-term solution which may become a permanent home to YI programs in Yosemite Valley." "There are several reasons why we think this is a terrific solution for YI programs: \* Boystown has a clearly delineated periphery which will make free time student management easier and more defined, \* the cabins are currently being insulated so they will be warm throughout the year \* the area and the dedicated bathhouse will only be utilized by YI students, \* the area is beyond a 300 foot buffer YI has added to the National Park Service rockfall closure zone in Curry Village, and \* the area still has access to the Curry Dining Pavilion for meals and the Curry ice rink in the winter.

The NPS has never addressed whether it is even appropriate to have a private entity, rather than a public entity, providing education and interpretation to children on our public lands at a monetary cost. Moreover, it is our understanding that YI may actually provide the most expensive ? and therefore exclusive environmental education in California. YI should not be placed in a more privileged category than the taxpaying public which funds the Park, and this Plan should consider whether there are other potential partners who could provide as much or more environmental education at equal or lower cost to students and the Park environment. Additionally, we are concerned that YI may still retain the facility at Crane Flat despite the changes noted. NPS should provide assurance going forward that the Crane Flat facility will not be carried forward, and assurances that YI will begin to operate with the kinds of limits NPS will now ask the public to support.

**B. Park Partners Need to be Subject to a Carefully Designed Policy to Avoid Undue Influence.** As the Park continues to recruit more "Park Partners" (e.g., Yosemite Fund, Yosemite Association, Yosemite Institute, Sierra Nevada Research Institute, concessionaires, NPCA, etc.) and volunteers (corporate groups and others), it is critical for managers to clearly delineate a consistent policy as to priorities which reflect identified Park values especially as these groups increasingly impact capacity, expand the development footprint, as well as intrude on visitor facilities. The power of some of these groups has been elevated to the point (i.e., money and influence) that their desired projects are slipped through under Categorical Exclusions, in effect bypassing the public review process. The needs of Partners and volunteers must be held in check so as not to compete with the needs of visitors. We are deeply concerned that the Park has come under ever-increasing influence by Park Partners, which affects the transparency of the Park's decisionmaking process. This concern is deepened with the merger of the Yosemite Fund and the Yosemite Association, creating a powerful union now under the direction of former Superintendent Tollefson.

**X. The Impacts of Climate Collapse and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Must Be Factored in to the Consideration of User Capacity and ORVs.**

The impacts of climate collapse must be evaluated and factored in as this new CMP is developed. How will the climate change and what are the likely affects on the Merced River and the ORVs? What may be the impact on identified development that the plan may embrace. What requirements and standards are necessary to ensure that ORVs will be protected into the future? The list goes on and on, as we learn more about the impacts of climate collapse, both in the near term and over the next 10 to 20 years.

The effects of use on greenhouse gas emissions must also be thoroughly evaluated. Whether dealing with concessionaire facilities, camping, or transportation, the potential for reducing and eliminating greenhouse gas emissions must be identified and embraced as much as possible. In the end, if we are to protect Yosemite and the Merced River, these essential environmental issues must be fully evaluated and addressed so as to provide protection. **CONCLUSION**

These scoping comments are just the beginning, but we look forward to contributing to NPS's process of defining ORVs, developing a full range of alternatives and other steps leading up to the Draft Merced Plan and EIS. And we look forward to the open exchange

of ideas that we (the public) will have with the user capacity experts and other scientists on their views of how best to fulfill the mandates of WSRA through this plan.

Please consider this excerpt from "Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness," by Alfred Runte:

"For Yosemite to remain distinctive, management must practice ? not just preach ? those forms of behavior ensuring that distinctiveness. Every landscape shared differences; few rose to such uniqueness. That uniqueness, in 1864, allowed Americans to herald Yosemite as a symbol of national pride. ? The gift of preservation is still essential to every future opportunity. Each succeeding generation, like Yosemite's first, must pass the park along "inalienable for all time." Yosemite is too important to be just another place. Civilization has many undeniable advantages, yet even the most inventive civilization has never built a Yosemite. Yosemite by every imaginable standard is one of a kind. In that perception, and no other, lie only the tried and true principles for guiding the future of the park's natural heritage." 1 We are reluctant to recommend providing for climbing gear rental, because of liability, and our belief that Yosemite will benefit from the reduction of concession influence.

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**Correspondence ID:** 315      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hack, Jay  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To Whom it May Concern, As an environmentally concerned citizen, active park user and longtime climber I would encourage you to preserve access to the historic and world-class rock climbing destinations in Yosemite Valley including but not limited to Middle Cathedral Rock, El Capitan and others located in the Merced River Corridor. These places are not just locations to practice our craft but for many of us they represent a special and even spiritual home that informs a lifetime of environmental consciousness and participation. Please keep rock climbers at the top of your list when considering the consequences of your actions with regards to this upcoming plan.

Thank you and I truly hope all parties will work together to insure the best mutual outcome.

Royal Oak, Michigan

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**Correspondence ID:** 316      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Haller, Doug  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Rock climbing is an integral part of the Park. In the past, climbers have been treated as outsiders and abusers of the resources. In fact, the majority take greater care of the resources than day visitors and other travelers in our national parks. Having worked for the NFS, I believe I know this to be true. Additionally, YNP is over crowded and heavily trafficked. Visitors, regardless of length of stay and use, should leave cars outside the park, buses should accommodate travel at all hours, and use ecologically friendly fuels

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**Correspondence ID:** 317      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mauro, Holly  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two

criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

\*\*\*\*\* And on a personal note:

We live in a world in which human population growth and increased consumption rates are rapidly eating away at our precious resources. Our National Parks do a good job preserving America's natural beauty and creating systems of low impact access for the public. And it is both of these functions- preservation and creation/maintenance of access- that are important for the future.

Yosemite is the mecca of rock climbing. Climbing is a cornerstone in the history of Yosemite National Park and continues to help shape the identity of the park. Just ask any tourist straining their neck in the meadow as if they were walking through the streets of Manhattan, the wide-eyed wanderers gazing up with a sense of childhood curiosity, the visitors flooding the museum special exhibit floors like never before. Climbers are some of the most low impact visitors to the park (and top volunteers for projects such as the annual clean up and the lichen research project), but they rely on access to a degree that most visitors do not. Cookie Cliff, the Rostrum, Middle Cathedral- some of the most popular climbing areas- are directly in the Merced River corridor. Access to El Cap, Half Dome, and other major climbing destinations is through the corridor. Getting between the showers at Curry, supplies in the Village, and Camp4 all requires crossing the river. Climbing also of course involves lots of equipment, which is not easily transported on foot or bike or buses crowded with tourists through the entire Valley. And climbing requires time- a 7 day stay limit is absurd, the check in process unnecessarily aggravating and slow, and a lack of showers or even hot water in Camp 4 adds to the need to travel within the valley to the other camps. Many climbers come from all over the world planning to stay one to two months to attempt the climbs of their dreams. My idea-- work with the San Jose investors who control Yosemite West to build an eco friendly climbers lodge/campground/natural food outlet/(yoga studio too!) in the commercial zoned area there and offer free direct climbers



bus access with stops at the Leaning Tower, Middle Cathedral, Curry/Half Dome, Village/Royal Arches area, Camp 4, and El Cap bridge. That should cut down a lot of the valley crowds and climbing traffic while providing a special new space for community.

Climbing is a passion. Driving through the park in a gas guzzling RV should be moderated. But passion, particularly one that thrives on nature, that's exactly what this world needs more of. It is crucial that this vital part of Yosemite is integrated into the Merced River Plan.

New Paltz, NY

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**Correspondence ID:** 318      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Beck, Holly G  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Yosemite Planning,

I am an El Portal resident. On the one hand, I have no reason to think that climbing is "threatened" by the new MRP, and I wonder if the Access Fund is going overboard. But, as I am not currently around to participate in the process, and as I care very much about climbing in Yosemite, I am participating in their letter campaign.

I climb at Arch Rock and the Cookie Cliff almost every week. These places are very important not only to today's climbers, but the history of climbing. I believe that climbers in these areas have a very low impact. The parking, road side, never fills up. I never see litter or other inappropriate behaviors at these cliffs. The climbers in these areas, in my opinion, are a responsible user group doing no harm to the area.

I also climb on El Capitan regularly. In fact, I hold numerous world records in climbing on El Cap, including that I have ascended more routes on El Capitan than any other woman in history. I heard a rumor that someone from the Sierra club wanted to ban all parking at El Cap meadow and said that visitors could watch climbing elsewhere. That is not true. El Cap meadow and the meadow experience is unique in all the world.

I worked as an "interpreter" for the YCA last year. I believe that the YCA ask a climber program, that I staffed about 33% of the time in July and August is one of the single most popular programs in the park. I had 20-50 visitors a day or more tell me that spending time with me, watching climbers, in the meadow was the best thing or favorite thing they did in Yosemite for their entire visit.

Finally, (before the additional wording from the Access Fund below), I would like to comment on the idea of "restoring" El Cap meadow. Yes, there are a few ad hoc social trails. But the meadow needs no restoration or protection, beyond the effective parking curbs that exist. Cars in the meadow - bad. People in the meadow - fine. I have spent hundreds and hundreds of days staring at El Cap meadow from the best place on Earth - the side of El Cap. The trails do not expand or get worse. They heal up very nicely in the shoulder seasons. They provide nice access without encouraging the masses to go too far back. I would greatly oppose a boardwalk or any other structures in the vicinity. Please, let El Cap be a place in the park where while IN WILDERNESS on the side of El Cap, I can look out and see no structure.

One more thing (I know I said finally). Please consider moving/eliminating the public woodlot in the Valley. My boyfriend lives in the Valley and I myself have harvested wood there with a permit. But, when I am climbing on El Cap and I hear chainsaws at 8 am on Sunday morning, it is a real downer. I am in the wilderness and chainsaws are not what I want to hear. Lets consider doing all our wood cutting in El Portal. Can we have a special place - El Capitan - where this noise does not have be tolerated day after day after day?

Below is the additional information I have received form the Access Fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River

planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

El Portal, CA

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	319	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Lapham, Ellen V.B.				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Fax				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Since 1975 I have been a frequent Park visitor, from skiing Tioga Pass in winter to climbing Half Dome in the fall to hiking Tuolumne Meadows in summer to photographing in the Valley year-round. I have been a multi-year volunteer at the Yosemite Faceliff as well. I plan to bring my two young grandkids and their parents to Yosemite and share the Park and its wonders with them later this year. We hope to enjoy some quiet tent camping. How do I interact with Yosemite National Park? Most often, ? Camping (tent only) in the Valley and Camp 4, or in the Meadows, typically for a week ? Hiking many many trails from the Valley to the high country ? Climbing hard and easy routes with friendS - from ready access day routes to those a long hike in What is important to me for amenities? ? Straightforward, accessible parking for multi-day adventures (staging areas outside the Valley with good public transport perhaps?) ? Clean campgrounds with clean air (exhaust fumes linger) ? Sounds of nature - not machinery, radios, idling vehicles ? A clean river for hiking with good trails ? Convenient pay showers ? Many "Midcountry" (e.g. 30 min -1 hour walk-in) campsites ? Free frequent shuttle buses from the Valley to Tioga Pass with many stops for hiking and climbing ? Good WIFI or G3 throughout the Park for access to weather and other data important to backcountry users and climbers What is important to me as a Park user and taxpayer? A place that: ? Excels in low-impact use ? Leads in best conservation practices ? Educates visitors to take care of the resource ? Many types of users can enjoy I am especially concerned about the Valley. It often has the feel of a highly				

urbanized place - traffic jams, pollution, noise, even vandalism. Finally, since the Merced River Plan may have significant impact, I urge you to think of this as an opportunity to 'let nature predominate'.

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**Correspondence ID:** 320      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Barrett, Ian P  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To Whom this may concern, I am writing in regards to the future plans associated with the wild and scenic designation of the Merced. I understand the necessity of comprehensive plan and hope it will meet everyone needs. My visits to Yosemite revolve around climbing El Capitan. When I come, I stay for one or two nights in camp 4 and then get on the wall. After the climb, I descend and hit the pizza deck. Sometimes I stay another night or two in camp 4 to take photographs and enjoy some of the more beautiful hikes around. I usually then feel so harassed by the tourists, law enforcement officers, and traffic that I leave. The valley despite its overwhelming beauty has a distinct commercial feel. I support the shuttles, but if you get down off the wall too late, you're in for a lengthy walk. Also, I have heard a shuttle does go to the Manure Pile picnic area but during the early spring and fall when I am there, it does not. My dream would be able to continue to simply drive to el cap meadow then park, climb, and leave. I know that I am a small portion of the people who use the park but I figured my input might be helpful. I would encourage any plan that took the commercialism out of the park, while preserving the rich climbing history/access. Grand Junction, CO

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**Correspondence ID:** 321      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Musolf, Tom  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Hello I would like to add my input into the Merced River Plan scoping effort now underway. My wife & I are avid hikers, campers and whitewater kayakers. We have spent many wonderful days in Yosemite valley, the park high country and on the Merced River. While most of our boating has been on the Merced River downstream of the park (Chevron, 140 bridge, Redbud, Indian Flat and Briceburg runs) we have also kayaked in the valley. I would like to see river access and non-motorized boating continue to be allowed on the Merced River and South Fork of the Merced within the park boundaries. Currently, boating is allowed in very restricted areas of the Merced river within the park boundaries. It would be nice if put-ins were allowed upstream of Stoneman bridge. I would also like to see the river opened up to boating downstream of Sentinel beach for those with the required skills. I would be open to a permit system for these other stretches of rivers such as that used for backpacking in the park and designated put-in/out points to minimize shoreline impact. As a side note I also believe that non-motorized boating should be allowed on all park rivers, creeks and reservoirs. For example, if a kayaker wants to pack in their kayak to do the upper Tuolumne or paddle on Hetch Hetchy. Thank you for accepting public input, Mountain View, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 322      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Hello, I think you should do something about the campfires. The air quality for the plant and animal life, not to mention employees and guests, is horrible. People don't know how to use them properly. They run smoky campfires from morning until night when they're allowed. And they use any and all natural plant life within their reach to start or supplement their fires. Please, just ban the campfires. Thank you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 323      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Colborn, James and Sara  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,08,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I would like to first state my uses of the park. I am a climber, I also utilize the camping in North, Upper, and Lower Pines. I generally stay in a small 19' trailer during my visits. I would like to see an increase in camp sites within the park that are rv accessible. I would also like to see an increase in walk in sites being available. The current state that all the camping is in within the park is sub standard to say the least. The cost of camping within the park does not reflect the condition that the sites are in.

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**Correspondence ID:** 324      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Felciano, Celeste  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax

**Correspondence:** As you make your decisions regarding the Merced River Plan, please consider my comments and concerns. I am extremely concerned about the commercialization of the entire park and back country. I have been a visitor for over 30 years and have hopes that it will be restored versus developed. I have hiked near many of the High Sierra Camps. It is my opinion that these camps do not belong in the back country. There is no need for a full service cabin/kitchen facility that has running water, showers, meals etc. The wear and tear that the pack stock do to the environment in "serving" these camps is extreme. The sewage and garbage are inappropriate for an outback setting. As for the use of pack stock, I am absolutely opposed.

However, I know there are others who feel they have a right to access by these means. If they are allowed, it needs to be limited and regulated. There should be no use in the river corridors, Only weed free feed utilized and the groups need to be much smaller than now allowed. It has been my experience that these pack stock groups cause lots of damage. I have observed them for years in the back country while backpacking.

The horse stables that are in the Yosemite Valley should be closed. (as the previous Yosemite Plan called for.) The degradation that I have witnessed and continue to see needs to be resolved. Thank you for considering my comment.

It is my hope that the park will be restored and cared for. This will be a huge challenge as it is being over used and abused.

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**Correspondence ID:** 325      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Johnson, Arleen & Ed  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** We haven't missed a Yosemite visit every year since 1962. We support the Yosemite Assoc. & keep informed as much as possible. We appreciate some of the changes we've seen. But, unfortunately it's no longer a National Park for the family. How can a family of 4 spend more than 1 night in the park? Since the floods, it's almost impossible to reserve a camp site. We tried the last 2 years & couldn't get 7 days together even when we began when the first dates in June were released. Now there's talk to let the Merced River run freely thru the park. This will take away much of the next most affordable housing in housekeeping camp. Yosemite may return to it's original beautiful state, but who will be able to enjoy it? Only the tourist buses who bring people in for 4 hrs so they can ride the shuttle loop?? What about the people? Isn't the idea for citizens to be able to experience their park at all hours? We believe the Merced should be routed with as natural look as possible. This was done in King's Canyon. Without routing, who would be able to experience that beautiful valley? We've been to many parks in other countries & with proper management; they've survived for many, many years & the people haven't been exiled. As far as the overcrowding is concerned; it's a big problem from June thru Aug only. Why not make "day visitors" make a reservation just as the overnights have to do? Why should hundreds of cars all arrive at one time to visit for a day? Eventually, there will have to be acres of parking lots outside the park to accommodate these last minute visitors. Please, please keep the average citizen in mind when making decisions to manage our park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 326      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Folks, James G  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent:

I have been backpacking in and around Yosemite National Park for over forty years, and I am well acquainted with the harmful effects of domestic livestock in Yosemite National Park. These commercial enterprises should in some places be abolished and in others, severely curtailed. Specifically: 1. Commercial horse stables should be completely removed from Yosemite Valley. To do otherwise would be to continue the systematic pollution of the valley. 2. All of the high sierra camps should be closed down. This entire enterprise is for people with lots of money who do not want to carry their own stuff. The pollution caused by these developments is staggering. They should be closed and the sites restored. Furthermore, the Park Service should recognize just how polluting these things are, and stop rationalizing their existence with references to their being "historic". 3. The use of domestic livestock should be severely curtailed and restricted in any plan for the Merced River. Once again, I know first hand what it is like to hike on the trails in and around Yosemite National Park, and to stay at lakes after the horses and mules have been there before me. I see areas completely and irrevocably destroyed by pack animals. And, of course, then there is the crap: Piles of it that pollute every trail. The number of pack animals allowed should be reduced by 90%, and all animals should be wearing manure catchers. I shouldn't

have to encounter any manure just because someone is too lazy to carry their own stuff.

Furthermore, the few pack animals that are allowed in the Park should be fed weed free feed to prevent the introduction of invasive weeds.

I appreciate the opportunity to make the above comments. I make them out a deep love for Yosemite, and a knowledge born of years of experience. Also, I am not making a penny.

Santa Barbara

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**Correspondence ID:** 327      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Maffei, Paolo  
**Outside Organization:** County of Tuolumne County Government  
**Received:** Feb,17,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** These comments are in addition to the Board comments which I supported. It has concerned me for some time that Tuolumne County is not benefitting financially, to the degree that it should, from its number one tourist asset. Tour busses spend about four and a half hours in the park, then leave, without contributing to the economy of Tuolumne County. It was decided by our Board not to participate in the YARTS program. I believe that was a mistake. Those counties that did are capturing more tourist dollars. Some years ago, in another scoping period, I submitted ideas, which I now repeat. I believe they could be beneficial in the long-term to both visitors and the local economy. One could say that the park receives two kinds of visitors: those to whom Yosemite is an item to be ticked off a life list of tourist attractions and those, perhaps fewer, seeking a deeper understanding and appreciation of this unique natural wonder. Hereunder is a plan, a vision, of a potential visitor experience. It could accommodate all visitors to maximize their enjoyment while minimizing their impact on the resource. Imagine a tour bus arriving in what was referred to as "the scar" in Big Oak Flat. It would now consist of a large but mostly hidden multi-story parking facility, surrounded by different price level hotels, restaurants and shopping opportunities. The whole complex is designed along New Urbanist principles, reminiscent of Groveland, but more compact. After an evening meal, a night in the hotel and breakfast, the visitor boards a Y ARTS bus. Making stops along the way at other tourist facilities, each clustered according to a long-term development plan rather than the result of strip development. After entering the Park, and somewhere near Foresta, the bus reaches a large building, similar in architecture to the Awahnee. This multi-use building is the upper station for the cable car gondolas to the valley floor. Like all its counterparts, it is a complete visitor complex, with shops, museum exhibits and restaurants, including one on the roof with a retractable glass cover. Everything is functional and inviting in both Summer and Winter. A silent gondola ride through the trees to the valley floor is an enjoyable experience, new and exciting to many visitors. The lower station building serves as the tum-around for both the Hwy 140 and the valley buses. (In my original letter, I had proposed that the valley bus should be a dual-fuel vehicle, long before this became a reality, as it makes frequent stops but climbs no significant hills). A second gondola, again with the terminal buildings serving as attractive visitor facilities and profit centers, would take passengers to Glacier Point. Looking across from the top of Yosemite Falls, one can see that gondolas could be hidden in the trees, concealed between parallel diagonal rock formations, in a trajectory from an area near the chapel to a small plateau near Glacier Point. From there an ADA compliant paved trail could lead to the point or a new ADA accessible look-out. It is here that the two kinds of visitors would likely separate. The day-hikers and backpackers would use the gondola to gain elevation. Their destination might be Half-dome or a downhill trek to Happy Isles. Not only is foot traffic in Yosemite dispersed, the visitor experience greatly improved, but the current shoulder-to-shoulder traffic on the Mist Trail is no longer a problem. By directing the less active tourists to designated areas throughout their visit, their impact and footprint is greatly reduced. However, they too can enjoy a view of the park that is now not usually possible and can even reach Glacier Point in the depth of Winter. Most public areas and facilities in the Park would be ADA accessible. This could be done by using ramps to speed loading and unloading. Gondolas accommodate wheel chairs by simply flipping up a seat. With respect to environmental impact, gondolas are silent, extremely energy efficient and clean, compared to buses grinding down into the valley or up to Glacier Point. Impacts are primarily in the installation phase. The final footprint is minimal. The impact on wildlife is also reduced - zero road kill. It does require a different mode of thinking. With respect to cost, I believe the Dodge Ridge chair improvements were in the \$7 - 8 million range. Yosemite's original plan referenced \$5.5 million just for a bus tum-around. The multi-use terminal buildings would pay for themselves by generating additional revenue through the concessionaires, who would benefit from a captive customer base. We could see a short-term reduction in the number of tour buses. However, if Yosemite is no longer a one-day visit, total revenue would soon be greater. From the perspective of our County, the difference would be enormous. Assuming an all-day and evening shuttle connected the new complex to the existing towns, one could expect a packed bar every night in the Groveland Hotel, as well as vibrant tourist activity throughout. Once bus tour planners see us as a multi-day destination, we could expect increased tourist revenue to flow into areas such as Sonora, Jamestown, Columbia State Park and Big Trees. I can even imagine a large Mother Lode theme theater - with shows based on (he) Mother Lode's unique History, written and produced by local talent, with audio in different languages. As long as tour buses can enter the park and return to the valley without contributing to our local economy, we lose all this revenue. I am not proposing a Disneyland Yosemite. Quite the contrary, visitors will get what Yosemite offers, but channeled into an enclosed system with maximum year round enjoyment, and minimum environmental impact. Please consider this proposal as something that could become a reality. Give it due consideration as a longer-term solution to accommodate increasing numbers of visitors who will contribute to the economies of all the local communities, but particularly Tuolumne County.

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**Correspondence ID:** 328      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Jason, Keith  
**Outside Organization:** Access Fund Conservation/Preservation

**Received:** Feb.03,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:**

The Access Fund welcomes the opportunity to submit these scoping comments on the National Park Service's (NPS) Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan ("Merced River Plan" or MRP). We provide these comments to better inform Yosemite National Park (YNP) planners and help identify the appropriate scope for the Merced River Plan. We also wish to help protect the Merced River corridor "for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" as required by the Wild and Scenic River Act.[1] Our comments are focused primarily on the Yosemite Valley and Gorge segments of the river corridor and secondarily on the Wilderness segment. The Access Fund The Access Fund is the only national advocacy organization whose mission keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. A 501(c)3 non-profit supporting and representing over 1.6 million climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing: rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering. The Access Fund is the largest US climbing organization, with over 15,000 members and affiliates. Many of our members climb in Yosemite National Park. The Access Fund promotes the responsible use and sound management of climbing resources by working in cooperation with climbers, other recreational users, public land managers and private land owners. We encourage an ethic of personal responsibility, self-regulation, strong conservation values and minimum impact practices among climbers. The Access Fund has a long history of participation in Yosemite National Park management initiatives. For example, the Access Fund submitted extensive comments on the Valley Plan in 2000, the Yosemite Falls Plan in 2001, the Yosemite Lodge Redevelopment Plan and Valley Implementation Plan in 2003, and earlier efforts on a Merced River Plan. The Access Fund also testified at a 2003 congressional field hearing in YNP regarding the Parkwide Out-Of-Valley Campgrounds Study, and provided lengthy informal input regarding a climbing management plan for Yosemite Valley and a redesign project for Camp 4 (which was partially addressed in the Lodge Redevelopment Plan). We also provided scoping comments to the Tuolumne River and Meadows Plan and will contribute comments when YNP publishes draft alternatives. In the 1990s the Access Fund built a climbers' trail to the Sunnyside Bench area in the Valley, and in 2005 we provided grant funding for bear boxes placed at strategic locations in Yosemite Valley to serve the needs of wall climbers who lack food storage while they are on overnight climbs. In 2009, we awarded a grant to Yosemite National Park for the creation and printing of a brochure for climbers visiting Yosemite. In partnership with the Yosemite Climbing Association, the American Alpine Club, Friends of YOSAR, and the Yosemite Mountaineering School, the Access Fund also helped produce this brochure which includes guidance for low-impact climbing and camping, safety information, maps, and descriptions of various climbing opportunities in the Park. The Access Fund continues to communicate with planners at YNP regarding future planning initiatives and implementation plans, such as those scheduled that will affect El Capitan Meadow, Camp 4 (and camping issues park-wide), climbing management policies, and noise. Finally, the Access Fund is proud to annually support the Yosemite Climbing Association's "Yosemite Facelift" scheduled every year at the end of September. The Access Fund supports all types of climbing, from urban sport climbing to pristine alpine wilderness mountaineering, including climbing experiences in protected environments such as those mandated by the Wild and Scenic River Act (WSRA) and the Wilderness Act. We also believe that these special environments are entirely appropriate for recreational uses, and that compatible and historic activities such as climbing in Yosemite should be recognized under the WSRA as Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs). Indeed, NPS policies support activities (like climbing and camping) that promote a "direct association with park resources"[2] and climbing in Yosemite is dependent on the topography and ecology provided by the Merced River. The Access Fund supports the protections required by the WSRA and Wilderness Act, as well as NPS planning and management policies that provide and enhance climbing and camping opportunities. Climbing Should Be Identified as an Outstanding Remarkable Value ("ORV") The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." [3] Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value (ORV) and must be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be 1) river-related, and 2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale.[4] Recreational rock climbing in the Merced River planning area meets this test. To be river-related, a recreational value must 1) be located within a quarter mile of the river and 2) owe its location or existence to the presence of the river.[5] Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river. An enormous amount of climbing also lies immediately outside of this management boundary, including world class climbs such as El Capitan. Yosemite climbing occurs on rock formations carved by the Merced River and its glaciers. While climbing does not take place directly in the Merced River (and for this reason does not pose a threat to its ecosystem), the activity is undeniably linked to the river and its processes.[6] In fact, climbing could not exist without the contributions of the Merced River to the geological history of Yosemite Valley. The very walls and boulders that climbers enjoy are a product of twenty-five million years of sculpting by the river and multiple glaciers, a process that has created the most spectacular climbing in the world. Climbing in Yosemite is inextricably linked to the river, and consequently is river-related for purposes of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The second ORV eligibility criterion is that a particular recreational activity "have the potential to be popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison or [be] unique or rare within the region." Outstandingly remarkable recreational values should attract visitors "willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes" and the "river may provide, or have the potential to provide, settings for national or regional usage or competitive events." [7] Yosemite Valley is the most challenging, historic, well-known rock climbing area in the world, and known to climbers from Norway to Japan simply as "the Valley." [8] Climbing in Yosemite has inspired a score of climbing guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. Moreover, Yosemite has been the site of practically every advancement in climbing technology, technique, and ethical standards for the past sixty years. As noted, climbers travel from all parts of the Earth to experience the unique and rare climbing experiences found only in Yosemite Valley and the Merced River planning area. Climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that is significant regionally, nationally and internationally. That Yosemite Valley is a rare and unique climbing resource is a vast understatement, akin to claiming Yellowstone National Park has a few unique geothermal features. Climbing also has characteristics that set it apart from other forms of recreation that together constitute the recreational ORV for Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. The National Park Service notes that recreational ORVs could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife and botanical observation, camping, picnicking, photography, hiking, backpacking, swimming, fishing, floating, boating, writing, contemplation, nature study, photography, artistic expression, and participating in Park education and interpretive programs.[9] The most important characteristic to climbers is that the climbing opportunities in Yosemite Valley are of a quality, length, density, number and accessibility that cannot be found anywhere else in California, the United States, or the world. This goes to the second ORV criterion. We think the most important characteristic to planners should be that unlike many other forms of recreation, for climbing the breathtaking scenery of Yosemite Valley is not simply a stunning backdrop; it is the fabric on which climbing occurs. Given that the Valley walls are an integral feature of the river, and that viewing them makes some forms of recreation outstandingly remarkable, it follows that climbing is also an outstandingly remarkable recreational value. A third unique aspect of Yosemite climbing is that it is dispersed in the management area both horizontally and vertically, whereas most other potential recreational ORVs experience the river corridor only on the Valley floor.

Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an outstandingly remarkable (recreation) Value in its ORV report due for publication in the spring of 2011. Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that wild and scenic rivers "be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be" designated.[10] In order to protect and enhance climbing as a recreational ORV,[11] Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions.[12] To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

- 7 Transportation into the Park. Climbers must have ability to drive vehicles into the Park. Climbing in Yosemite often requires a significant amount of gear. The ability to bring climbing gear, in addition to camping gear, necessitates the use of personal vehicles. Restricting entrance into the Park to public transportation would significantly hinder the climbing experience.
- 7 Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites and a volunteer work program to allow climbers to camp for the longer periods necessary to plan, prepare for and carry out Yosemite Valley's longer climbs. Climbers must have access to affordable overnight camping.
- 7 Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. Climbers must have the ability to Park within a reasonable distance from the many existing climbing access trailhead locations. The sheer height and difficulty of Yosemite's walls often requires climbers to bring overnight climbing equipment and provisions, making it difficult to ride public transportation, and/or transport such gear over long distances without the use of personal vehicles.
- 7 Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailhead locations. To reduce vehicle congestion, the Access Fund supports intra-Park public transportation. We encourage the Park to place bus stops at traditional climbing access trailhead locations to accommodate climbers doing day ascents, or who otherwise will not need to carry bulky overnight climbing equipment. A Valley-wide free bike program should also be considered.
- 7 Maintained climbing access trails with minimal, climbing-specific or no trailhead markers to limit attracting non-climber access (like the posts with carabiners on them that Joshua Tree National Park has on their climber trails).
- 7 Staging areas at the base of climbs, but also traditional locations to network socially and prepare for climbs such as the Camp 4 parking lot and El Capitan Meadows.
- 7 Maintained climbing descent trails. Maintained climbing descent trails are critical for safety reasons and to avoid unnecessary impacts that result from multiple unmaintained descent trails.
- 7 Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. It is therefore necessary that climbers, in order to adjust to Yosemite's uniqueness and difficulty and avoid accidents, have the ability to stay in the Park for extended periods of time.
- 7 Amenities such as groceries, showers and a climbing equipment shop. Climbers from all over the world travel to Yosemite and rarely stay for less than a week. Consequently, it is necessary that climbers have access to basic amenities such as groceries and showering facilities.
- 7 Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum.
- 7 NPS support facilities and services, including Yosemite Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.
- 7 The climbing school and guide service. The climbing school facilitates people's entry into the sport of climbing, especially for children and young people who would otherwise not have an opportunity to experience climbing, particularly in an extraordinary environment like Yosemite. The guide service allows climbers at all skill levels to advance their skills and to safely and confidently climb routes they would not otherwise attempt.
- 7 Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:
- 7 A healthy and protected natural environment.
- 7 Primitive camping opportunities.
- 7 Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails
- 7 A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.
- 7 Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. Accordingly, the Merced River Plan should use the following tools and methods to implement a carrying capacity program as required by the WSRA and the National Park's Service's own management policies which prioritizes those activities with a "direct relation to park resources." [13]
- 7 Develop a plan for effective transportation into the Park from gateway communities and regional airports and other public transportation facilities in cities such as Fresno and Merced.
- 7 Prioritize primitive walk-in camping over auto-camping; prioritize auto camping over RV-camping; and prioritize RV camping over lodging.
- 7 Develop an effective intra-Valley bus system that focuses on high-use trailheads and parking lots.
- 7 Restore and slightly widen the Valley Loop Trail that circles the Valley away from the road and closer to the cliffs (away from the river). Visitors then could safely walk, run, or bike to all parts of the Valley without being forced to either drive their cars or try to share the road (as a hiker or bicyclist) with its dangerous traffic laced with highly distracted drivers. That Loop Trail would also greatly help to disperse visitors more evenly in the Valley, instead of having them compelled to congregate in a few areas.
- 7 Enforce National Park Service regulations and California Vehicle Code restrictions on loud motorcycles and trucks, manage RV generator use to reduce conflicts at campgrounds, ban loud speakers on tour busses, and limit noise from trash pickup operations.
- 7 Develop and implement management policies that reduce user conflicts (i.e., horses and hikers, RVs and primitive campers, loud campers and quiet campers, loud motorcycles and everyone else).
- 7 Phase-out or de-emphasize recreational activities that have little or no "direct relation to park resources" (such as tennis and swimming pools) and which artificially increase the number of recreational users in the Park.
- 7 Provide effective education and information on climbing management policies and environmental conditions to the climbing community through message boards, online websites, and inter-personal ranger-climber relations such as the Camp 4 Coffee and other public meetings.
- 7 Provide minimal services at stores that supply groceries, automobile gas, climbing equipment, and showers. Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing when developing a user capacity framework for the Merced River planning area. Unlike other recreational uses such as hiking, picnicking, and boating, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape where there are thousands of possible routes and destinations. Moreover, most climbing routes are accessed through the Merced River planning area. Other activities, by comparison, are limited to a far fewer number of established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Additionally, unlike other recreational uses, climbing depends on the whims of weather, and climbers' plans must be flexible enough to accommodate changing conditions. A fast moving storm could be life-threatening for a pair of climbers 800 feet off the ground, and climbers must be able to change their plans and objectives quickly. Because of the weather-dependent nature of their activity, climbers cannot always plan their specific routes in advance, except in the abstract. Any user capacity framework adopted by NPS must consider these unique aspects of climbing, since user capacity models that are designed for hiking or sightseeing may not take these factors into account. The Merced River Plan Must Allow For Access to Park Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary by passing through it. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls pass through the MRP planning area, but climbers' destinations are often outside these proposed boundaries. Even within the WSRA planning areas, Congress declared that selected rivers that possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." (emphasis added)[14] Therefore, any user capacity model adopted as part of the Merced River Plan should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with

existing climbing use levels. The Merced River Plan Provides an Opportunity to Reverse the Increasing Urbanization of Yosemite Valley Increase Camping Opportunities and Reduce Luxury Accommodations One of the challenges of the MRP will be integrating NPS management policies into a plan where the requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act direct the planning process. Yosemite planners may effectively address the question of how to prioritize planning decisions by following the simple value system set forth in National Park Service Management Policies Section 8.2, which emphasizes visitor experiences that foster a "direct relation to park resources." [15] This policy immediately suggests a natural hierarchy of overnight opportunities for Park visitors. Overnight visitor experiences that foster the most direct relationship with Park resources should be accorded the highest priority in Park planning, while those that foster the least direct relationship with Park resources should be accorded the lowest priority. Thus, in considering visitors' overnight experiences for the Merced River Plan the NPS should prioritize backcountry camping first, followed in order by walk-to and walk-in campsites, [16] drive-in campsites, RV camping, rustic lodging like Curry Village, then the Merced Lodge, followed last by the Ahwahnee Hotel. In the Merced River Plan this hierarchy can be achieved by expanding the number of walk-in campsites in the Valley while reducing the number of developed lodgings and RV sites. [17] Using this prioritization hierarchy could allow YNP to reduce impacts to the river corridor from urban development while expanding the number of campsites in the Merced River planning area and in the process fulfill the purpose of the Park to foster a more direct relationship to park resources for many visitors. For this reason, we believe the plan should fully consider the possibility of restoring camping in areas of Yosemite Valley where campsites have been removed, including the area east of the Ahwahnee Hotel and the Rivers Campgrounds, as well as in areas where more developed lodgings could be removed. In particular, we think the Ahwahnee cabins, the most expensive and space-consuming lodgings in the Valley and the primary reason this area would not be considered for camping, should be considered for removal. The camping experience in Yosemite has been recognized in earlier plans as a recreational ORV, an irreplaceable means of creating "personal memories, traditions, and multigenerational bonding among families and friends." [18] More campsites means more outstandingly remarkable experiences and accordingly camping should be encouraged as the primary option for overnight visitors to the Park. Thus, the potential for more camping sites used by climbers as well as other recreational groups should be studied in the Merced River Plan, while some existing camping sites could be altered from RV to walk-in to conform to the hierarchy set forth in NPS visitor use policies. Reduce Motorcycle, RV, Trash Disposal, Campground and Tour Bus Noise Yosemite wilderness users are required to conform to strict guidelines to protect wilderness resources, and Yosemite National Park invests significant resources in enforcing wilderness regulations. The Park should spend a corresponding amount of effort to ensure that wilderness users receive the benefits of a wilderness experience, one that is not needlessly degraded by noise sources from outside wilderness. Yosemite is one of the nation's flagship parks and one of the world's premier climbing resources. It deserves noise protection that is consistent with its world-class status. On weekends long lines of motorcycles, sometimes numbering as many as 60 according to entrance station staff, roar through the Valley and the Merced River planning area. Many of these motorcycles have altered mufflers that cause them to emit an ear-splitting roar. When groups of motorcyclists file through the Valley, they emit a tremendous thunder that can be heard for miles into the wilderness. In Yosemite, wilderness begins at 4,000 feet elevation (pretty much as soon as you get above the Valley floor) and motorcycle noise has a direct impact on climbing and many other types of outstandingly remarkable recreational values in the Merced River planning area. Climbers constitute one of the Park's major user groups in the wilderness immediately surrounding the Valley, and this noise has a very negative impact on the climbing experience. Modified mufflers violate the California Vehicle Code, which YNP enforces. [19] Motorcycle noise also violates NPS management policies that strive to "preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the natural soundscapes of parks . . . [which] exist in the absence of human-caused sound." [20] NPS policy also endeavors to "restore degraded soundscapes to the natural condition wherever possible, and will protect natural soundscapes from degradation due to noise." [21] The already degraded soundscape in Yosemite Valley continues to deteriorate, and motorcycle noise is now a significant disturbance to climbers and others visiting Yosemite. The Merced River Plan should also address other noise sources that negatively impact ORVs in Yosemite Valley. These include recreational vehicle generator noise in campgrounds, the crash of dumpsters being emptied, and unreasonably loud campers. [22] It is unnecessary for the trash pickup at the campgrounds to occur early in the morning when campers on vacation are still trying to sleep. The enormous steel dumpsters make a tremendous crash when their lids fly open after being lifted above the trucks, followed by a second crash when the truck starts to lower the dumpster and the lid flops closed, then a third crash when the truck drops the dumpster to the ground. This process is repeated multiple times as each dumpster in a campground is emptied. The Park should reschedule these trash pickup times to preserve the soundscape in the MRP planning area. The Park should also do more to manage loud campers by way of information and education to limit, for example, radio noise and barking dogs. Lastly, the open megaphone used by the tour guides on the Green Dragon is a needless source of noise, one much heard by climbers in the Valley's wilderness areas. This megaphone could easily be replaced by headphones or the hand-held recording wands commonly used in tours of monuments and museums elsewhere.

Conclusion The Access Fund hopes these scoping comments assist the NPS in identifying the proper planning scope for the Merced River management corridor and produce a better plan. In short, we support recognizing climbing as an outstandingly remarkable value for the Merced River planning area, and we believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should consider climbing's unique characteristics. We provide several suggestions herein for the user capacity plan and will submit more detail in the next few months that will assist YNP to protect and enhance climbing and its unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. The Merced River Plan also provides an opportunity to manage the increasing urbanization of the Yosemite Valley, including reducing luxury accommodations in favor of campsites and addressing problematic noise pollution, and the MRP must allow for access to Park areas outside of the planning area boundary. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process. If you have any questions or comments please contact me at 303-325-5936 or Jason@accessfund.org.

FOONOTES: [1] 6 U.S.C. " 1271-1287. [2] NPS Management Policies, 8.2 Visitor Use (2006). "To provide for enjoyment of the parks, the National Park Service will encourage visitor activities that ? will foster an understanding of and appreciation for park resources and values, or will promote enjoyment through a direct association with, interaction with, or relation to park resources." See [http://www.nature.nps.gov/naturalsounds/PDF\\_docs/Visitor\\_Use\\_8.2.pdf](http://www.nature.nps.gov/naturalsounds/PDF_docs/Visitor_Use_8.2.pdf). [3] 6 U.S.C. ' 1271. [4] Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, The Wild & Scenic River Study Process, 1999. See <http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/rta/nri/elig.html>. [5] Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, The Wild & Scenic River Study Process, 1999 at 12. [6] Thousands of climbing routes lie directly within the Merced Wild and Scenic River management corridor, including many world-famous climbs such as Arch Rock, Cookie Cliff, Elephant Rock, The Rostrum, Lower Cathedral Rock, and Liberty Cap. [7] Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, The Wild & Scenic River Study Process, 1999 at 13. <http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/rta/nri/elig.html> [8] In the past, Yosemite National Park has recognized the unique role that climbing has played in Yosemite Valley. During efforts to determine Camp 4 as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, Don Klima with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation said that "During the period 1947 to 1970, the Yosemite Valley region was an exceptionally important center of rock climbing activity. Activities and technological advancements and skills developed here



made significant contributions at the regional, national and international level within the sport. World-renowned climbers such as Tom Frost, Royal Robbins, and Yvon Chouinard, were among the pioneers of this sport who developed equipment, techniques, and forged new routes in Yosemite, considered a Mecca for rock climbers. They used Camp 4 as a base camp. Camp 4 is listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its nationally significant role in the development of rock climbing as a sport. The documentation makes a strong case for the "exceptional significance" of Yosemite National Park within the context of modern mountaineering and rock climbing history." See <http://www.nps.gov/archive/yose/news/2003/camp0227.htm>. [9] NPS, Yosemite National Park, Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers Draft Outstandingly Remarkable Values Report, February 2008 at 10. [10] 16 U.S.C. ' 1281. [11] Even if climbing is not considered a recreational ORV for the purposes of the Merced River Plan, Yosemite National Park should consider these characteristics while developing the MRP so that climbing as an activity is not negatively and unnecessarily affected by the Park's user capacity program. [12] The unique characteristics of climbing in Yosemite Valley may also be researched in the following guidebooks: Wilder, Matt, and Chris McNamara. Yosemite Valley Bouldering. Supertopo, 2007. McNamara, Chris, and Erik Sloan. Yosemite Big Walls. Supertopo, 2005. Barnes, McNamara, Snyder, and Steve Roper. Yosemite Valley Free Climbs. Wilderness Press, 2003. Chris McNamara. The Road to The Nose. Supertopo, 2001. Don Reid. Yosemite Climbs: Big Walls. Falcon, 1998. Don Reid. Rock Climbing Yosemite's Select. Falcon, 1998. Don Reid. Yosemite Climbs: Free Climbs. Falcon, 1994. George Meyers, Yosemite Climbs. Chockstone Press, 1987. Steve Roper. A Climber's Guide to Yosemite Valley. Random House, Inc., 1982. The Access Fund and its partners are currently exploring a much more detailed report of the behavioral trends of climbing in Yosemite Valley that we will submit to the Park Service in coming months. [13] NPS Management Policies, 8.2 Visitor Use (2006). [14] 6 U.S.C. " 1271-1287. [15] NPS Management Policies, 8.2 Visitor Use (2006). [16] In YNP's Campground Study, a walk-in campsite is defined as one within 50 feet of parking, while a walk-to site is more than 50 feet from parking. Campground Study at B-11. [17] In previous comments The Access Fund has stated our support for less developed campgrounds that serve climbers and other backcountry visitors to Yosemite. Climbers and backpackers are able to use smaller, less-developed walk-in campgrounds without paved roads and running water. Because of the Yosemite National Park's campsite shortfall and the demand for camping in Yosemite Valley, the Access Fund supports the continue review of all the potential camping areas studied in the 2002 Campground Study. The NPS should also coordinate campground planning with national forests outside the Park. [18] NPS, Yosemite National Park, Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers Draft Outstandingly Remarkable Values Report, February 2008 at 10. [19] See Cal. Vehicle Code Sections 27150-59 (Exhaust Systems) and Sections 27200-27207 (Noise Limits) at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=veh&codebody=&hits=20> [20] NPS Management Policies, 4.9 Soundscape Management (2001). [21] Id. NPS regulations also prohibit operating a motor vehicle that produces noise in excess of 60 decibels at 50 feet or makes noise "which is unreasonable, considering the nature and purpose of the actor's conduct, location, time of day or night, purpose for which the area was established, impact on park users, and other factors that would govern the conduct of a reasonable person under the circumstances." 36 CFR ' 2.12. [22] RVs are currently allowed to start their generators at 7:00 a.m. which is far too early, especially on Sunday mornings when many tired campers look forward to sleeping in following a long work week and a late Friday night arrival in the Valley. Generators are allowed to operate until 7:00 p.m., thereby assuring that they will be thudding while other campers' are trying to enjoy their dinners. This is inexcusable. There is no legitimate camping function a generator performs that cannot be handled by battery power or propane. RVs in Valley campsites should be required to charge their batteries between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and to use battery power and propane outside those hours.

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**Correspondence ID:** 329      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Renison, Jeff  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
Feb,16,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** In regards to the postcard we received, here are a couple of ideas we would like to suggest: 1) Incorporate interactive technology (for rent, buy, etc) that can share historical and real-time data/stories/events in a unique way. The melding of nature with technology to provide a comprehensive journey that leaves visitors feeling apart of. RFID, GPS, GIS, Web technologies present opportunities to do so. I have specific ideas if you are interested in discussing further. 2) More scenic day spots to stop and enjoy the views and sounds. Encourage a better understanding of the environment as a whole through the microcosm that is the River and its surroundings.

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**Correspondence ID:** 330      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** N/A, N/A  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I have the following concerns or issues that I believe should be addressed in the Merced River Plan:

Consider the experience of people arriving in the park by bus over the near term (upon completion of the planning process, but separate from longer-term plans for transportation). For example, need for larger luggage storage at a place convenient for bus riders and places for them (and others) to charge cell phones, laptops, cameras, etc.

Picnic areas. Consider a range of options for picnic areas (in terms of location and design), which are currently over-used, in poor condition, and poorly located with respect to visitor needs and, in some cases, resource protection goals. Consideration should be given to formally designed/constructed picnic areas that can accommodate both small and large groups while minimizing negative impacts. Currently, cooking is not allowed at Curry Village. This should probably remain the case, however, there is an increasing desire on the part of visitors to bring their own food and cook their own meals. Yet, there are no picnic areas in eastern Yosemite

Valley that have grills. People with food (but without grills) who want to grill now have to drive several miles on one-way roads to and from Curry Village to use grills. Only one picnic area (without grills) has reasonable shuttle bus access (Lower Yosemite Fall) during dinner hours.

Campfires. Currently, Yosemite Valley is extremely smoky at night as a result of campfires. Despite campfires being illegal after 10 pm in summer, many fires continue to smolder, putting out additional smoke all night. This raises health concerns for those living or working in or near campgrounds and Housekeeping Camp, and is also a concern for visitors who are sensitive to smoky conditions (e.g., asthmatics). (Some visitors have to leave because it's so smoky.) Possible solutions could include a ban on campfires during summer, requirement to use types of wood (or wood substitutes) that burn more easily and produce less smoke, and/or stricter enforcement of campfire regulations. Additional restrictions on campfires could also include requirements for a campfire permit system with a quota on number of permits issued each night, or some other way of limiting the number of campfires each night.

Housekeeping Camp. In addition to again considering reducing the size of Housekeeping Camp due to its proximity to the Merced River, the plan should analyze and consider the current and historic uses of Housekeeping Camp. Its current use is not compatible with its design. While intended as a lodging facility where visitors would do their own housekeeping, it's now more of a campground with electricity and sleeping facilities. It's common to find people sleeping on the ground outside their units (sometimes well beyond the area surrounding their units)--something not tolerated at any other lodging facility. The use of microwaves, toaster ovens, coffee makers, and a wide range of other appliances is increasingly common. The electrical system was not designed for this load and will reach its capacity as the use of these and other appliances continues to rise. The use of these and other cooking appliances also raise concerns about bear safety because these food-tainted appliances are usually kept in a partially enclosed area very near where people sleep. The camp is also very well lit at night by flood lights and Christmas-style lights, among other lighting sources brought in by visitors, which results in significant amounts of light pollution the impacts of which haven't been analyzed. The design and/or the use of Housekeeping Camp should be reconsidered in this plan.

Pines Campgrounds. The plan should consider completely redesigning these campgrounds (without necessarily reducing number of campsites) or significantly rehabilitating them, and/or providing more space for parking (which is currently insufficient with the larger cars and RVs now common), and completely segregating RV and tent campsites (not just partially, as proposed in the Yosemite Valley Plan). Consideration should be given to a "quiet" campground, where generators, radios, etc., (and maybe campfires) aren't allowed.

Wawona parking. While Yosemite Valley is well known for its parking issues, Wawona has parking capacity issues that are at least as bad--if not worse--and these need to be addressed in the plan.

I would also like to point out that this planning process is fatally flawed because the park lacks a valid General Management Plan and may fail to comply with NEPA. As currently described, the separate plans for Merced and Tuolumne rivers unnecessarily result in a fragmented planning process because these plans will address issues (especially related to transportation and use limits) with parkwide impacts in an isolated manner. The Merced and Tuolumne River Plans should be completed together, or, better yet, as part of a new General Management Plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 331      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Trust, Jeffrey  
**Outside Organization:** NPS Employee  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I have the following concerns or issues that I believe should be addressed in the Merced River Plan:

Consider the experience of people arriving in the park by bus over the near term (upon completion of the planning process, but separate from longer-term plans for transportation). For example, need for larger luggage storage at a place convenient for bus riders and places for them (and others) to charge cell phones, laptops, cameras, etc.

Picnic areas. Consider a range of options for picnic areas (in terms of location and design), which are currently over-used, in poor condition, and poorly located with respect to visitor needs and, in some cases, resource protection goals. Consideration should be given to formally designed/constructed picnic areas that can accommodate both small and large groups while minimizing negative impacts. Currently, cooking is not allowed at Curry Village. This should probably remain the case, however, there is an increasing desire on the part of visitors to bring their own food and cook their own meals. Yet, there are no picnic areas in eastern Yosemite Valley that have grills. People with food (but without grills) who want to grill now have to drive several miles on one-way roads to and from Curry Village to use grills. Only one picnic area (without grills) has reasonable shuttle bus access (Lower Yosemite Fall) during dinner hours.

Campfires. Currently, Yosemite Valley is extremely smoky at night as a result of campfires. Despite campfires being illegal after 10 pm in summer, many fires continue to smolder, putting out additional smoke all night. This raises health concerns for those living or working in or near campgrounds and Housekeeping Camp, and is also a concern for visitors who are sensitive to smoky conditions (e.g., asthmatics). (Some visitors have to leave because it's so smoky.) Possible solutions could include a ban on campfires during summer, requirement to use types of wood (or wood substitutes) that burn more easily and produce less smoke, and/or stricter enforcement of campfire regulations. Additional restrictions on campfires could also include requirements for a campfire permit

system with a quota on number of permits issued each night, or some other way of limiting the number of campfires each night.

Housekeeping Camp. In addition to again considering reducing the size of Housekeeping Camp due to its proximity to the Merced River, the plan should analyze and consider the current and historic uses of Housekeeping Camp. Its current use is not compatible with its design. While intended as a lodging facility where visitors would do their own housekeeping, it's now more of a campground with electricity and sleeping facilities. It's common to find people sleeping on the ground outside their units (sometimes well beyond the area surrounding their units)--something not tolerated at any other lodging facility. The use of microwaves, toaster ovens, coffee makers, and a wide range of other appliances is increasingly common. The electrical system was not designed for this load and will reach its capacity as the use of these and other appliances continues to rise. The use of these and other cooking appliances also raise concerns about bear safety because these food-tainted appliances are usually kept in a partially enclosed area very near where people sleep. The camp is also very well lit at night by flood lights and Christmas-style lights, among other lighting sources brought in by visitors, which results in significant amounts of light pollution the impacts of which haven't been analyzed. The design and/or the use of Housekeeping Camp should be reconsidered in this plan.

Pines Campgrounds. The plan should consider completely redesigning these campgrounds (without necessarily reducing number of campsites) or significantly rehabilitating them, and/or providing more space for parking (which is currently insufficient with the larger cars and RVs now common), and completely segregating RV and tent campsites (not just partially, as proposed in the Yosemite Valley Plan). Consideration should be given to a "quiet" campground, where generators, radios, etc., (and maybe campfires) aren't allowed.

Wawona parking. While Yosemite Valley is well known for its parking issues, Wawona has parking capacity issues that are at least as bad--if not worse--and these need to be addressed in the plan.

I would also like to point out that this planning process is fatally flawed because the park lacks a valid General Management Plan and may fail to comply with NEPA. As currently described, the separate plans for Merced and Tuolumne rivers unnecessarily result in a fragmented planning process because these plans will address issues (especially related to transportation and use limits) with parkwide impacts in an isolated manner. The Merced and Tuolumne River Plans should be completed together, or, better yet, as part of a new General Management Plan.

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**Correspondence ID:** 332      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Syz, Jeremy  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Any plan for the Merced River should include access for white water boating opportunities. I am a recreational kayaker who has visited Yosemite and the surrounding area many times. I have boated on the Tuolumne River and its tributaries outside of Yosemite Park, as well as the Merced River outside of the park boundary. The Merced River deserves designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The Merced River also deserves to be enjoyed within the Yosemite Park boundary by responsible river users. I understand that any increased use of park resources has the potential to increase the impact on the natural environment and other facilities within the park. However, I also strongly believe that, relative to other park users, white water enthusiasts have an equal or greater appreciation for their impact on the environment, and actively attempt to minimize such impacts to the greatest extent possible. The complete prohibition of kayaking in the park does not seem to be a reasonable restriction, given that other similar activities, which have equal or greater impacts (such as backpacking, rock climbing, etc.) are permitted. If these activities are allowed (subject to reasonable restrictions and limitations), I see no reason why river users should not also be allowed to use the park for their own recreational pursuits. Any future plan for the Merced River should allow white water kayaking within Yosemite National Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 333      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Cullins, Jessica  
**Received:** UC Merced University/Professional Society  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Any plan for the Merced River should include access for white water boating opportunities. I am a recreational kayaker who has visited Yosemite and the surrounding area many times. I have boated on the Tuolumne River and its tributaries outside of Yosemite Park, as well as the Merced River outside of the park boundary. The Merced River deserves designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The Merced River also deserves to be enjoyed within the Yosemite Park boundary by responsible river users. I understand that any increased use of park resources has the potential to increase the impact on the natural environment and other facilities within the park. However, I also strongly believe that, relative to other park users, white water enthusiasts have an equal or greater appreciation for their impact on the environment, and actively attempt to minimize such impacts to the greatest extent possible. The complete prohibition of kayaking in the park does not seem to be a reasonable restriction, given that other similar activities, which have equal or greater impacts (such as backpacking, rock climbing, etc.) are permitted. If these activities are allowed (subject to reasonable restrictions and limitations), I see no reason why river users should not also be allowed to use the park for their own recreational pursuits. Any future plan for the Merced River should allow white water kayaking within Yosemite National Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 334      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hurley, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Hello Yosemite National Park Planners, Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding the New Merced River Plan. I think that it is very important that the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement address the issue of rockslides and public safety at Curry Village. I am very concerned that the current development envelope at Curry Village still extends into possible/likely rockslide fallout areas. I am concerned that innocent members of the public and employees are in danger of injury or death due to inevitable future rockslides. When Curry Village was built over 100 years ago there was no environmental review of development and our understanding geology was very limited. My interest in making sure that an in depth analysis of rockslide related public safety and development issues at Curry Village stems from the fact that my 10 year old son, Tyler, was nearly killed in the massive October 17th rock slide at Curry Village. A rock the size of a large van crushed the cabin right next to the cabin where my son had just been seconds before. The fact that no one was seriously injured or killed that morning is incredible. Many children and teachers were running for their lives that morning and I want to make sure that any comprehensive planning takes into account our evolving understanding of the geology and rockslide danger to people and structures below Glacier Point. I also am concerned about public notification, signage and education regarding the significant, ever-present threat of rockslides to visitors and employees. I am also concerned about emergency response policies regarding rockslides. On the afternoon of October 16th, 2008 slide, a very sizable rockslide occurred at Curry Village taking out a couple of cabins. As darkness set in a few hours later, a decision was made to let the over 1000 people staying at Curry Village go back to their cabins. Knowing that rockslides very often come in waves within hours of each other...this was an amazingly negligent decision. Sure enough, the massive Oct 17th slide happened at 7am the next morning and out of sheer luck (and the bravery of teachers and parents) no one was seriously injured. The assessment and wait period after rockslides needs to be seriously analyzed so that geologists have had plenty of time to truly assess the likelihood of followup rockslide. We must learn from this event. I know that some units at Curry Village were closed...but is this enough? Do we need to do more geological studies of the history of rockslides in this area? What does rockfall evidence that is underground tell us about the actual rockfall zone? Is it really responsible for Curry Village to remain as is just because it is there? Would the massive Curry Village complex ever get approval if it was trying to get built today? Please address these issues in your planning process. I love Yosemite and I know that rockslides happen but Curry Village is located in perhaps the most active recurring rockslide area in all of Yosemite. We knew nothing of the serious rockslide danger that existed at Curry Village when we let our son stay therein 2008. As planners you must make the safety of innocent visitors a top priority even if it may mean fewer places for visitors to stay. I am very interested in finding out more about how I can participate in this planning process. Thank you for giving me the chance to share my concerns, I trust that you will address them in your planning documents and decision making. Please notify me of any further opportunities to comment, speak or assist. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Thank you. (a Very Grateful & Concerned Parent) Santa Barbara

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**Correspondence ID:** 335      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Murchison, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I believe that the structures along the Merced River at El Portal that relate to the mining of the mineral barite during the 1920's through 1950's fall under the classification of "Outstanding Remarkable Values" and should be preserved as historical building. The mining represents Yosemite's unique geological character because of the barite deposits there, but is also of cultural and historical interest because of its relationship to the development of the Yosemite Valley Railroad (YVRR). The YVRR was instrumental in opening the park to the public because at the turn of the century it was the high speed alternative to stage coach for transport into the area.

Mountain Ranch, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 336      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Busse, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** NPS, I believe you need to take a look at the park policy towards whitewater rivers within park boundaries. Making an activity such as whitewater kayaking illegal in a federally protected area is just plain ridiculous. Let's face it, the Sierra Nevada has some of the most beautiful and remote rivers anywhere in North America and they are an international destination. So, let's open the rivers to a reasonable plan that allows us to run them in OUR protected areas. Look at the Grand canyon, middle fork of the salmon, and the rogue rivers. They make it work.

So I'm appealing for you to consider what this means for people who are naturally drawn to great rivers. Please give us access legally.

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**Correspondence ID:** 337      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Oxenbould, Joanne  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Although felt not appropriate to submit comments regarding the planning issues currently being considered by all users and managers of Yosemite, as an Australian citizen who has visited these areas on several occasions, I applaud the US NPS for their efforts in preserving this special place.

I look forward to following resolution of the issues mentioned via continued email contact.

Victoria, Australia

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**Correspondence ID:** 338      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Guerrero, Mario  
**Outside Organization:** UC Merced University/Professional Society  
**Received:** Feb,10,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1.The Yosemite valley is a breath of fresh air and is a beautiful valley that bears a lot of nature that requires its habitat to be protected and conserved for the different species that are present. It also allows for visitors to take in the rich life that is seen at Yosemite for year and years. The surrounding river Merced river is also connected with nature that harbors rich life.  
  
2. What i would like to see protected would be the rivers (merced) that are close to Yosemite valley and the forests that lead into Yosemite to build that true nature and preserve its Life expectancy from a few hundred years to thousands to come. The river of merced needs to be protected and over seen by officials to ensure its safety and benefits.  
  
3.Create a plan that communicates a long-term management vision to guide future park managers also to create All the required elements of a wild and scenic river plan ? Boundaries ? Classifications ? River Values ? User Capacity Program ? Monitoring plan  
  
4. The valley ; )

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**Correspondence ID:** 339      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Rhoan, Pat & Natalie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. This "Organic Act" of August 25, 1916, states that the Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations ... by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. The Ahwahneechee Paiutes were the Native Americans in Yosemite. There were no others before the white man arrived. When making any decisions throughout Yosemite you are going to have to consult with the direct lineal descendents of Yosemite. Many are these descendents are federally Recognized. There are no more Chiefs, Captains or any other titled Native Americans since the arrival of the white man and none will be considered one these titles persons again. Craig the former curator for Yosemite lied about the history of the park and those historical errors must be corrected. The public must be informed worldwide of the real history of Yosemite predating white mans' entry. All of his books need to have the history revised with the correct historical facts or eliminated completely. The museum pictures need to have the correct tribal affiliations attached to them. All of the historical information is at your fingertips. These same lineal descendents protested the digging at the Yosemite Falls project. It was known that this is a high use Indian area and it had been recorded that it would disturb a very sensitive cultural area, a prehistoric Indian area; as well as a traditional gathering area still used by the local Indians. Giving money to a local non-profit organization-

Southern Sierra Miwok-to act as monitors to the projects that have taken place in the park and consulting with them is a conflict of interest. They have no ties to Yosemite's ancestral history and this consulting with them needs to cease. The Native American monitors also need to have the educational credentials to be allowed to perform this sensitive type of work. These are our ancestors and they deserve respect. Leslie VanMeter stated before that you wouldn't appreciate it if John Muir was dug up and boxed up and sent away for a decade or more to sit in a basement. Digging up our ancestors' burial sites is desecration based on our traditional religious beliefs. The old El Portal sewer plant was built on an Indian cemetery and now the facility has been abandoned. The area is fenced and secure and there is no reason to remove the structure and disturb the ground. It can sit there and deteriorate and there will be no disturbance again for those that are still in the area. Yosemite Valley, Hetch Hetchy, El Portal and Tuolumne are very sensitive cultural areas. The Ahwahneechees moved about the areas to collect food and game, They camped in the different areas depending on the seasons and their needs. They passed back and forth over the pass to trade with the Mono Lake Paiutes. They used the rivers for food and water. Yosemite was the home of the Ahwahneechee Paiutes. The rocks have stories that go with the names given the rocks and have spiritual significance to our people. There should be no rock climbing. The walls of the great rocks are being destroyed with litter and hardware from the climbers. We can call this graffiti-defacing the walls of the rocks. The Hetch Hetchy valley was destroyed when the dam was built but knowing the significant history of the area. it is best for our ancestors that the dam remains intact. The Indian Village that is being constructed below Camp 4 is a high use area and cultural items have shown up there. This project needs to be stopped immediately. The Merced River and the Merced Canyon must be preserved and protected. There is no reason to allow it to be destroyed by overuse with the renting of rafts. If water fun is what visitors" desire, swimming or wading in the river should be adequate. If they supply the floating devices then they could enjoy the river by this means. There is a lot of natural beauty along the banks of this river for a visitor to enjoy. It can be enjoyed without the amusement park activities. Fishing, hiking, picnicking relaxing, wildlife watching can happen along the river and not destroy it. Coming to Yosemite means leaving the city behind and the activities become self with the outdoors, slower pace, picture taking of the rock formation, plants, animals that cover this area of the Sierra's. This is the people's park and it needs to be kept available so all can enjoy it. The family campgrounds that have disappeared due to flood should be returned so people can enjoy the outdoor experience, One of the 2 campgrounds lost to flood could be turned into self-contained camping without hook-up. That way the tent, small vehicle campers could be segregated from the large units for the more outdoor experience. Remember, this park is the people's park and everyone should be given the opportunity to enjoy it. Each one of us pays the monies to run the Park so it should be enjoyable for everyone. Wawona years ago was usually a pretty quiet place to live. All the major traffic was on H wy 41 going to the valley or going to the Big Trees. There is one campground that had a lot of the same people returning the same time each year. The Wawona Hotel and the golf course offered a unique setting for those that wanted more resort. There is the history center and the occasional barn dances that made it a unique evening. The stagecoach rides always gave the visitors another view of how travel was in the early days. The "Mayor" of Wawona-- Albert Gordon-made sure that the old way was not destroyed. He kept tabs on everything that was going on in town and would notify the appropriate authorities if he felt harm was going to come from a project that would destroy the history of the past. He is gone now but he had many visits from the Headquarters when he was not comfortable with a project. Wawona has grown since we resided there but hopefully the area can still be a get-a-way once you leave the main roads. The Merced River, South Fork, again is the major part of the area and swimming and fishing are activities that has people along its' banks. This runs thru part of the campground so there are a large number of people near the water at this area. Most people who lived there worked close to the area. There were a few commuters but many more these days since houses were bought by the Park for employee housing adding to traffic congestion. The area always had something for every visitor that made it special. There is more than enough buildings throughout the Park and no reason to build anymore. The only thing they need is to be better maintained. Much of the valley has been heavily destroyed. With buildings and roads so it is time to stop adding more and start maintaining what is already there. They can be upgraded in the same place and this will prevent disturbing untouched grounds. The Yosemite Institute Campus has impacted the area at Crane Flat. There is no reason to move and disturb a new area. Upgrade what is there without disturbing new grounds and enjoy it. Henness Ridge is a big NO! Better yet move it outside the Park. You always want to disturb virgin grounds because you forgot to maintain what is already there. Start an aggressive maintenance program and keep what you already have in above average condition. The roads are another item that needs aggressive maintenance. You invite people to come in to the Park: but the roads are falling apart, sinking and creating an unsafe condition for visitors. With the various sizes of vehicles that use the roads they must be in better condition than they are. With the sinking road and poor conditions the larger vehicles are tossed around and control of the vehicle becomes a safety issue. I still haven't figured out the reasoning for sending traffic 20 miles out and 20 miles back for fuel-Crane Flat or El Portal. The only thing this does is put more congestion on the roads, causes more pollution and a waste of fuel to go and get fuel. The Yosemite Fund and the concessionaire can fund the majority of your maintenance projects. Remember the motto: More is not better. There is a lot of rational thinking that will need to be done to follow the directions that the Judge issued to you. You will have to follow those directions very carefully while you put together the Merced River Plan. Take care of what you already have, improve it and forget about moving to other locations, disturbing virgin grounds, or digging to disturb sensitive cultural areas. Limits will need to be put into place meet the user capacity. If you want people to cross an areas at certain places or to make it more accessible to the handicap then install elevated walks. This will eliminate disturbance of the ground.

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**Correspondence ID:** 340      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Harold Urdahl, Rosemarie Chatman

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Normally, I would not write such a letter as I feel it is a fruitless endeavor. I believe that a million people could spend valuable time informing you/responding/suggesting, and it would be a waste of time. The agenda for these situations, of which you now "seek input", has already been decided prior. These decisions have already been made by a core group of you guys in control. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Undoubtedly, while I am foolishly taking the time to answer, decisions are already in place. Some decisions relating to future planning, those small and not very visible, have probably gone forward into "affecting" already. You people are so dishonest. After the fact - you guys give the American public - a fake and contrived request of gleaning input/feedback/suggestions from us. Totally dishonorable and quite disgusting I may add. You have already got it all laid out, so why go through the machinations of asking for "our help". Why waste time, effort and money this way. The stamps alone and paper must have cost a fortune. We're not stupid, you know. Well, most of us aren't. My husband and I used to come to Yosemite twice every

year for well over 15 years. We stayed at the park. spent money in Yosemite, sent small amounts of money for donations. In other words we were what your bottom line goal is = consumers who spend. Then, we saw the changes we felt were coming, come, and decided you were running Yosemite as though it were just a business and we stopped coming. As did scores of our friends. First off, as an Executive Vice President for THEE largest company in the USA, I came to Yosemite to relax. Get away from rules and regulations, find a "host" of the low key nature. Whose presence was quiet and unobtrusive. As the years went on, there were more and more rules, restrictions, regulations and the host became more of a law enforcement presence. We became sick of it. As a four year, Christian College graduate, who once taught school, coming from a police, detective, DEA agent prison gusrd family - I CERTAINLY know why rules are made. You want to protect the park from damage. protect it from people who do not know what the word "boundaries" mean. However, when year after year, more and more gratuitous rules were made and enforced - it just gets to a place where you begin to resent "Big Brother" and that is what you became, long about 1994. Instead of feeling as though we were guests we began to feel YOU THOUGHT you were doing people a favor by letting them in to the park. How dare you take the gas station out of the valley and offer NOTHING to offset this. Did you not consider the hardship this would impose on people? Why close more and more little roads in the park? The only thing I ever saw it improve was the ability of your camp drivers to play speed demons on it. What about hiking room fees up 300% in some lodgings over a 7-8 year period? Hiring, then using tax payers money to train what looked and acted like - a marginally criminal element - in place as your "work force". Tattooed, pierced, foulmouthed, (verbally) sexually explicit workers who caused trouble on the trams in the park, spoke unhappily about working/salary/treatment conditions in the park, looked horribly unhappy as the poor souls bussed the kitchens. lance heard two men (no teeth or very few, filthy and full of tattoos, piercings,) speak on the tram. loudly. about how easy it would be for them to get their friend, now on parole. to get hired there. 7' ... hell. ... they'll hire anybody whose breathing." Yes, I could believe it. As did the scores of other people who become disgusted at the level of humanity you hire, with impunity. Let I be dismissed as a person who is prejudiced about working class people who look a certain way - I do not judge that way. I don't care how a person looks - it is the content of their character I evaluate. Your employees ACT the part of an unmannered and crude, scary class, long before you look at the rest of the package. However, the entire package is looked over, and harshly evaluated, once their actions begin. It is the loud mouthed, ungoverned speech and behavior that makes you notice the dirt, tattoos, piercings, shaved heads, unruly mouths. The first years we came, we felt the only thing we had to worry about once in the park was fire, or maybe a crazed axe murderer. In later years, we had to worry about your employees. Many, many look like a criminal element. (I am informing you of the following to assure you I don't come from prejudicial socio-economic place or racially prejudiced place. Hence the following: I came from immigrants, we lived on a cement floor, had a kerosene stove, and my first marriage was out of my race. At my place of work I personally interviewed and hired my own people. HR offered and I said no thanks. I hired ethnicaly and racially diverse people. And, had many people work for me who's sexuality was often viewed as immoral to others. The outstanding quality within each of these people was honesty and respect. Respect for themselves, me, our customers. If a person was qualified, polite and professional and could do the work well, I'd have hired Sasquatch. But remember, if they looked like Sasquatch, they had better be a mannered, smiling, helpful, competent and professional Sasquatch. Yours look like Sasquatch and act like sharks. Need I tell you about the indifference and marked unfriendliness of some of your long term employees at the front desk at the lodge? More than a few act like you are "invading their haloed reveries" if you ask a question of them while they are not looking up and out upon the awaiting crowd. In other words, God help you, if speak if they have not given you permission to proceed to the counter for service. How just plain, rude. The lodge is not an airport. Can you please tell them that. Don't you monitor these people? Excellent management surrounds themselves with good employees. Mediocre management surrounds themselves with substandard employees. I once witnessed a man and a woman try to tell a desk clerk they had to check out quickly as they had just learned of a tragic death in the family - that of a young child. The desk clerk - was speaking to a fellow clerk about how weather conditions in the next month or two might impede their skiing fun - once "interrupted" and in a voice MEANT to be heard - first clerk commiserated with the other clerk about how rude people could be ... couldn't they let you finish a sentence? When my husband and self were "threatened" by a large racoon on our patio trying the door - with a panel of wood housed in the door with half a slat missing - we were told basically by the desk to "get over it". " ... what did we expect... this was not the city...". Well, as I always say, rabies shots feel the same - whether in the city or wilderness. Do you Agree? Once, I actually saw what was, come to find out, the head chef at the then, big salad bar, blow his nose through his fingers, onto the ground near the Mountain Room. He then came in and stirred a pot with a huge implement BEFORE going in the back - hopefully to wash his germ infested hands. I almost became ill. We never ate there again. He was a young black man, already dressed in his work gear. I reported it. I am sure nothing was done, as it didn't seem to be taken very seriously. For me to go on and on about all the changes you have made in the park that concerned visible and experiential consequences/restrictions to the guest of the park, would be redundant. You as supervisors before you, know of that I speak. For me to list them sickens me and makes me very angry. Again, we began to feel you were doing us a favor - a very restrictive favor - by even letting guests in anymore. It frankly, and crudely said, "pissed us off" (in the vernacular of your many employees). But the consumer has the last word. All we had to do was stop coming. And, we have. In retrospect, truly, the percentage of -turn off as relates to want to keep coming to Yosemite, is small as relates to your "employees" - who all seem to hate working there and speak loudly and terribly about those empowered. It is your rules, changes, regulations, constant constant constant implementations and changes PARK changes, changes and rules rules rules within Yosemite that is the killer of impetus to come. It is almost like to keep your jobs and salaries you all keep thinking up things to do. And it is never to the liking of the guests. Are you totally unconscious of this? I mean, do YOU guys know what the heck you are really doing? You must know attendance is down. If I am wrong, then write me off. So, you keep making your changes. Give the biggest, most different and changed, (from the original ones), party you want to give. But don't be surprised if someday soon, no one comes. Good Luck to the actual land and animals in the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 341      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Over the past 5 decades I have enjoyed Yosemite National Park, from the high Sierra camps to the alpine ski area, from hikes out of Tuolumne Meadows to winter camping at Glacier Point. I have stayed in freezing tent cabins, backpacked in the wild areas, and seen the fire falls. But just as the Kadota figs have vanished from the cafeteria line, the world has changed: population growth has brought new stressors to the Park, and time and population growth are having growing impacts on the Park and its resources. Just as our

heritage of Cowboy and Indian movies has evolved to Avatar's military and Indian movie, old park stalwarts must be reviewed in light of the current and future world, in which natural resources become more and more dear. It is clearly time for a minimum ten-year rest for the natural areas of the park, as is often applied to overgrazed range. The damage in the Merced River landscape is so extensive that it is conceivable that the land will have to be rested for even longer. The parallels are certainly close, as described below. Range is degraded by overuse, including eating up the grass to the degree that it cannot regenerate except in sparse ways that provide not enough nutrients to the livestock, and seriously damage the soil and the habitat for wildlife, from large animals to small bugs that keep the soil healthy. In addition there is ongoing damage to streams and meadows from from trampling, expanding animal trails, and the inevitable feces, which never seem to totally deteriorate, and pollute the waters of the Park. In comparison, the high Sierra is degraded by people overuse, including poached campsites that damage the vegetation, the impact of people on the wild animals, ongoing damage to streams and meadows from trampling, playing, riding horses into streams, creating new user-trails, adding soap to every watercourse, dumping food or not burying it well-enough, trash thrown throughout, the inevitable toilet paper and feces behind trees and rocks and the resulting pollution. Argument for a period of rest for the Merced River landscape. In short, non-native uses in the Park have grown to mimic and now exceed the kind of damage once seen primarily from non-native animals. But the solution is likely similar: rest and restore the soil, rest and restore the vegetation, rest and restore the water, and rest and restore the landscape by removing the damaging uses for a period of time that lasts until substantial restoration has been attained. Please note: the concept of resting and restoring the land must be included in the alternatives for the environmental documentation. My specific comments are as follows: First, the plan for the Merced River should close and dismantle the polluting high Sierra camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise; My most recent experience there, three years ago, was of shockingly tired facilities, the ground beaten to death, camping that was unattractive and crowded, scraggly vegetation attempting to survive in a hostile land, and no protection for the various creeks and rivers from heavy overuse. Between the septic tanks and the horses, it was clear that the likelihood of finding any clean water in the Merced drainage was hopeless. The high Sierra camps - - - - should be closed, the sites restored, and future use limited in both number and impact. The camps called Sunrise, May Lake, Merced Lake and Vogelsang are an embarrassment to Yosemite National Park. While there are those who cling to the past, there comes a time when the weight of the damage to the natural resource leans heavily on the romantic, and cries for preserving history are false indeed. There are good arguments for preserving pieces of the past, but the overwhelming natural disaster that is the high Sierra -camps argues to close them as soon as possible. Many historic pieces of the Yosemite that I have known are gone - the firefall, the old oil-heated cabins at Yosemite Village, and the cramped and crowded campsites along the river in the Valley. And they are gone for reasons that the Park found compelling and necessary for protecting the important resources of the Park. The Park must not conflate "historic" and "heritage" to the same level as restoration. Once there is a clear and obvious need for restoration, the romance of historic and heritage is lost. After all, horse manure is historic and a heritage at Yosemite, but that doesn't make it desirable. Second, the plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on horse use, horse rides, and horse housing. There is no more disgusting site on a hike or packing trip into the less used areas of Yosemite than the expansion and proliferation of horses and their "manure dumps" on the trails and resting areas, and close-up views of horses urinating in the water. Since the Merced River has been highlighted for its special natural conditions under the Wild and Scenic River designation, there is no excuse to allow horses to impact the buffer area with ground-up trails, trampled vegetation, and horse manure. Until horse use can be restricted to no-impact horse use, the activity should be banned, both for riders and for stocking camps. The plan should analyze the fact that if there are no commercial camps there will be no need for commercial packers to supply the camps, thus reducing horse use impacts many-fold and greatly benefitting the Merced River landscape. Third, the plan for the Merced River should provide for the removal of the horse stables from Yosemite Valley. During the last planning process, the Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of the stables concession from the Valley. Such removal would eliminate a source of manure and horse-flies in the valley and on the trails, thereby removing a significant source of pollutants. This is another site that has been beaten to death and is in desperate need of restoration. The next plan must continue the policy to remove and restore the site of the stables. The reduction in invasive weeds to the valley floor from horses' coats and their manure should be argument enough to say goodbye to a concept that has failed to adapt to the public's desire and increased needs to protect the natural values of the National Park. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Merced River Plan. It is timely and very important to move forward with bringing the natural resources of the park into their rightful place in the management of Yosemite National Park - and that place is front and center, of primary importance. Once lost, the costs to restore grow and grow.

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**Correspondence ID:** 342      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Fontaine, Joe  
Sierra Club's Yosemite Committee Conservation/Preservation

**Received:** Feb.04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Fax

**Correspondence:** Following years of litigation Friends of Yosemite Valley the NPS and Dept. of Interior have entered into a Settlement Agreement that 'will grant protection to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVS) of the Merced River. Ibis agreement requires the defendants to comply with their obligations under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and other applicable federal environmental statutes to protect these resources from continued degradation and over use. Under the Settlement Agreement the NPS develop a User Capacity Program designed to protect the Merced River and other Park resources from the excessive visitation that has seriously impacted these values for decades.

Following Court directives and the Settlement Agreement a User Capacity Program will be developed that will be the fundamental component of a new Merced River Plan (MRP). On summer weekends current and past levels of day use result in unacceptable traffic gridlock, human congestion and near chaos as many long time Yosemite visitors can attest. During these events Park resources are seriously compromised and the visitor experience is enoffi1ously reduced.

In order to avoid these recurring episodes of gridlock and congestion a number of alternatives must be considered to resolve this decades old problem. A :e~trictin!! In unregulated day use is a fundamental component in the Park's effort to protect the Merced River and other Park resources and iiVill allow a quality visitor experience not realized during current periods of gridlock. Any system regulating day use will benefit commercial interests and stakeholders in the gate\V'ay communities where they can provide, to



their advantage, increased levels of food, lodging and other visitor services during these periods when visitation pressure within the Valley exceeds capacity. A day use reservation system would be an advantage to visitors, guaranteeing a date for future access to Yosemite Valley and should not be construed as a restriction of entry as many now fear. The adaptive management strategies preferred by many in the NPS to regulate use can then tier off the user capacity mandate and can be used to complement the many additional alternative actions needed to further enhance and protect the ORV'S of the Merced River. Reducing day use visitation in Yosemite Valley east of the El Cap crossover is only a first step in the multiple actions required to reduce the human impacts on Yosemite Valley resources.

Transportation is a key issue in addressing user capacity. How people get to the Valley (and get around while they are there) is a significant part of the per-visitor impact, and no successful visitor capacity program can be developed without addressing transportation comprehensively. If a majority of day-use visitors were to enter the Valley from gateway communities by shuttle rather than their own personal vehicles, it is possible that more individual visitors could enjoy the Valley with less impact on resources. Less space would need to be devoted to car parking and the perception of congestion, and resulting visitor experience, improved. With global warming becoming a major environmental concern the NPS must consider the effects of transportation options and proposals and how increased reliance on public transit might be developed to significantly reduce {bis looming environmental threat.

The following scoping comments suggest actions that could or should be considered that will address many long standing issues that have seriously impacted Yosemite's resources and the visitor experience for decades. Our comments are intended to present ideas~ suggestions and possible solutions to the many complex issues we would like the NPS to consider in this planning process and are not to be interpreted as an official position during this scoping period. The committee's official position. on these and other issues will come during a later phase in the planning process. Our comments are intended to reflect a desire for the NPS to consider actions that will increase resource protections, improve the visitor experience and limit visitor activities to those appropriate in a National Park. 1. A day use electronic system to regulate day use parking could be used at Park entrances to monitor visitors with east Valley destinations beyond the El Cap cross over during heavy use periods. Bar code technology could be used to guarantee advanced day use parking reservations, avoiding the restrictions to entry that visitors often encounter during holidays and other popular summer periods. 2. Activities and infrastructure not relevant to the National Park experience should be: ' ~li!.n!!~ted ~T!d ~e~s occupi~d b~~ tb.c~e 3.ct~~ities ~d. ir"~:;t:~ct:..rc shGi.ild be; restored to as natural a condition as possible. Restoration efforts could include many previously developed areas that were destroyed in the '97 flood. 3. Reduce non-essential visitor amenities unrelated to experiencing the natural qualities of Yosemite. Apparel and souvenir shops, a golf course and tennis courts, energy consuming artificial ice rink, concessionaire stables and stock use in a confined valley, and a large screen TV pavilion are some examples of visitor services and activities that are not appropriate in Yosemite. In Wawona the golf course could be restored to a wetland and the tennis courts near the Wawona hotel could be removed.

4. Consider closure of the one-way road between Stoneman Bridge and Yosemite Village, and restore it and former Upper and Lower River campgrounds and flood plain to as natural condition as possible.

5. Consider maintaining the current Valley loop road prisms including Segment D, the section 900 feet east of the 120/140 intersection to Pohono Bridge, and maintain the one way traffic pattern. currently in use except for the section between Sentinel Bridge and Curry which would then require two-way traffic if the road west of Stoneman bridge is closed. Widening valley roads. only encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles, RVs and tour busses.

6. Two other actions to consider that would further reduce impacts to meadows and view shed vistas would be to restore Chapel and El Cap Straights to their original alignments. The old SSD alignment at Chapel Straight was south of the meadow in tree cover near south side cliffs and the present alignment of NSD at El Cap was on the original stage route north of the meadow and view shed and away from sensitive wetland resources. A return to these historic alignments could be considered to both restore sensitive wetland meadows and iconic view sheds. These realignments were recommended by a former superintendent 7. Consider retaining the current alignment of North Side Drive (NSD) at Yosemite Lodge and address the pedestrian/traffic conflict at the Yosemite Falls intersection. with regulated day use or another on site pedestrian/traffic solution. Rerouting NSD south of the Lodge complex to resolve this issue would seriously impact wetland resources and the aesthetic values of the area and would not be consistent with current efforts to protect the ORV's of the Merced River. Some existing lodge units could be relocated farther away from the River possibly into the area presently occupied by employee housing and amenities. 8. Eliminate roadside parking at El Cap meadow. The Cathedral Rocks/Spires view shed is one of the most iconic in the Park and it is pennantly debased with a solid line of vehicles and visitors trampling El Cap meadow to dust trying to get a look at rock climbers on near by cliffs. There is a suitable non sensitive area north of NSD on an old road alignment that could accommodate vehicles and observers where they would be out of sight of the meadows and view shed and not impact sensitive meadow wetlands. Additional restrooms and increased shuttle service should be included in this restoration effort. See comment under # six. 9. Maximize shuttle service throughout the Valley including to West Valley destinations to reduce private vehicle use and restrict limited term roadside parking to only designate turnouts. High priority should be given to secluding any new or relocated parking to tree covered areas. Landscaping with native plants would further mitigate parking lot impacts. Avoid proposals presenting new "open air" parking lots and eliminate or upgrade them where they now occur. 10. The size and number of tour buses and the under regulated emissions emanating from those vehicles greatly impact the ORV's of the Merced. Public transportation is an important objective to relieve congestion along the Merced, but their numbers, size~ emissions and parking venues need to be addressed. 11. Encourage visitor activities directed toward natural and cultural park qualities over non ecocentric activities like golf and tennis that would be appropriate outside a National Park. 12. Valley rafting in the Merced River impacts resource and aesthetic values. Consider reducing or eliminating this activity. 13. Consider reducing visitor impacts along sensitive riparian shorelines and direct river access to non sensitive sand and gravel bars. 14. Reduce the incredible inventory of obsolete "stuff" in Yosemite Village. Unnecessary buildings, warehouses, corporate offices, a vehicle repair facility, junked equipment., and an unserviceable helicopter that is no longer necessary for current operations should be reduced or eliminated from Yosemite Village and Valley. Removing much of the outdated and obsolete infrastructure and clutter would allow relocating much of the day use parking in Camp Six to more appropriate locations closer to visitor services in the Village area. Wetland areas in Camp Six nearest the river could then be restored to natural conditions. Similar reductions in non relevant visitor amenities and infrastructure should be considered at Curry as well. 15. Consider reducing NPS stock use to minimum

essential levels and eliminate concession stock and stables to reduce stock waste and pollution and to minimize other stock related impacts to Valley resources. 16. Increase the number of walk-in and group campsites and consider placing them in presently occupied areas including the concessionaire stables area, or the area east of the Ahwahnee currently being used as a NPS storage area. Landscaping existing campgrounds with appropriate native vegetation would greatly improve the camping experience in Yosemite Valley. Additional out-of-Valley campgrounds emphasizing youth groups and walk-in sites should be developed in appropriate locations with shuttle service provided to the Valley. The former Upper and Lower River campgrounds destroyed in the '97 flood should be restored to as natural a condition as possible. 17. Consider whether a limited number of hookups for RV's should be provided and whether to restrict them to a single campground located away from other camp units. The size and number of RV's for both day and overnight use should have defined limits. 18. Many visitors have expressed opposition to the smoke and air pollution generated in Valley campgrounds for both environmental and health related reasons. Campfire smoke is especially detrimental to visitors with chronic respiratory problems and can significantly impact their health and the quality of their camping experience. With health concerns in mind, consideration should be given to whether they could be restricted to designated campgrounds, or eliminated entirely or only during the summer season. 19. Prescribed burns are needed for fuels management and healthy forests. New management criteria should be reviewed and revised to prevent prescribed burns from getting out of control. 20. Efforts to restore and maintain iconic view sheds should continue along with efforts to eradicate invasive exotic species. 21. Consider reducing the total number of accommodations in the Valley at Curry and the Lodge. Reduced to the maximum level possible the number and density of tent cabins at Curry and replace them with low cost architecturally appropriate units. An affordable price range for overnight accommodations between Yosemite Lodge and Housekeeping rates could be considered without increasing the number of overnight units or pillows. 22. The current employee housing situation and infrastructure at Curry, the Yosemite Lodge area is abominable and must be resolved. Relocations to Foresta or other out of Park locations should be considered. Essential in-Park NPS and concession employee housing should be razed and rebuilt to architectural standards appropriate in a National Park. The Yosemite Committee is looking forward to working with you and your staff, on these and other issues, during this precedent setting planning effort. Reducing impacts by regulating day use when demand exceeds capacity will be a key factor in our efforts to protect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River. Policies and actions developed and taken in this planning process could be incorporated into the planning process of other units of the National Park system where resources and the visitor experience are impacted by over use. Thanks for listening Sierra Club's Yosemite Committee

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**Correspondence ID:** 343      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Brauer, Lawrence  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb.04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** I am writing to comment for the public scoping phase of the revised Merced River Plan. I am not affiliated with any organizations, but wish to convey my views regarding a place that I regard as uniquely precious. I have been visiting Yosemite Valley and the Sierra for over 30 years and have hiked most of the Sierra backcountry from the Hoover Wilderness to the Golden Trout Wilderness. Yosemite Valley is one of the places I return to year after year; each time, I discover and learn something that inspires and sustains. I have observed how fragile this singular place is and how human interference becomes a constant threat to its remarkable beauty. In developing a plan that will sustain this incomparable place for future generations, all of us must seek ways to minimize further human impact in an area that has been developed for 150 years. The current state of development along with visitor expectations based on long-established traditions have made prior attempts at a comprehensive plan problematic. I am hopeful you will develop a plan that will preserve the Merced River corridor and allow future generations of visitors to appreciate this remarkable place. The sense of Yosemite Valley being a scenic version of Disneyland needs to be changed. Too many visitors come to the Valley without comprehending they are visiting a national park, not an amusement park. The rangers do their best to educate the public, but many visitors lack of knowledge along with expectations created by outside media hype and the Delaware North Company (DNC) create an amusement park with fabulous scenery atmosphere. During peak visitor season Yosemite Valley and the Merced River corridor are transformed into more an overcrowded playground than the "crown jewel" of the National Park system. DNC emphasizes and promotes a sense of Yosemite as a luxury resort in a spectacular location. In order to preserve the park and the river corridor, this must change. DNC's input on this plan should be minimal and their opinion merely one among, I hope, thousands. Better public education is crucial to the preservation of Yosemite Valley and the Merced River. Any new plan must include that as a major component, especially since a new plan should contain provisions that may require major adjustment in public perceptions of visiting Yosemite Valley. There needs to finally be a coherent, workable transit plan for Yosemite Valley. This has been discussed for many years with many ideas proposed as to how to best limit auto traffic. The current shuttle bus system provides excellent service. Unfortunately, the public education to use the system is inadequate. Auto travel should be considered as a means to enter and leave the Valley, not as a way to move within the Valley. Yosemite Valley should be a place for shuttle bus, foot, and bike traffic. Overnight visitors should be encouraged to park their cars at their destination and get around by bus, hiking, and biking. Upon check-in at a campground, housekeeping camp, Yosemite Lodge, Curry Village, and Ahwahnee Hotel, every overnight visitor should be handed a shuttle bus map Laurence Brauer, Merced River Scoping Comments, Page 2 and told they should not drive within the Valley in order to allow all visitors to better enjoy and experience the park and better preserve this place for future generations. During peak season, day visitors should park outside the Valley and ride a shuttle system. I suggest the Big Oak Flat/Hodgdon Meadow entrance (perhaps by the existing maintenance yard), Crane Flat (by the gas station), El Portal, and the existing Badger Pass ski area lot as possible places for peak season day visitors to park and catch a shuttle. Further parking should not be created within Yosemite Valley. There already is too much concrete and asphalt covering the Valley. I am in agreement with most of the provisions of the Selected Modified Alternatives for Yosemite Lodge along with Curry Village and the Campgrounds. However, there should be no electrical hookups for RVs in any Yosemite campground. Also, DNC needs to remove the televisions from guest rooms. Yosemite Valley is already over-developed with the accouterments of modern urban civilization. Electrical hookups are a luxury, not a necessity for camping. Campers and lodge guests in a national park do not need to watch television or videos. The stone bridges over the Merced are historical and beautiful. However, in places where they exist that do not require a road, they should be removed for the preservation of the Merced. They should be replaced by hike and bike bridges that are more conducive to preserving the riparian zone. An earlier plan proposed removing many of the existing bridges, which would have resulted in even foot and bike traffic being

concentrated in narrow corridors for travel from one side of the Valley to the other. This is the worst possible concept for dealing with overcrowding in the Valley and preserving the Merced River. A better approach is to try and spread people out over the relatively narrow area as much as possible. This means encouraging people to hike and bike in as many areas as possible through trails and bridges over the Merced. In areas where a bridge might encourage people to explore and damage the riverbank, restrict the riparian zone the same way as has been done with the fragile meadows. The first of the Topic Questions Instructions asked "What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?" When it comes to the Merced River and Yosemite Valley, the answer is simple but involves a wide range of emotions and experiences. I have followed the Merced to its source in the Clark Range, spending two unforgettable days camped by the Merced Peak Fork. Years later, camped at an unnamed lake above the canyon, I was transfixed by the silver ribbon of water winding 2,000 feet below. My wife and I have visited Yosemite Valley nearly every winter since 1983. Each year we are both reassured by how this uniquely beautiful place remains the same while we discover the subtle constant changes of the natural world. Walking across the Valley after a fresh snowfall in the light of the full moon is a profoundly magical experience. I want those experiences to be there for future generations. If the Merced River Plan approaches the river corridor as a unique natural wonder with humans as another species within its larger ecosystem, then it will succeed. Thank you for your consideration.

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**Correspondence ID:** 344      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mohr, Jon  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I'm writing to comment on Yosemite's Merced River Plan. I am very concerned about the harmful effects of business activities and other high-impact uses, such as commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor. My specific comments are as follows: Your plan for the Merced River should include a provision to remove the commercial horse stables from Yosemite Valley.. This is not a radical idea. The previous Yosemite Valley Plan called for the removal of the concession stables from the Valley, and restoration of the site. This should be included in the new plan, with a time schedule to ensure that it happens in a timely manner. The public has been waiting too long for this polluting business to be removed from the Valley. Your plan for the Merced River should close the polluting High Sierra Camps at Merced Lake, Vogelsang, May Lake, and Sunrise. This is not a radical idea. Decades ago, Congress authorized the Park Service to remove these aged, ugly, and polluting commercial enterprises. These elitist developments pollute Yosemite's backcountry with sewage, wastewater, trash, and noise. They should be closed as soon as possible, and the sites restored. Park Service staff should stop attempting to rationalize the polluting High Sierra Camps as being "historic" or part of our "heritage." The Glacier Point "firefall," feeding bears at garbage dumps, allowing recreation stock to travel off trails, and logging of giant Sequoias are also part of our heritage -- but they were discontinued long ago when it became obvious that they are harmful to the park and to the experience of visitors. It is long past time to similarly stop the pollution and degradation of the Merced River and its corridor by removing the damaging High Sierra Camps.

Because domestic livestock (i.e., horses, mules, etc.) are known to pollute water, spread weeds, erode trails, and cause significant conflicts with foot travelers, your plan for the Merced River should adopt strict limits and controls on this harmful activity.

Specifically: 1) all commercial horse rides should be banned within the Wild & Scenic river corridor; 2) when stock must be used, stock parties should be kept as small as possible (i.e., limited to no more than 12 "heartbeats" per group); 3) all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure. Such products are now widely available and inexpensive. (See, for example, the websites: Bunbag.com and Equisan.com.au); and 4) to prevent the spread of harmful invasive weeds, all stock animals must be sufficiently quarantined before entering the park, and must be tied up and supplied weed-free feed, with no open grazing or roaming on park lands.. Because livestock are known to spread invasive weeds by importing weed seeds on their coats and in their manure, all stock animals should be strictly required to be properly washed and quarantined before they are allowed to enter Yosemite, all grazing within the Merced River corridor should be prohibited, and only weed-free feed should be allowed.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Please craft a plan that will truly protect the Merced River and its corridor from ongoing harm. Oakland

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**Correspondence ID:** 345      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Clark, JoAnne  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent Neubacher: First, I would like to welcome you as our new superintendent for Yosemite National Park. I look forward to your advocacy for the protection of this special place that belongs to all of us. I appreciate the opportunity to provide my ideas on what the scope and extent of analysis should be in developing the new Merced River Plan.

My comments will be general and based on one overriding goal for the Merced River and Yosemite National Park. That goal is the protection and preservation of nature; natural processes, natural environments and natural ecosystems for future generations. All park service plans for restoration, construction, housing, parking and visitor use should be governed by this goal. I will not pretend to be a

geologist or a hydrologist but my logic tells me that floods and rock falls are a part of the natural processes that take place in this unique Valley. They have shaped the Valley into what it is today. The Merced River will continue to meander back and forth across the Valley floor and frost wedging will continue to pry slabs of granite off the Valley walls. These natural processes should be considered foremost in any plans for the Merced River and for Yosemite Valley.

Consider reducing obstruction of the river during flood levels by lowering the bridges so the high water can flow over them or by providing portable bridges that can be moved as the river changes its course. Study the consequences of rip rap removal and how it will affect the river channel. Determine the natural condition of the river and let that govern decisions on how best to protect this precious resource.

Careful consideration should be taken when deciding where to place visitor or employee accommodations. Danger from rock fall is unpredictable and can result in tragedy for those unaware of the risk. Existing geologic data on rock fall should be made easily available to the public while park geologists continue to gather the most up-to-date information on Yosemite Valley rock fall locations and frequency. Yosemite is a finite resource. It cannot accommodate an unlimited number of cars, buses or human beings. Carrying capacity must be considered in any plan for the park. User capacity, global and specific, should be determined with regard to impacts on the outstanding and remarkable values and then consider infrastructure to support that capacity. Numeric capacity limits need to include scientists, naturalists, and researchers for resource protection. Consider linking the number of rangers/naturalists to the number of visitors for education and resource protection. It may be necessary to establish a day use reservation system especially on heavy use holidays and weekends. This would insure access for those with reservations while there could be a first-come first-served component on a space available basis. Overnight accommodations should take into consideration social and economic equity. A proportional analysis of the various categories of lodging could provide valuable information for planning efforts. It was the primitive tent camping of my youth that has made me such a strong advocate for protection and preservation of nature. Primitive camp sites should not be minimized in favor of hotel and motel type accommodations that are not affordable to most park visitors.

Consider removing all obsolete, inappropriate and unnecessary infrastructures not consistent with National Park purposes or resource protection mandates. Instead of invading presently natural, undeveloped areas with new campgrounds consider replacing these unnecessary, high-impact facilities with low cost camping or lodging opportunities.

Give serious consideration to environmental impacts before advocating for the installation of RV hookup sites. Such sites do not currently exist in Yosemite and the excavation necessary to establish them will degrade the environment. Study the option of providing RV camps in areas such as Foresta or Wawona, outside of the Valley. Focus on which employees need to be housed in the Valley and then consider the nature of their accommodations. Consider locations outside of the Park for non-essential employee housing.

Think about limiting the number of souvenir and gift shops within the park. Local communities will benefit economically by providing this service outside of the park boundaries. This would also apply to concessions such as riding stables and river rafting.

Be thoughtful of the environmental damage that asphalt and petroleum products cause to the natural ecosystem. Research sustainable pavement alternatives currently available for road and trail repair and consider replacing all asphalt surfaces with context sensitive pavement materials that will limit the visual impacts of trails, paths and roads.

Rather than advocating for large, major satellite parking lots, consider a number of small, unobtrusive, dispersed parking lots scattered throughout the Valley with access to a shuttle system that would cover the entire Valley. To facilitate the viewing of Yosemite's incomparable resources contemplate adding more roadside turnouts and eliminate roadside parking where the visual impact is greater.

If the current free shuttle system were expanded beyond the Valley, facilitating access to Wawona, Glacier Point, Crane Flat, Tuolumne Meadows and other areas it could potentially significantly reduce vehicular congestion and provide alternatives to private autos. The feasibility of this option should be studied.

The one-way road circulation within the Valley seems to work just fine to me and I appreciate the fact that the narrow road limits traffic speeds and oversized vehicles. Please consider retaining the Ahwahnee Meadow road between Camp Curry and Yosemite Village and Northside Drive between Yosemite Lodge and the El Capitan Bridge. Any re-routing or realigning of roads should be done only after careful study of the impacts on the river, wetlands, and scenic views.

Most of the traffic congestion in the Valley occurs during peak visitation periods. Weigh the option of a day use reservation system to eliminate this. Think about addressing the problem of pedestrian crossings by installing pedestrian-activated signal lights at heavily used intersections. Again, keep in mind the environmental degradation caused by major excavation projects.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the fact that my comments have centered on Yosemite Valley. I understand that I should be addressing the Merced River as it is classified "wild and scenic" and the requirement to protect, not degrade, and to restore as much as possible to its natural state. With that in mind, I will add that throughout the entire Park impacts on the river and wetlands should be studied carefully before implementing any type of management plan. Please keep me informed as the scoping process proceeds.

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**Correspondence ID:** 346      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Eden, Joy M  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** "The map is not the territory," Alfred Korzybski

Superintendent Neubacher:

Since 1997, I have participated actively and extensively in the planning processes and plans for Yosemite National Park (the Park) including El Portal and the Merced River. Previously, I actively participated in Yosemite planning processes and plans especially the Concession Services Plan (CSP) in 1991 and 1992. I have been greatly disappointed in the manner and outcomes of the planning processes. These processes have led to plans and projects which, in the main, have been inappropriate justifications for development and so-called, "maintenance" and "improvements," directly leading to degradation and destruction of the natural, cultural, hydrologic, archeologic, and scenic values of the River and the Park and of the visitor experience.

Myself, along with many other knowledgeable people who care about the preservation of Yosemite and the visitor experience, have walked and watched and imbibed Yosemite and the Merced River, researched documents, and worked hard to communicate our concerns to the National Park Service (NPS) to prevent just such degradation. We communicated extensively through both oral and written comments. While we did manage to prevent much additional degradation and destruction, at least for now; there is much we were not able to prevent.

Understanding that most or perhaps all the National Park Service employees entered NPS because of their love of nature and/or wanting to engage in employment which was also a benefit and service to the public and the Park -- somewhere along the way, this went wrong for individual employees, for the NPS, for Yosemite and for future generations. The legacy we are leaving is sadly and unnecessarily degraded.

I am writing these comments in the hope that the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) that comes out of this process will not provide a platform for the same into the future. Instead, that it will form the basis for actual protection and preservation of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVS) and the visitor experience based on those including the intrinsic Park values.

#### CURRENT PLANNING PROCESS: THE HELPFUL and THE NOT HELPFUL & INAPPROPRIATE

1) Real communication at the Berkeley Scoping Meeting: Before deciding to attend the scoping meeting in Berkeley, I had been hearing reports back from other scoping meetings of real communication taking place. I found that I still went into the scoping meeting in Berkeley feeling I would be facing yet another pro-forma meeting in which there was not real communication and listening from NPS employees, in which there was a pre-determined plan for the Park, and which did not allow for the public to hear a dialogue between NPS and the public. A meeting in which the public's questions and comments were a one-way street with no dialogue between NPS employees and the public in the public setting so everyone could hear the comments, questions and responses in an open forum. However, we did, in fact, get to hear both the questions and answers and also the concerns of our fellow participants.

The NPS staff was very open to hearing comments and answering questions in the first part of the meeting during the presentation. I greatly appreciated this new step by the NPS which I had asked for in previous venues and was either ignored or overridden.

2) At the Berkeley meeting, I asked what the process would be for reading and compiling the scoping comments. I was concerned, as previous comments had been read and responses organized and compiled by a division in the Forest Service, rather than by the Yosemite Park planners. This meant that the public comments were not read in full, potentially important nuances could be lost, and the thrust of individual's specific and general comments were never read and understood for consideration by the CMP (and YVP) planners. Probably the same would be so for the NPS and USGS scientists. This discounting of the importance of the actual public comments was unhelpful to the planning process, to communication and I believe inappropriate. The public has the expectation that their comments will be read and considered by those drafting the plans and making the decisions.

However, I was assured at the meeting that the head planner would read the comments herself. Another NPS representative stated that in another planning process, she took the comments to planning meetings in a shopping bag and put them on the table. I guess this was for focus and for availability for consideration? That would be my hope and suggestion for the Merced River CMP.

3) The four predetermined NPS questions unnecessarily constrained the conversation. One of the NPS staff appeared to ask for a wide open "wish" list of what would we like. I responded that was not appropriate, as protection, preservation and enhancement of the ORVS is called for. The "wish" list framed gave an impression that it would be appropriate for the public to ask, e.g., for a movie theater.

4) No Notice until today, the deadline, in the Federal Register of the Extension of the Scoping Period to February 4, 2010.

5) No Notice, to date, in the Federal Register of NPS Rescinding the Yosemite Valley Plan.

6) Completely inappropriate posting of the 2007 Draft ORV report on the NPS web site regarding Scoping for the current CMP planning process. This sets a frame for the ORVs when no frame should be set. It sets the expectation in the public's mind that this is the frame upon which their ORV comments should be focused. It sets a frame for Park Planners for their thinking regarding ORVs in the new CMP. The ORVs during the scoping period should be open for new thinking and for outside the box thinking of what they are, how they are defined and how to actually protect them. And from whom to protect them -- it is the NPS has done more harm to ORVs that the public over the last 13 years (see discussion later in these comments).

In addition, the last time I looked, the NPS web site contained links to, "completed plans," which inappropriately included plans which were rescinded and/or declared invalid. Those should not be up on the NPS web site designated as, "completed plans." The posting of these plans gives the public the false impression that they are valid plans which are in effect and are being followed by YNP. This is not ok and could interfere with the content of public comments on this scoping period and other plans.

7) Concession Services Plan (CSP). Also completely inappropriate is any current work, drafting or negotiations towards framing the new Concessions Services Plan. The CMP needs to be finalized before a new CSP is scoped or drafted. A new CSP must be based on a new and valid CMP. I spoke to this at the Berkeley scoping meeting during the presentation period, so it was communicated to the acting Superintendent and to the CMP Chief Planner.

The new CSP is an opportunity to bring the CSP in line with a new and finally protective CSP. If the Concessionaire is not satisfied with a new CSP and its removal of unnecessary and inappropriate accommodations and accoutrements (see below), then they do not have to bid on it. It is long past time to do this. Now is the time.

**DEGRADED or DESTROYED IN THE LAST 13 OR MORE YEARS: VISITORS, EMPLOYEES AND CHILDREN PUT AT RISK:**

1) The previously undisturbed geologic ediface just east of the junction of 140 and 41. This is/was the geologic configuration where the V shaped valley becomes the U shaped valley. This was specifically identified as an ORV in the 2005? ORV listing. That is, the place where the Merced River Canyon becomes Yosemite Valley. Do you who are reading this feel the power of that statement in your heart? In service of (unnecessarily) widening the road in 2007(?), the NPS DESTROYED this IRREPLACEABLE geologic monument. This was also a special scenic and esthetic value and experience. (I feel sick picturing this loss as I used to particularly enjoyed viewing it for its own special esthetic value and its heralding of Yosemite Valley)

2) The upslope and the downslope along the Merced River Canyon -- its habitat, inhabitants, trees and destabilization of its slopes through the unnecessary road widening project. (I cried a lot when we could not stop this and still cannot look at that Canyon. Has my visitor experience been enhanced by NPS?) The rarity of this previously in tact ecosystem ORV at this elevation in the Sierra Nevada was specifically highlighted in the Report on the Sierra Nevada some years before. The ORV values have been amply documented in litigation why they should not have been destroyed or degraded in an attempt to prevent this. That includes the increased instability of its slopes through the road widening process.

3) The historic Works Progress Administration 1930's rock wall ORV which previously lined the El Portal Road along the Merced River Canyon in Yosemite. Bulldozed down by YNP -- with merely a tiny remnant left. This is after having carefully protected it only a few years previous to that during a road paving project, by carefully covering its entire length with a protective covering so as not to get any splashes of asphalt or other materials on it. Although my main focus is on natural values, I enjoyed viewing the wall along the Canyon road and contemplating that it was constructed with the dual public purpose of the collective public providing jobs for those in need during the 1930s' depression era; while at the same time, providing the workers with the opportunity to create a public good -- a protective wall along the road in this public national park. This historic wall and the intentions and process which created it is not only historically important; but as it turns out, is an important example for today and tomorrow.

4) The Lower Yosemite Falls (LYF) Area (I feel literally nauseous in naming this travesty and try not to picture the ridiculousness of this paving project in a unique braided stream area and the huge disrespect it is to the Native Americans -- a monument to blind callousness. I will spell it out -- the bathroom actually overbuild like an NPS monument and placed on top of the principal Native American settlement in the Valley, with sewage pipes perhaps running through graves beneath it. Could it be any worse? What if these were your ancestors or the remains of someone you were intending to honor?)

Understanding that there is no good spot for a bathroom at the LYF Area and there is no good spot for a bus stop. However, YNP managers kept the yellow tapes and debris from the 1997 high water conspicuously visible for years -- that is, it was kept a visible mess which helped to justify an overdone over built destructive project to the public. (The same was done in Yosemite Lodge area and elsewhere for years, some places, for a decade.) The bathroom was obviously in need of modernization; however, it did not need to be relocated to an entirely new area at LYF. The solution was to build a new bathroom on the same footprint. Not a ridiculous resort structure edifice on top of Native American ground.

The LYF project was not a restoration project, it was a development project with a plaque. Despite the numerous promises to the contrary over many years of absolute assurances, the paths were not build of permeable materials, but instead of impermeable materials. The statements by those attending the first LYF workshop was that it should be an environmentally protective restoration project. Myself and others also pointed out that the eastern part of the loop trail afforded a quiet experience that should be retained. By the second workshop, it was obvious to myself and some NPS staff, that neither of those goals and intentions was what was happening. I objected at that meeting (NPS staff who disagreed did not object out loud). Yet the meeting is presented as a unanimous

approbation. That is not the case.

While there is a very small amount of restoration at LYF, the project is a development project which degraded the ORVS in many ways, which I will not list here, but should be obvious. The part of the project that would have been real restoration -- removal of the human made blockage of one of the braided streams just below the bridge -- was completely dropped from the project.

This is an illustration of problems with having private entities operating in a national park -- in this case a "non-profit" entity. Known as a, "Park Partner." While the Yosemite Fund is operated as a "non-profit," that does not in and of itself mean that it is operating for the public good or under the mission of the National Park System. In fact, it appears that the donation of money to the Yosemite Fund for this project created a push to make this an overblown project and inappropriately pushed the time frame for this project through, without an adequate opportunity for the public to really understand it and to comment on it. The plaque is on the wall. The damage is done. When people purchase a "Yosemite" license plate, they assume it is helping the Park. My guess is that to most of the public that assumes protection and preservation. Yet my understanding is that much of that money does not go directly to NPS; but rather, to the Yosemite Fund. Years ago before the LYF project began, I tried to get some information about it, only to be told by NPS that it was private privileged information because it was a Yosemite Fund project.

The Yosemite Fund is now headed by a former Superintendent of YNP. A concerning revolving door situation.

5) Building the Curry Employee Dormitory in a rock fall zone. I was among the many people who objected to the plan to build the Curry Employee Dormitory in what appeared to be a rock fall zone. Through a Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA), I obtained the YNP records of a serious rock fall that happened just prior to or during the planning stage near the area of the proposed Curry Dormitory. Therefore, we objected to the project as potentially putting employees at risk. We also asked for a geologic study of rock fall and bounce/debris zones in Yosemite Valley before any other planning and projects took place. It is my understanding that this study is still not released to the public. The former Superintendent of YNP who signed off on the Curry Dormitory project in its present location, with the knowledge of our objections based on the aforementioned concerns, is now the head of the Yosemite Fund. Perhaps he would like to live in Yosemite Valley in a penthouse on the top floor of the Curry Dormitory to demonstrate his confidence in signing off on that project and of confidence for the safety of the employees who now live there. Is there ever any responsibility? Isn't the reason that there is a signature on a document because someone is supposed to be responsible for the decision?

6) The construction of the pipe from Housekeeping to Camp 6 through the Merced River.

7) Glacier Point development. Before or around 1997 I was at Glacier Point with some NPS staff. One of them pointed out that there would be a development at Glacier Point which would consolidate the (small little) gift shop and the (small little) snack bar. I said I wished the General Management Plan had called for them to be only one very small building away from the line of sight and the parking lot in a certain area. When I later hiked the trail from Yosemite Valley up to Glacier point, I was shocked to see the overdone development. Some years later when I looked at the GMP, I saw that what I had suggested, had indeed been what was called for in the GMP, not what was pointed out to me and subsequently built. The GMP was wrong in any case because, while it generally had beneficial overall goals, it was loaded with inappropriate compromises. Why in the world have a "gift shop" at Glacier Point, except to fill the coffers of the for-profit concessionaire. And why have a snack bar, beyond some simple drinks and snacks, except for the same reason.

8) The closing the Rivers campground for "restoration" and then using it as a storage area for years and years while the weeds from the disturbed land grew over piles of garbage. I was one of the people who participated in the removal (so-called restoration) of picnic benches and bear boxes from the Rivers campground in 1997.

9) Bracebridge Dinners. I really wish nothing needed to be said re this. Remove them from the Park. Just because Ansel Adams instituted this idea in Yosemite, does not make it appropriate for Yosemite. And he only instituted one, not 7 or 8 or whatever the number is now. This is a prime example of the Concessionaire having a vested monetary interest in an inappropriate activity in Yosemite and apparently being allowed to expand it by a compliant YNP management. All the extra truck trips bringing in the supplies, all the extra garbage to be hauled out, all the people coming for a reenactment of an early European pageant completely unrelated to Yosemite. This is appropriate to San Francisco or Fresno and could be properly sited and enjoyed in those locations. The Concessionaire could rent hotels and hold those dinners there, and make their profits in those locations.

10) The cumulative impacts not only of other YNP plans and projects and plans and projects outside of YNP; but also, the impacts from the degraded or destroyed ORVS must be considered. Because of the degradation or destruction of ORVS by YNP since 1997 and also from 1980 - 1997, no mitigation is an acceptable justification nor excuse for any further degradation or destruction of any of the aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological and scientific features' ORVS of the Merced River. There can be no justification nor excuse for any further degradation or destruction. In fact, restoration where possible needs to be mandatory. (Section 10(a) Wild and Scenic Rivers Act)

In fulfilling this mandate, NPS needs to ask itself, "How many No Significant Impacts equal or add up to a Significant Impact or Cumulative Impacts? A continuing ignoring of these impacts and inappropriate justifications of them needs to stop now. No Significant Impacts and categorical exclusions (CE) have been used profusely and inappropriately to "develop" or "fix" or "maintain" YNP facilities, building or amenities. If this CMP is to mean anything, this practice has to stop now. Needed repairs and maintenance are different from most of what has been done under that rubric for decades in YNP, especially in the last 13 years.

CONSEQUENCES: DEGRADATION OF ORVS The WSRA mandate is not only to protect, but also to enhance the ORVS. Much

must be done to even get back to protection and restoration, where possible, of what remains. Much is lost.

HEIGHTENED IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTION OF ORVS AND "ENHANCEMENT" OF WHAT REMAINS: ANY "MITIGATION" FOR DEGRADING OR DESTROYING ANY ORV IS NOT ACCEPTIBLE.

ORV BASELINE I would hope it is obvious that the ORV baseline is NOT the current baseline of the degraded or destroyed ORVS. There needs to be a category for degraded and lost or destroyed ORVS. While they can no longer be protected, the knowledge of their loss is important to carry on into the future as a part of the CMP.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE & WHAT TO DO NOW -- YOU ARE HERE! THIS IS IT! SIT QUIETLY IN A MEADOW AND YOU WILL KNOW! Type of or Quality of "use," that is, enjoyment of the River and its ORVS is of premier importance in determining capacity based on protection of ORVs. The less stuff, the more enjoyment of Yosemite and the Merced's ORVS and probably the more people who can enjoy it.

The accoutrements of suburbia and urban cities are not only a distraction from the ORVS, the values of Yosemite, they are at best an interference of their enjoyment and appreciation; and at worst, which is too often the case, degradation or destruction of them.

Removal of the inappropriate uses and developments in Yosemite including: Wawona golf course, Ahwahnee Tennis Courts, Curry Pavilion, especially the BBQ, sports bars, swimming pools, television sets in lodge/hotel rooms, souvenir shops (properly put in gateway communities), etc.

Reinstatement of the Yosemite Lodge area visitor room for cold weather and winter time campers -- Not a sports bar. Reinstatement of certain campgrounds.

Some years ago I was taking a break from reading in the Yosemite Research Library near the visitor center. I overheard the following approximate loud complaint at the ice cream parlor. Someone had tried to order a banana split. The clerk said they did not have any. The patron loudly complained that it was ridiculous that he could not order a banana split and that they should have them. This is an example of the slippery slope from having suburban-urban type amenities -- more and more are expected. It is the NPS who sets or should be setting the expectations. If Yosemite appears to visitors like just another place in their suburban-urban environment or like a resort or club med -- then they want and expect these types of accommodations. The NPS could and should be setting other expectations.

A simple grocery store, simple dining areas and ordinary supplies for campers and lodgers that they might have forgotten to bring, were unable to bring, or ran out of and needed for their stay at Yosemite as a basic necessity.

This also speaks to Camping versus Hard Sided Lodging. On the outside it can and often does appear that Camping has the most detrimental impact. But a study would probably reveal, that taking all appropriate impacts into consideration, e.g., including changing and washing sheets, employees to change the sheets, housing, food, healthcare, barber and beauty shops, entertainment, etc, for those employees versus car campers who can bring most of their own bedding, much of their food and utensils, and other supplies and take them out with them as well as entertaining themselves by being outside, seeing, hearing, smelling, walking and hiking or sitting quietly, preparing their food, and generally enjoying where they are and by doing so deepening their appreciation of the myriad of gifts Yosemite and the Merced River have to offer.

Driving within Yosemite Valley. Most people do not realize how close most places are to each other in Yosemite Valley. Many car trips are taken within the Valley, when those who are able, could just as easily walk. And the walk in and of itself is the experience and reveals more to the visitor than driving to the close by Valley destination. For those not able to walk, or picking up supplies, the Valley shuttle is there.

Getting to Yosemite and Yosemite Valley is another matter. I was a knee-jeck buses are more environmentally beneficial mode to get to Yosemite than cars. That was before I had many conversations with gateway people and also before I looked at the situation and studied it in more depth. I then came to realize, that while I am a strong advocate for public transportation using it to get to Yosemite for the majority of people now and into the near future, is not the best means either environmentally or for the visitor experience. This has been spoken to many times: The detriment both to the environment and to the visitor experience of dumping a large bunch of people off at the same time in the same place -- as has been learned in Zion. The four entrances and exists of YNP and the fact that around 1/3 or more of visitors enter one entrance and exit through another. If they were forced to park remotely, they would be backtracking, therefore doubling or tripling their drive. Buses do not run full. Buses still are much more polluting than cars when you average the amt of people in a car in Yosemite versus in a bus and add up the amt of pollution --- since cars are so much less polluting than diesel buses.

I lived in Paris and therefore know how great public transportation can work and how much better it is quality of life as well as efficiency -- IN A BIG CITY. A couple of years ago, I heard that the East side of Berkeley would no longer have buses running. Why? Because there was not enough population to support the public transportation system in that particular area. It takes a critical mass amount of people for public transportation. Let's hope that that critical mass never comes to Yosemite.

DEFINING THE ORVS The first step in defining the ORVS should be a walk in Yosemite Valley, along the Merced River in El Portal, along the High Sierra trails, the source of the Merced, and wherever the River flows. Look down from the overlooks at Glacier Point for example. Is there a line that can be drawn regarding the Merced River, its influence, and the influence and formation of the



granite walls/hanging valleys's on the Merced River? The answer that I hope the planners will sense and understand to that questions is, "no." Isn't this understanding the best way to begin to approach the ORVS?

Specific versus General:

If the ORVs are SPECIFIC: they are too constrained and much gets left out.

If the ORVs are GENERAL: much that is defined specifically does not get protected and/or gets degraded or destroyed as merely a part or a portion of a contribution to the whole, as not being the whole.

Therefore, in order to actually protect the ORVS it is necessary to define them both as 1. SPECIFICS and particularities and at the same time 2. as GENERAL or more broadly.

The point is made that definition by segmenting the Merced River is not the best way to protect the river and its ORVS.

Defining either ORVS as, "Recreational" is not protective of ORVs, nor is defining a segment of the Merced River, "Recreational."

THE ENTIRETY OF YOSEMITE VALLEY IS AN AESTHETIC, SCENIC AND SCIENTIFIC ORV. A litany of monumental and stupendous edifices, edifice by edifice, neither does Yosemite Valley justice, nor is descriptive of its aesthetic and scenic ORVS. The first time or times seeing Yosemite, one wants to identify these natural monuments. But they are part of a continuous and contiguous whole. Basing, constraining or describing ORVS based on the paintings, drawing and photographs of Thomas Hill, and all the artists and photographers who created the wonderful depictions of various specific views and scenic wonders in and of the Valley, is lacking. If those artists had stayed their entire life in Yosemite, they would have been painting new scenes and vantage points endlessly. Even standing in one spot, one could spend an entire lifetime painting as one turned 360 degrees, then looked up and down, closer and farther in different times of the year and in differing weather conditions.

"The Valley comprehensively seen . . ." John Muir's depiction says it best. You cannot pick out parts of the Valley, it is the Valley in its entirety, it is the Valley itself that is the ORV. You cannot get away from that. If you do, then the ORVS become a mockery or an excuse for carving out the ground for development.

NO MORE DEVELOPMENT

Basing development in Yosemite Valley or elsewhere along the Merced River's environs and hydrology, including waterfalls, oxbows, wetlands, "flood zones"/high water, according to currently or previously developed or disturbed areas is to miss the point entirely.

What is the developed footprint? What is the date of the developed footprint? What is the outline?

It is instructive to look at the Map of Yosemite Valley from 1890.  
[http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john\\_muir\\_writings/the\\_treasures\\_of\\_the\\_yosemite/images/valley\\_map.jpg](http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/the_treasures_of_the_yosemite/images/valley_map.jpg) This should be the ORV boundaries. Of course this boundary was chosen because of the recognition of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (although that particular term was not used then, it was not then needed to express the concept, the preciousness, the intention to protect this amazing and unique River and its place.). While the boundaries of the WSRA constrain to 1/4 mile from the center of the Merced River or xxx acres total, this leaves out the high water of the River. At this point in accepted ordinary scientific hydrological definitions of a river, this leaves out much of the high water areas of the Merced River and much of its waterfalls. As is well known, the hanging valley's from which the water drops, "falls," into Yosemite Valley and which serve to make/form the Merced River itself, are rare and particular in their configurations to the Merced River in Yosemite. This all must be included as ORVS -- as logic and aesthetics and science clearly tells us. Can this be ignored or worse denied without making a mockery of the intention of protecting the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River?

Lastly, I hope you will ponder these concepts in defining the ORVS and what is appropriate or not.

(W)recreation versus Re-creation.

Entertainment versus Enjoyment.

"I am tired of talk that comes to nothing." Chief Joseph

All things are bound together. All things connect. What happens to the Earth happens to the children of the Earth. Man has not woven the web of life. He is but one thread. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. Chief Seattle

Cupertino, CA

**Correspondence ID:** 347      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Dehner, Jean  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** It would seem to me that the plan seeks to diminish the experience of visitors to the park. There needs to be a balance between making the park and the river available to visitors while preserving the environment. The Merced River has continued to flow unimpeded through the valley for quite a number of years and it will continue to do so. Litter, fallen trees, and other debris should be removed to enable to river to keep its current course. Otherwise leave it alone.

I am increasingly concerned about the difficulty in getting camping reservations. We could not visit the valley last summer. If one is not a high tech hot shot who can hit the right button at the right time, you are out of luck. What is even more distressing is to see the number of empty campsites in the valley, even in the busy summer time. Something is wrong with the system; perhaps the newly reconstituted Yosemite Association/Fund can take this issue on.

Hope the plan will enhance the experience of visitors and not make the park more inaccessible than it is becoming.

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**Correspondence ID:** 348      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Sullivan, Cait  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear planners, I am a mom, camper and climber who visits Yosemite at least five times a year. My suggestions are based on visiting the Valley frequently over the past ten years. Please reduce car access and increase bike lanes from Mirror Lake to El Cap. I should be able to bike to El Cap safely. Also, make El Cap Meadow easier to stop at so I can take in the beauty. Re-open Yellow Pines. I volunteered at Facelift and had a wonderful two nights there. Close the horse area and horses for tourists. Place Curry Village there due to the slides. Remove Housekeeping camp - an eyesore in a prime location. Create campsites out of it with a limit on how big vehicles can be. Limit sizes of enormous campers(vehicles, not people). Take down Half Dome cables forever. Take down the train-looking employee housing behind the Lodge; replace it with single story structures. Keep the 50's decor of the Lodge (big windows) within the park.

Increase walk-in campsites and tent campsites throughout the Valley. Take down the horrible green web fencing in front of the historic Camp 4. Expand Camp 4. Keep the cool pay phone booth at Camp 4. That's about it. Palo Alto, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 349      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Colburn, Kevin  
**Outside Organization:** American Whitewater Recreational Groups  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent Neubacher, American Whitewater is pleased to offer these scoping comments regarding the Merced River Plan. American Whitewater is a national non-profit organization with a mission of protecting and restoring our nation's whitewater resources while enhancing opportunities to enjoy them safely. Our members are primarily non-commercial conservation-oriented kayakers, canoeists, and rafters. American Whitewater specializes in connecting paddlers with river stewardship opportunities. While much of our work is focused on river conservation, we also strive to keep Americans connected with rivers and the natural environments that they flow through. Maintaining a close connection between a conservation-oriented facet of the public and our nation's treasured natural landscapes - in a low impact manner that inspires nature appreciation and conservation - is the context of these comments. Yosemite National Park prohibits human-powered kayaking, canoeing, and rafting on most of the rivers and streams within the Park, including significant reaches of the Wild and Scenic Merced River and its tributaries (both within and outside of the Wild and Scenic Corridor, including the Wild and Scenic South Fork of the Merced). American Whitewater asks that the NPS explore (and ultimately adopt) an alternative that allows the public to experience the entire Merced River and its tributaries in human-powered whitewater-specific boats. We ask that the alternative allow only non-commercial use (except for reaches already permitted for commercial use). We ask that the alternative consider managing paddling like any other day use of the Park such as hiking and rock-climbing, and managing overnight paddling like any other overnight backcountry use like backpacking or climbing. We ask that no new or formal river access areas or parking facilities be considered, and that the alternative consider paddlers identical to hikers and other sightseers with regards to parking and accessing the rivers and streams in question. We are fully supportive of also considering (and employing) methods to monitor and if necessary limit use in a rational and fair manner, similar to methods used regarding trail and other resource use and capacities. In analyzing the alternative outlined above, we ask that the National Park Service consider the following issues: 1. National Park Policy and Practice Yosemite National Park is one of only two National Parks in the entire Country to prohibit human-powered kayaking, canoeing, and rafting (i.e. paddling) on any river reach. All other National Parks allow paddling throughout the Parks' waters. For an example you may want to review the recently completed Olympic National Park Final General

Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement, Vol 2, at page 68, which outlines the Park's simple management policy regarding paddling: "Within the frontcountry and wilderness zones, nonmotorized/hand powered boating, including kayaking will continue to be an approved activity." The New River Gorge National River and the Gauley River National Recreation Area are units of the NPS that are largely dedicated to supporting paddling on the New and Gauley rivers in West Virginia. The Rivers and Trails Conservation and Assistance program within the NPS actively advocates that rivers on private and public lands be made accessible to the public. It is generally the policy and practice of the NPS to support the interests of citizens who seek to explore and experience our National Parks from kayaks, canoes, and rafts.

2. Recreational Use Capacity We believe that the paddling capacities of the various reaches of the Merced River and its tributaries are not zero. However, most reaches have been managed as though they have zero capacity for some time. Surely one group of paddlers would not be too many, and alternately one million groups would be too many. We expect that the demand will be significantly below capacity for the waterways in question, and are of course supportive of methods to track and when necessary limit use. We ask that the NPS address the paddling capacity (regardless of the methodology used) of the entire Merced River and its tributaries. If the NPS determines a river reach has a zero capacity, then we ask that the determination be made with significant evidence and explicit rationale.

3. Wilderness Compatibility Paddling is a Wilderness compliant activity. It is non-mechanized, human powered, quiet, low-impact, and is an ancient primitive form of travel. Paddling is allowed in Wilderness areas across the country, and on virtually every river and stream in the Nation.

4. Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Compatibility The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is very supportive of paddling, as are the many interpretive documents relating to the Act published by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Council. This oft quoted section of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act offers insight: "Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. 16 U.S.C. ' 1281(a)." Paddling either is such a value on the Merced River and its tributaries, or is at least an appropriate means of "public use and enjoyment of these values." Certainly paddling does not "substantially interfere" with those values. Thus, the NPS should protect and enhance, or at the very least not unreasonably limit, paddling enjoyment of the Merced River and its tributaries. In addition, allowing paddling is vital to the process of defining the Merced River's outstanding remarkable values. Currently, it is difficult to assess the recreational value of some river reaches because the primary form of recreation is prohibited. Indeed it seems that the NPS will be unable to analyze and recognize an inherent and likely outstanding remarkable value while prohibiting its expression.

5. Management Needs Skilled non-commercial whitewater paddlers have very different and vastly fewer management needs than unskilled and commercial uses on easier stretches. Paddlers would utilize existing trails to access rivers and creeks and follow the same rules as hikers ? in fact they are hikers until they reach the water. Paddlers typically traverse these streams with kayaks that are easily portaged around downed trees (Large Woody Debris) and un-runnable rapids, and typically pass through places without a trace. Paddlers receive their information from trusted community resources, primarily peers, guidebooks, and websites, and do not need interpretive displays or signage. No trails, roads, golf courses, streetlights, hotels, swimming pools, interpretive displays, campgrounds, or new parking facilities are required to support paddling. Paddlers simply need enticing natural rivers and a way to get to them via car or foot.

6. Resource Impacts Resource impacts of allowing paddling can be presumed to be low compared to other uses of the Park. Paddling downstream on a river is likely the lowest impact means of traveling through a natural environment. While accessing the river, scouting, or portaging, paddlers are just like hikers or anglers, leaving only footprints and often not even those when traversing riparian bedrock and boulders. While camping, paddlers are just like backpackers and overnight climbers, and practice leave no trace methods. Many of the paddling opportunities are in parts of the Park that are seldom visited, and flows support paddling during shoulder seasons when other uses are lower in density. Paddling is compatible with other uses of the Park, and equal to them in merit.

7. Recreational Context Paddling is, like hiking, a means of moving through the Park and seeing the sights. In addition, paddling rapids that are unique to the Park allow visitors to directly experience the power and beauty of the Park in a way that can be experienced no other way, and in no other place. The challenges that rivers offer focus the senses, and sharpen the experiences that paddlers have in the Park. Solitude, scenery, small group definition, and sense of place are important to every specialized group like paddlers.

1 Research has shown that paddling, and especially whitewater paddling, is a highly place-based activity.<sup>2</sup> Allowing the American public the opportunity to establish a relationship with the Park on this deep and personal level will significantly enhance the public value of the Park.

8. Youth Outdoors Paddling is fun. Young people like fun. Young people like paddling. Paddling is a great way to get young people outside and experiencing nature in a captivating and playful way. While a family camping trip may not hold the attention of today's youth, paddling a whitewater river certainly does. Just as stressed out adults find peace and solace navigating rapids, scaling crags, and skiing powder, so too do over-stimulated kids and young adults. Watching adults paddle more challenging water can also inspire kids to get outside and learn how to paddle, even if they themselves do not paddle the most challenging rapids. Supporting paddling on the Merced River offers one way to entice kids and young adults into the woods.

Conclusions: Thank you for considering these comments. We are hopeful that you will conclude that allowing paddling in Yosemite National Park, on at least the entire Merced River and its tributaries including the South Fork of the Merced, is highly appropriate and is a great compliment to the other uses allowed in the river corridor.

Missoula, MT 59802

FOOTNOTES:1Ewert, Alan., Hollenhorst, S. 1994. Individual and Setting Attributes of the Adventure Recreation Experience. *Leisure Sciences* 16: 177-191.

2Kinney, T.K. 1997. Class V Whitewater Paddlers in American Culture: Linking Anthropology, Recreation Specialization, and Tourism to Examine Play. Unpublished Graduate Thesis. Northern Arizona University.

Bixler, R., and E. Backlund. 2002. Chattooga National Wild and Scenic Private Whitewater Boater Substitution Study. <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Document/view/documentid/709/>

Backlund, E.A. The importance of place and substitutability of river recreation experiences: empirical evidence from the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River. Proceedings of the 2005 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. 386. [http://www.fs.fed.us/ne/newtown\\_square/publications/technical\\_reports/pdfs/2006/ne\\_gtr341.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/ne/newtown_square/publications/technical_reports/pdfs/2006/ne_gtr341.pdf)

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**Correspondence ID:** 350      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Juline, Karen  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** HI- Thanks for giving us the opportunity to comment on what's important to us in Yosemite. We've been camping there, almost every year for the last 40 years. We have a camper and are finding it's VERY hard to get any reservations. They seem to be gone in less than 1 minute. We are concerned that the rental companies are buying up all the spots and leaving the average camper with nothing. We would like to see that system changed. Also, we would love to see electrical hook-ups in the campgrounds. That way, people won't be using their generators and taking away from the quiet that we all enjoy. Thanks for your time!

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**Correspondence ID:** 351      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Amstutz, Karen and Paul  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** It is difficult to comprehend the overwhelming volume of locations, issues, and complexities of the "plan of all Merced River Plans," but we would like to submit this short list of scoping comments. We hope that you will consider our ideas, and weave them into your challenging planning process.

Affordable Lodging & Camping Opportunities After the flood of 1997, a huge percentage of campsites was lost in Yosemite Valley. Combined with proposed upgrades & expansion of high-end motel units at Yosemite Lodge, this represents a significant shift towards favoring more affluent park visitors. Family camping trips are an affordable way for visitors to connect with Yosemite and the ORV's that the MRP is trying to preserve and protect. The park and the river belong to us all. There should be no expansion or construction of lodging developments in Yosemite Valley or along the Merced River corridor. If there is to be any increase in overnight opportunities, it should be increased campsites; the lowest impact and lowest cost option.

We recommend that the following demographic forecast for California be strongly considered when planning for the Merced River Use. The US Census Bureau released its projections of California's population in October, and projected that the state would have 49.3 million residents in 2025. In 2025, California is projected to have 21 million Hispanics, 15 million non-Hispanic whites, nine million Asians, and three million Blacks.

California's Latino population is expected to double between 1995 and 2025 and account for a third of the total Latino population in the US in 2025. California is projected to add a net 18 million residents between 1995 and 2025, including nine million immigrants.

Studies and careful observation has shown that Latino groups who use Yosemite Valley as an overnight destination, prefer camping with their families. In addition, they often camp with large family groups. We need to strongly consider who will be taking care of our National Parks and planning to make it possible for these groups to use the park/river corridor in a way that protects the river while allowing for these future generations to form a lasting bond that will inspire their stewardship.

Biological Inventories Baseline scientific studies should be initiated and maintained throughout the Merced River corridor so that species of concern are adequately protected. Special consideration should be given to El Portal's unique groves of "heritage oaks," some of which now serves as informal gravel parking areas. Invertebrate and avian species have also been minimally studied and inventoried in the Merced River corridor. Before initiating long-term management decisions, we must have the best possible baseline data on local biological resources.

Natural Quiet The quiet of the wilderness and the national parks is certainly an ORV. People escape from the frenzy and chaos of city life to enjoy some peace and quiet in Yosemite. Much of their visit is within the Merced River corridor. A regular and persistent violator of Yosemite's natural quiet are the groups of excessively loud motorcycle groups roaring up and down highway 140 and 120. I won't name any specific brands, but there are MANY motorcyclists who quietly hum along, no louder than any other well tuned small auto. These are appropriate vehicles. It is the intentionally-altered intentionally-loud motorcycles screaming through our area that are the problem. I'm sure they would violate noise ordinances in any city that enforces noise limits. Why are they permitted to disturb and disrupt wildlife, natural quiet, and all park visitors within a 5 mile radius? Please set a maximum decibel limit, and screen revving vehicles at the entrance gates. Quiet hours are regularly enforced in lodging areas, housing units, towns and cities. Quiet limits should be enforced on vehicles who desire to visit Yosemite.

Additionally, Soundscapes/Natural Quiet must be considered when planning for a park wide transportation solution. The image of a constant stream of noisy and polluting motor coaches (busses) roaring up and down the Merced Canyon may alleviate the parking

problem in the Valley, but creates a messy air quality and city-sounding picture. (See Transportation for further discussion.)

Natural Darkness Regulate the motels' lighting along the Merced River at minimal levels to preserve Dark Night Skies

Throughout the El Portal area, maintain current Dark Night Skies and lack of street lights.

Transportation Increasing public transit options, within the El Portal area, and along the Merced River corridor should be a priority. More frequent bus departures, both up and down canyon, would reduce the number of individual vehicles on the roads.

If a mandatory day use shuttle system is proposed, the huge parking structures and transit facilities should be located IN gateway communities where services already exist. Not only does Mariposa (for example) have much more open space than in the narrow Merced Canyon, but it would provide a huge economic benefit to the gateway community. There is not ample space in the Merced River corridor for large parking structures.

Whatever public transportation proposed should be the cleanest and greenest technology available. Hybrid-electric, hydrogen, or alternative fuel vehicles will improve air quality in the Merced River canyon, and also educate visitors on cleaner transportation options.

Bicycle commuting, to both work and school, is healthy, non-polluting and should be encouraged. Riding on narrow winding mountain roads, however, can be dangerous, especially for young cyclists. A study should be undertaken on the feasibility of a dedicated bike path, connecting old El Portal with Rancheria Flat and the NPS warehouse complex. If extended from the park boundary, all the way downstream to Cedar Lodge, it would provide emission-free commuting, as well as wild and scenic recreation opportunities for both visitors and residents.

Views

Please consider the pristine view from vantages such as Tunnel View, Dewey Point and others which still have a natural overlook of Yosemite Valley where virtually no roads or human-made structures can be seen.

El Portal Town Issues Protect the residents and community of El Portal as an ORV. Maintaining El Portal's vibrant, supportive small-town community is vital to the many essential employees that work for NPS, YI, YA, DNC, local schools, and other park partners. Residents of this Outstandingly Remarkable community were the driving force behind the Wild and Scenic designation of the Merced River. Residents of this town study, maintain, and work to protect the ORV's all along the Merced River corridor.

Encourage the longevity and sustainability of park-related employees, by clarifying and simplifying the process of being an El Portal homeowner. Investing in a home provides stability and long-term commitment in employees. The long-term commitment to Yosemite and the Merced River of local residents, past present and future, has contributed and will continue to contribute greatly to the Park's mission and the protection of the Merced's ORVs. With this in mind: ? Provide an avenue for EP homeowners to choose a loan-able long term lease. ? Allow homeowners to maintain and improve their homes, within clearly defined guidelines and limits. ? Designate old El Portal as a cultural landscape or historic district worthy of preservation.

El Portal, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 352      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,15,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear NPS/Yosemite, I have been following the planning activities for Yosemite for many years. While I live in southern Oregon, I used to live in the SF area and visit more frequently. I still visit Yosemite at least once per year for a week-long multi-family camping trip. I love this place. You have my Kearney St. Ashland Oregon paper mailing address, and it remains valid. I am prepared to do without paper and CD if you send me the notices by email. So I am providing a new email address. In the past I had an opendoor.com address. Please replace that old one with the new one at me.com. Thank you very much.

Ashland, OR

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**Correspondence ID:** 353      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Organization:**

**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** Please keep the merced drainages open to boating this is premiere whitewater and is only found like that in the sierra. The Grand canyon on the other side of the park would be nice to have as well but beggars cannot be choosers. Thanks for your time.

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**Correspondence ID:** 354      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Hanson, Ken

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** 1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? Yosemite Valley: The whole experience of relaxing in a beautiful place with amazing scenery, swimming/floating in the Merced River, hiking around on the "standards" such as the Mist Trail, and sharing it with all the other people who are enjoying it just like me. I believe there are about the correct amount of support facilities such as overnight accommodations, groceries, prepared food, bicycle rentals, etc., and of course Ranger supervision and programs. Knowing how the budget is, you could probably use a few more Rangers.

Wawona: I haven't been there as much, but have camped at the campground. I like its low key atmosphere. I also like the "classic" Wawona Hotel, though I probably will never stay there. It's a nice reminder of the history of the area, and an example of how some people vacation. Even the golf course is pretty cool. The covered bridge is interesting along with the other exhibits, though I'm not a big fan of role-playing demonstrations. I also like to visit the big trees occasionally and think you've done well to make it more subdued compared to the days when you would drive a car through a tree.

Merced Lake High Sierra Camp: I haven't been there, but have camped next to the Sunrise Camp (backpacking, not a guest). I highly favor these camps, as they are another fine way to see the backcountry, and it is good to have different ways for people to structure their experience in the park.

2. What do you want to see protected? The entire experience in the park that we have all come to expect and enjoy. This means protecting the land and wildlife while allowing the large numbers of people to enjoy it. It is wonderful to actually interact with the environment while following a minimum impact philosophy. I think it is important to preserve the "look and feel" of the man-made facilities in Yosemite to keep them consistent with the park's history (and the pleasant memories of guys like me).

3. What needs to be fixed? I'm not aware of anything major. I suppose the Rangers who are there for a season or more have some ideas. The Park Service has done a great job with the park during my lifetime (I'm 60), making incremental adjustments to improve activities in the park. I think the biggest positive change was putting in the buses and restricting cars in some areas. This prevents the large traffic jams and emissions, and actually improves our ability to get around and enjoy the park. However, I would strongly oppose any plan to make people leave their car outside the valley and ride in on a bus. I think the current strategy of "get here in your car, then park it for the week as you use the bus" is the best approach. This allows us campers to get to our site conveniently with all our "stuff".

4. What would you like to see kept the same? Just about everything. All those great experiences over a lifetime of trips to Yosemite. Teenagers sitting on the bridge across from Camp Curry; floating down the Merced; staying in a campground; staying at the Housekeeping Units; visiting the Ahwanee Lodge; staying in a tent cabin after backpacking from Toulumne Valley; hiking to the top of Yosemite Falls, Nevada and Vernal, the four mile trail, and the Panorama Trail. Even swimming in the pool at Camp Curry, though soaking in the Merced River late in the summer when the water was warmer was even better. Oh yeah, and riding a donkey/burro up to half dome and climbing to the top when I was about 11 years old.

5. Other Comments: The overall strategy when making any change should be: think it through carefully, then make an incremental change that can be adjusted or reversed according to how it actually works in the park. This seems to be how you've done it in the past. Roads: perhaps widen the lanes a bit in certain places, but I don't think any new lanes should be added. Infrastructure: when replacement or repair is necessary, possibly "beef it up" to give more safety margin in strength and capacity. Capacity of Accommodations: I don't think a large increase would be wise, but modest total capacity increase (10% ?) is possibly a good idea. This is a guess on my part, but I'm sure the Park Service has some good data on how many people can be reasonably accommodated without damaging the visitor's experience in the park. Maybe it's just safer to not add any capacity. National Park vs Wild and Scenic River: I think following the mission statement of the National Park Service should have priority over the Wild and Scenic River Act. After all, Yosemite Valley is not wilderness, though we try not to impact it any more than necessary. Perhaps the river can be treated more as Wild and Scenic in the backcountry where there are fewer people. Even there, I wouldn't want any Wild and Scenic provisions to over-rule standard good backpacking practice with regard to campsites or other interactions with the river. Planned Changes: It would be highly desirable for the Park Service to outline any proposed changes so we can make comments specific to such changes.

5. About the Park Service: I get to Yosemite every 5 or 10 years, and it looks like you've done a great job, preserving it and making gradual improvements in operation. To me it looks like your job is subtle, however, I guess you are actually working hard behind the scenes to maintain the quality of the visitor's experience. I appreciate your effort and the good results of that effort. Thanks for taking good care of the National Parks.

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**Correspondence ID:** 355      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Bottari, Ken and Jean  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** My wife and I have been camping in Yosemite since 1956. Nothing has been done to the campgrounds except closing over half of them. The campgrounds need to be completely refurbished and made larger for the larger campers that every body seems to be driving now a days.

You should also add electrical and water hookups so we don't have to listento generators all day.

You started to add new camp sites in upper pines a couple of years ago, but then stopped, why?

Yosemite is one of the best parks in the U.S. and I don't think these few changes will hurt.

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**Correspondence ID:** 356      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Kingma, Kevin E  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,07,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Sir, I have been backpacking and hiking the Sierra Nevada and Yosemite for the past 30 years. Given that the NPS and other federal agencies move employees around fairly frequently it is likely that people like myself have seen more and have more historical perspective on the Yosemite than most NPS employees that work there (Carl Sharsmith and a few others excepted). This letter, then, is my comment on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (MRP/EIS). I've followed this process and understand that this is attempt number two to develop a legal plan to manage the Merced River. Although I appreciate your survey form, I think questions like, "What do you love about the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?", bias responders to write something and that evaluators of the survey would take whatever was written as support for the camp. My own response to this question is -- the lake, Lake Merced, the bear boxes there, but nothing else. An unbiased question would be "Do you like the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?" followed by "please explain". As a wild and scenic river everything should be done to protect the Merced River and its watershed. Simply, this means that all commercial processes should be stopped. The High Sierra camps should be closed and the commercial horsepacking should end. The commercial horses and mules pollute water, erode trails, spread weeds and cheatgrass and have a negative impact on the river. They also have a negative impact on my experience with the presence of a large animal on the trail, the flies, and the bad smell disrupting my enjoyment of the "fresh air". The idea of the camps being historic is not a valid reason for their continuation. Feeding the bears and Glacier Point firefalls were historic also. The high use today of the Merced River trails and scenic river designation make this the time for change to protect the Merced River. A receipt message to my email address would be appreciated, let me know if you have any questions, and please keep me informed.

El Cerrito, CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 357      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Tucker, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Hi there! I would like to have the following comments included in the record for the public scoping process for this effort at writing the Merced River Plan. Thank you very much for your assistance.

1. Traffic Management - Proper management of visitor transportation to Yosemite Valley will greatly enhance the protection of ORV's within the Merced River Protection Overlay within Yosemite Valley.

Without a massive and very expensive mass transit system to facilitate the movement of Park Users to, from and within Yosemite Valley, the continued use of the privately owned vehicle (POV) appears to be largely depended on. This POV use, without effective and efficient management, both strategic as well as tactical, creates marked and significant impacts on Merced River ORV's. Serious congestion, air quality degradation, increased traffic safety risks, oil and fuel spills and collisions with wildlife crossing road

corridors are some of, but not all of, the impacts associated with improperly managed traffic/visitor transportation.

I propose that YOSE planners identify every possible technique, method or best management practice on the "intermediate level" to pro-actively work toward a management solution for this long standing problem in Yosemite Valley which is also proliferating to many other areas of the Park where POV's are depended upon for transportation (Wawona, Hetch Hetchy, Tuolumne Meadows).

Examples of such intermediate steps to alleviate the problems caused by park visitor transportation needs include the intelligent and optimum use of currently available traffic lanes, day use reservations for POV's during the known high demand times of the year/day, and partnering with the nearby gateway community motel/hotel owners to most efficiently utilize parking space for day users to YOSE who are staying overnight at such accommodations.

Yosemite Valley's current road and visitor attractions configuration, coupled with Park User entrance and exit behavior patterns, is ready made for a relative inexpensive but effective and efficient "intermediate level" traffic management solution that could be realized by recognizing and applying the best management type practices that are employed at the Golden Gate Bridge and the Caldecott Tunnels. Specifically, properly and effectively utilize the existing road infrastructure that already exists in Yosemite Valley on a supply and demand basis.

There are two roads coming into Yosemite Valley, Southside Drive (SSDR) and Northside Drive (NSDR). Each of these roads has two traffic lanes dedicated to the movement of Park Users in their POV's.

Moreover, these Park Users have established long standing patterns of use of these roads, especially during the high visitation times of the year. That is: Park Visitors/Users strongly tend to enter Yosemite Valley in a manner that is spread out over many hours of the morning and early afternoon. However, the vast amount of them have strongly tended to all leave in about a two hour time period in the late afternoon. That is what greatly contributes to the very significant congestion in Yosemite Valley at this time of year. So, during the exit "rush hour" (1600 hrs - 1800 hrs) both available lanes of NSDR leaving the Valley are jammed full from the choke point at the Lower Yosemite Falls Crosswalk all the way back through the Village I/S and especially at the pedestrian crosswalks between the Yosemite Village area (store, Degnans, VC, etc.) and the Day Use Parking Area (Camp 6). At the same time, the available traffic lanes on SSDR are largely unused.

The specific proposal is to dedicate three of the four available traffic lanes comprising NSDR and SSDR to exiting traffic only while allowing entering traffic to use the remaining lane on SSDR. This scheme has been tried and found to markedly succeed and improve the very problematic traffic congestion situation. (Tucker, Sept., 1995).

The beauty of this proposal, besides being relatively very inexpensive, is that it takes maximum advantage of the natural separation between "East Valley" (Curry Village, Campgrounds, Wilderness Parking Lot, etc.) and "Mid Valley" (Camp 6 Parking Lot, Yosemite Village, Yosemite Lodge, etc). this natural separation is the Ahwahnee Meadow. So, under this scenario, all East Valley traffic would exit via SSDR which would be re-configured into a two-way, one lane available for each direction, road between Curry Village I/S (Stoneman I/S) and the I/S of SSDR and El Capitan Crossover Road.

Concurrently, all Mid Valley traffic would exit the Valley as per now via NSDR. That means that we could avoid the big snarl-ups caused by pedestrians, POV's and busses now experienced at three (3) I/S's in a row in Mid Valley, namely: Camp 6, Yosemite Village (Bank 3-way) and the Lower Yosemite Falls crosswalk.

In short, one half of the big traffic load goes out SSDR and one half goes out NSDR, and they don't merge again until El Cap Crossover.

It's been tried and it works. It does have some trade-offs, like anything, but the trade-offs must be weighed against the huge advantages that the proposal allows.

## 2. Partnering with Gateway Motels/Hotels:

I propose for the record that a hard look be taken at developing a Park Visitor shuttle busing system that would utilize the existing large parking lots that the private sector motel/hotel operators have already constructed for YOSE Park Visitors who are staying overnight at their accommodations. Specifically, I mean Yosemite View Lodge and Cedar Lodge in El Portal and Tenaya Lodge and the soon to be built Silver Tip Lodge in Wawona for starters. The parking lots at these establishments are greatly under utilized during the day since Park Visitors have driven their POV's into YOSE Valley the short distance only to park in very dear resource parking lots in Wawona and the Valley.

This would be an intermediate step shuttle bus system that may actually be affordable and successful since it directly would serve Park Visitors at the point of need for their transportation. Entrance fees could already have been collected at time of registration at these motels, and a fee reduction incentive could be put in place to strongly encourage participation.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on factors that have a great deal of impact on Merced River Corridor ORV's which I have had opportunity to spend just a little time thinking about in my life and career. I would be more than happy to speak with anyone on



the planning staff to more specifically develop any of these concepts if anyone is interested.

Thank you very much.

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**Correspondence ID:** 358      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Burlison, Wayne  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Kristine Bunnell,

I have for 40 years revered Yosemite Valley as a naturalist, tourist and climber. It pains me to hear that development plans are endangering the legacy of climbing and seem to be mis-using the public's concern for environmental protection. I am particularly dismayed at the ongoing development of lodging and commercial enterprise in the Valley, at the expense of lower impact activities that are much more in the sustainable spirit of the Park and the NPS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

#### Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

#### Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational

values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

Shutesbury, MA

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**Correspondence ID:** 359      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Gravatt, Tom  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,06,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Our family have enjoyed Yosemite Valley as well as the backcountry for over 40 years. In that time, the park service has had to deal with population growth, weather variations, and public safety issues. There has been many natural "disasters" in the park and I'm sure they will more in the future. It's also well known that the park service has done a good job of informing the park visitors about the dangers that are a real part of this natural wonder. The one element that park management can't seem to manage is the behavior of visitors, especially those who ignore all the warnings of possible danger. What I would not like to see is an overreaction of the park management to restrict, prohibit, or barricade the public from enjoying the parks great beauty and being able to commune with nature. There is a delicate balance between being too lenient and being too restrictive. I do believe the park service has done an admiral job at this process. As for the new plan for the future of the "Merced Wild?River" thru the park, it's my belief the river will do what it wants to do if left to it's own to do as mother nature allows. Unless of course, man steps in and builds some kind of control over those natural forces. To do so in the "Valley" would most likely call for restricting flow, redirecting flow, or some other device which I can't imagine right now. What I've seen in one area, is the big Red river in Canada that flows thru Winnipeg. Floods occur there and I think they have been working to gain some form of control of the river to protect the people and the city from these dangers. Could there be some lessons to learn from their experience? Lastly, the one idea I've been thinking about is a compromise with mother nature. That would be to construct "over flow" channels for times when the river swells to some danger point then allowed to flow into special flood channels and away from public access areas. Sort-of a divide and conquer approach. I know, the Valley has only so much available space, but to give up some of that space to protect the public might be worth it.

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**Correspondence ID:** 360      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Milledge, Todd  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Yosemite is my favorite place on this earth. I have been going there for over 40 years. This park is a magical place. Saying all of that, I must say that I have been less able to enjoy it in the last few years. Not because of my unwillingness to go, but because of the lack of places for me to stay in the park.

I wholeheartedly agree that we must protect our National Parks, Yosemite included. I also believe that we MUST make them available to the taxpayers who pay for the parks. It is inexcusable that Upper and Lower River campgrounds were removed with nothing to take their place. IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET CAMPING RESERVATIONS IN THE VALLEY IN THE SUMMER. THIS MUST BE FIXED. There must be new campgrounds in the valley. This plan must NOT take out any of the current campgrounds. The number of overall campsites in the valley MUST be increased significantly. IT IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO MAKE CAMPGROUNDS OUTSIDE OF THE VALLEY OR OUTSIDE OF THE PARK. PEOPLE COME TO EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF STAYING IN THE VALLEY.

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**Correspondence ID:** 361      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Robinson, Tim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I just wanted to submit a comment on the Merced River study. I am an avid Class 5 boater and have paddled the South Fork of the Merced from Wawona to the confluence a dozen times. I have paddled in numerous countries and fully believe that the S. Fork of the

Merced is THE BEST RUN I'VE EVER KAYAKED! It is a jewel. Every time I go in there I feel blessed. It is one of my favorite places to be in the world. Please help me keep this run open. I also have kayaked the main Merced from the park boundary as well as Upper Cherry Creek (6 times). I know this is not technically in Yosemite but we do hike through the park to access this AMAZING run. I just wanted to quickly send this comment so that you know how important kayaking in and around the park is to me and the friends I have been blessed to enjoy our protected lands with. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for the avenue to express my thoughts.

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**Correspondence ID:** 362     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, Tom  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent--It is time to change policy and to make the High Sierra Camps cleaner and less intrusive upon the wonderful Sierra high country. Certainly, there is a history...and legacy there. However, this in no way means that the Park Service shouldn't expect them to be more accountable and have less impact on the wonderful backcountry so many of us enjoy. Thank you for your consideration.

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**Correspondence ID:** 363     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Jeppson, Jared  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to kayak rivers in and around the park. I have kayaked the Merced river just outside the park many times and it is a favorite of all of the kayakers I know. I live in Modesto and it is one of the closest quality river. I would love the opportunity to kayak the Merced river in the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 364     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Nishimura, Terri  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I hear comments from many visitors regarding a need for additional campsites and improved overnight accommodations. I visited your website today and was reminded that Yosemite National Park is approximately the size of Rhode Island and 94% of the Park is considered wilderness area. I understand that the lion's share of our 3+ million annual visitors are served in Yosemite Valley. I think we do a very good job of conserving and providing for the enjoyment. I hope we can maintain a workable balance through the next few hundred years.

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**Correspondence ID:** 365     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Cavin, Taylor  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Please consider these comments since my computer does not have an application to modify PDF files. I instead have included all information in this email. Thank you.

1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?

I love that even though Yosemite is a heavily visited area, its river canyons are a place where one can experience the scale and grandeur of granite in relative solitude. I found this to be the case when I paddled the Merced River from the park boundary to El Portal. My friend and I were very close to the road alongside the river, yet out of sight and a world away. Yosemite was shaped and formed by water, and floating on water is one of the best ways to experience it.

2. What do you want to see protected?

I think that to an extent, river canyons protect themselves with their foreboding nature. It is the water itself that drains from the whole of their watersheds that needs to be protected. I would like to see water quality protected with strict management of sewage in Yosemite Park.

3. What needs to be fixed?

I would like to see all streams, including the Merced River in Yosemite Park, Yosemite Creek, Big Creek of the South Fork Merced, the Headwaters of the South Merced, and Tenaya Creek opened to boating. I would like to see the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne opened for boating as well. While some of these streams present cataracts that are not runnable in kayaks, boating the streams is possible by carrying kayaks around the cataracts. The practice of kayaking has evolved beyond what could have been foreseen at the time when rules concerning boating in the Park were made. It seems a shame to me that people be prevented from running rivers in the spirit of protecting them. Boaters love rivers and treat them with respect.

The few people interested in kayaking in Yosemite will do so safely and responsibly. One can review the safety statistics kept by American Whitewater ([americanwhitewater.org](http://americanwhitewater.org)) to see that boating is a relatively safe activity. I do not think that "monkey-see-monkey-do" mentality will tempt hikers or other visitors to test the waters in unfit craft. I do not think that kayaking in Yosemite will significantly impact the river corridor since kayaks floating in water has lower impact than even boots treading on trails. I would cite the fact that the South Fork Merced has been floated for over 30 years without detriment to the park as evidence of this.

4. What would you like to see kept the same?

I would like access to the South Fork Merced below Wawona to remain open. This river was declared by one of the late great pioneers of whitewater to be one of the best rivers for expert kayakers anywhere in the world. It is a gem.

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**Correspondence ID:** 366      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** As our population grows, putting more people on the planet and in our Parks, management issues will only become more complex. Complex issues deserve complex solutions, and I urge you to consider the consequences of limiting the public's access to our public lands, our national heritage. There are many other viable ways, other than a visitor cap, that would have much more profound effects in reducing human impacts on the Merced River. Consider public transit, an extensive (and late-running) bus system, even a light rail system. Also consider the force of Yosemite Valley, its history and its grandeur, to generations of climbers and hikers. Many come to seek some inspiration, peace, clarity of mind in our rushed, overworked lives. These things cannot be quantified or measured, but they are very real. Ultimately, allowing people to enjoy and appreciate our wild lands is the only thing that will ensure thoughtful stewardship, from the urban environment to the rural, of the whole of our environment.

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**Correspondence ID:** 367      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Ouzounian, Brian  
**Outside Organization:** Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** Help Save Yosemite Valley's North Pines Campground from closure, and restore the other Yosemite Valley campgrounds closed by the 2000 Yosemite Valley Plan

Before the 1997 flood, there were more than 800 family friendly auto-based campsites in Yosemite Valley. The Park's 2000 Yosemite Valley Plan permanently eliminated Upper River Campground, Lower River Campground, the Yosemite Valley Group Campground and a large portion of Lower Pines Campground.

The Plan also targets North Pines Campground for removal, which we feel must not go forward.

Final count: 500 campsites will remain resulting in a loss of more than 40% of camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley. Of the 500 sites, only 330 will be auto-based sites creating even fewer opportunities for young families, the disabled, and the elderly.

As part of the emergency flood appropriation, Congress gave the National Park Service funding to repair these campgrounds in Yosemite Valley—not to eliminate them. We oppose this arbitrary action by the National Park Service. We believe the NPS breached any public process in condemning the river damaged campsites and that none took place in their condemnation.

We request that Lower River, Upper River, and a portion of Lower Pines Campgrounds be reinstated with family friendly auto-based sites, as was the case pre-flood; we further request that North Pines Campground remain as currently used. This request complies with the vision of the Park's original General Management Plan.

After you sign, please go to our website below, where if you are interested you can sign up to get the newsletter at the link that says "Mailing List"

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**Correspondence ID:** 368      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Pierce, Jack  
**Outside Organization:** Bear Mtn Ski Patrol/National Ski Patrol Recreational Groups  
**Received:** Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Superintendent, As an annual visitor and conference attendee, to the Yosemite Valley, I can certainly appreciate the positive effort of protecting the natural beauty of the river. I believe that spending money to keep it clean is a worthwhile cause, however, I do not believe that we over protect it so that we the people that own it cannot even walk up and touch the water. I believe the current policies are more than enough to continually protect the river. I do not believe in what the "so called environmentalist (or Sierra Club)" would recommend that we prevent any human body from having access to the river. Again, I am very pleased with the current effort and would recommend that the future state be cautious in creating policies that "over protect".

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**Correspondence ID:** 369      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Frohwerk, Penny  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am responding to your invitation to share some thoughts on the future of the Merced River in Yosemite National Park.

For me, the river is a dynamic and powerful symbol of the Yosemite Park ecosystem. It reflects the life and beauty of the valley, but it also makes me think of the high country snows and meadows that feed it and of the other natural communities that it travels through. I have been visiting the park for 50 years and I think of seeing the river as the first exhilarating glimpse of Yosemite and its promise.

It is the right thing to do to continue to preserve the Merced River in Yosemite as a freely flowing clean stream with as little contamination from human activities as possible. 1. Runoff from roads and parking lots, construction sites and horse trails should be closely monitored. 2. No new structures should be allowed near the river to maintain its current natural look. 3. People should have free access to the river to play and enjoy, but commercial recreational activities should not be allowed.

On a more personal note, I visited Yosemite Valley every summer when I was growing up in the 1960's. My experiences on and near the river were unforgettable. They were transforming in making me the nature lover and lover of national parks that I am today. I want the river to be preserved for its own sake, but I also want people to always be able to experience the river in all of the ways that I have loved. 1. Driving on the current roads around the park with many beautiful and tantalizing views of the river and of people enjoying it, fishing, picnicking, etc. 2. Hiking past the rushing waters at Happy Isles or beside the braided streams that run across gravel below the falls. Appreciating the coolness and variety of sounds. 3. Camping near the river, seeing the reflections on the water at sunrise or in moonlight. 4. Watching ice flows on the river in early spring and seeing coyotes hunting in the meadows beside it. 5. Walks with Rangers to learn to see more of the life and beauty that was there all along. 6. Returning to the park and the river many times over a lifetime and always being inspired and refreshed and very thankful that it is still there.

Thank you for considering these comments.

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**Correspondence ID:** 370      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Raffaelli, Paul  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1) What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? The Beauty, the rugged geography, and the clean water.

2) What do you want to see protected? The Rivers, the views, the access. and the park as a whole.

3) What needs to be fixed? a. Any man made dams should be removed and cleaned up. b. Please grant permission for recreational boating on all rivers within park boundaries. - This is a clean, low impact human powered activity. 4) What would you like to see kept the same?

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**Correspondence ID:** 371      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Martzen, Paul  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Merced River Plan Comments.

Over many years, I have enjoyed kayaking on the Merced River and some of its tributaries, inside and outside of Yosemite Park.

Floating through Yosemite Valley is one of the nicest ways to see the myriad waterfalls in the spring. I use to make an annual trip of it. Some friends still do, bringing family and friends to experience a wonderful river and valley. It has to be the most unique float trip in California, comparable to floating the calm sections of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park.

I have long had a fondness for the the Merced from El Cap Meadow down to the Highway 140/120 junction, because of the combination of fantastic scenery and moderate but fairly continuous whitewater. It seems different and more attractive to me than any other section on the Merced. It also seems to me that the terminal moraines are more easily seen when floating over and past them on the river. It has been a long time so I don't remember exactly, but I seem to recall that they seemed more obvious from the river.

I never had the courage to boat on downstream of highway 120 junction, but looking at the river, I see lots of sections that would be fun even fairly moderate boating. Boaters are getting so skilled now that there are many who might boat the whole section to the park boundary.

Years ago, I kayaked a few times on Yosemite Creek from Tioga down to the Yosemite Falls Trail. I don't think I would have much awareness of that creek, without having kayaked it. I suppose hiking along and snorkeling in the pools would be more educational. I particularly remember how the number and locations of fallen trees and logs changed from year to year. I also found it interesting where logs formed dams to pool the creek and capture sediment and debris.

The SF Merced around Wawona is an interesting stretch of river. I have never gone from Wawona all the way down to the main Merced, but I know that many boaters think it is a wonderful, overnight expert level whitewater run. I have enjoyed floating from the roads end down to the highway or to the campgrounds. It is not very difficult, but at high water it sure zooms along.

Nearby Big Creek has been a favorite of mine with its beautiful small waterfalls one after another. I have seldom seen other people along this creek. One time I did see two young fellows in wetsuits swimming in the pools and scrambling from one pool to the next. That may be an even more fun way to explore a creek than kayaking. I think I might need a thicker wet suit than what I have, though.

I have hiked, skiied and rock climbed, scrambled through much of Yosemite. Exploring a few of its waterways by kayak has given me valuable additional perspectives and appreciation for the beauty that is Yosemite and the natural world.

I know that boating in most of Yosemite is discouraged, though I have don it anyway, but I think it is not the same as cutting switchbacks or trampling meadows, or driving my car around in circles, for that matter. It seems to me that my floating down the rivers on occasion has had the smallest impact of the various activities that I have pursued in Yosemite. Well, maybe skiing on top of the snow has less impact. But I think that floating on top of the water after the snow melts is pretty benign and super educational.

When considering what activities to allow or restrict in Yosemite National Park, I would like to see guiding principles that can be evenly applied to all competing activities. Activities in the park should be fairly compared in terms of resource impacts vs social and educational values. That may not be perfectly possible without tossing out all the cars and buildings, but we can at least make the attempt and keep it in mind.

When deciding to allow or restrict whitewater boating, I think that the reasons for those decisions should be potentially measurable and thus potentially provable or falsifiable. If the reasons are concrete enough to be measurable, then future measurements can substantiate the reasons or prove them lacking.

Depending on the reasons for a restriction in boating, the whitewater community has the potential to adjust their behaviors to

minimize adverse impacts. In Grand Canyon National Park, boaters put tarps under their eating areas to capture crumbs and food debris. This minimizes problems with insects that would feed on the the food scraps and seems to work very well. Where there are riparian issues or archaeological issues on a certain shoreline, boaters are simply instructed not to land in those areas. Boaters can avoid damage to riparian zones by launching and landing on non vegetated shoreline.

On the other hand if you wish to arbitrarily ban some activities, then it is probably best to use some vague, unmeasurable reason such as a decree from a deity such as Zeus or the Park Superintendent or such. Only a small number of people will ignore such a decree, so that should minimize any impacts. On the other hand it will also minimize the social and educational benefits.

I think that boating in Yosemite is a very positive experience. I think it has helped me better understand the natural processes in the rivers of the park. I think that other boaters and the park can benefit by allowing whitewater boaters to explore the waterways of the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 372      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Outside Organization:** Ouzounian, Brian H  
Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition Recreational Groups

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Dear Superintendent and Merced River Planning Staff: This package and associated comments are hereby submitted for your consideration for scoping the New Merced River Plan and subsequent plans that spring from it on behalf of myself as a representative of the Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition (YVCC), representing Valley campers in the millions. Although we have played an active role in most all forums, workshops, hearings, etc. our members have been active for nearly 30 years submitting comments both written and oral, in the park, in the gateway communities, and in Washington D.C.. This package is submitted due to our unease and non confidence that past comments will be used and included in your scoping of the project. However, our hopes are that you will use those comments from the past and supplement them with any new comments in this submittal. The YNPS has made so many personnel changes that continuity was always broken in the past along with promises to those who actually participated. Therefore these comments are once again submitted in hopes of inclusion guiding the future of the Merced River and the corridor it flows through.

The following comments are requested for consideration: 1. Recognize that camping in Yosemite Valley is an ORV (Outstanding Remarkable Value) to Yosemite and its visitors and cannot be replicated by camping in other parts of the Park. The Valley walls keep the temperature warmer at night. The biting bugs are minor distractions to visitors in the Valley versus other parts of the Park and the traditions of camping in the Valley date back to our Native American tribes (and that's a long time ago). Ahwahnechee (sp) means "dwellers in a deep grassy valley," as this writer understands it. It was attractive then and it is so now. 2. Study the river to accommodate maximum affordable family auto-based drive-in camping from Happy Isles to the "Swinging Bridge." For the balance of the river, furnish picnic locations for day visitors. This type of camping or visitor experience is an ORV of all our national parks and in particular for Yosemite Valley. This type of visitor experience facilitates the appreciation of the following ORV's: Recreational, Social, Cultural, Environmental, Geological, Architectural, Nature. It commands fewer support services than the "fixed-roof-lodging" at an affordable price. Reference the 2009-2010 Delaware North Rate sheets (attached) for fixed-roof lodging accommodations; after camping at \$20 per night for up to six people or \$3.33 per night per person, the minimum cost is a Housekeeping unit for up to four people at \$79 per night or \$20 per person all the way up to the Ahwahnee Library Suite at \$1,127 per night. These rates have escalated each year with fees that cause economic discrimination to visitors and certainly an imbalance for U.S. Citizens to access their own Park given the reducing numbers of campsites over the past 30 years. Consider the total visitor cost to travel (on a bus), eat, and recreate using concessions versus camping.

The tradition of family auto based drive-in camping also values riverbank camping, the most sought after spaces of all campgrounds. Restore and improve upon riverside campsites in the corridor from Happy Isles to the Swinging Bridge to the maximum possible. Remove the "split-rail fences" currently blocking access to the river to allow the enhanced value of family camping. Having at least 2 miles of riverside camping and prohibiting in for the downstream 79 miles is a surely reasonable balance.

3. Restore the Group Campground north of Tenaya Creek. Currently campsites are overloaded exceeding the maximum allowable visitors of 6 persons. This has created diminished visitor experiences detracting for the natural setting and setting a "party" mentality that has increased year by year. This also overloads the restroom facilities, law enforcement, quiet times, and the campground landscape. The previous group campground provided for large groups with controls till damaged by the flood.

4. Study and return the flood damaged campgrounds and campsites to their historical locations and quality. Camp 4 litigation has set a precedent as to the historical nature of all campsites back before the flood and prior to the recharacterized Camp 4(use to be for campers with animals), which is now on the U.S. Registry for Historical Places. All campgrounds and sites should have equal status/standing, without litigation, back to their pre-1980 GMP (General Management Plan) status. Campers were left out of that planning process and sites have been removed unjustly since.

5. Return I use the \$187,000,000 allocated by Congress for the Valley repair of flood damage (\$17 million to be specifically used for campgrounds) as it was intended.

6. Floating down the Merced river is one of the most rewarding activities in the Valley, especially on a hot summer day. The sense of

relaxation and enjoyment of major ORV's is obvious to those who have ventured. As you spin around and gaze at the sheer cliffs, nature, geology, natural architecture, nature's flora and fauna, blue skies, puffy clouds, all mesh to produce jaw-dropping wonderment that soothes the soul and relaxes the mind. For you planners and the newly appointed Superintendent, you are invited to take this journey from Clark's Bridge to Sentinel or Swinging Bridge while studying this plan, on your own vessel of course. To miss this, would be short-changing the plan and those visitors who love it so much and misunderstanding this ORV.

Remove the raft concessions and allow personal flotation devices (i.e.: tubes and rafts) to be used from Clark's Bridge to the Swinging Bridge. The concession rafts, no doubt, wreck the natural bank vegetation and concentrate damage by multitudes of people who haul in and out their vessels at their designated locations and at indiscriminant locations along the river by the users' own discretion. This activity forces visitors to spend their money on an unnatural activity creating the need for additional support services by the Park and its concessionaire. Allowing visitors to fend for themselves is a much more compatible and environmentally acceptable activity.

7. Remove the few trees that cause river floating accidents. This is a simple fix for a huge ongoing problem. Swift water rescues are needed due only sometimes to the obstinate opposition to removing a few fallen trees at certain points in the river. (i.e. at the Merced River ITenaya Creek Island. This is an easily managed condition.

8. Provide for two automated vending devices at each campground for affordable ice and dry firewood. This will eliminate unnecessary trips to the Camp Curry and Village markets and reduce traffic, auto emissions, and air pollution from the burning of green and wet wood, and reduce the pilfering of wood in the Park.

9. Provide more picnic areas throughout the auto corridor that is spread out to avoid concentration and the loading of the few areas now established. This will also reduce the voluntary makeshift areas that are vegetated and not designated for picnic use.

10. Incorporate the book, Yosemite, by Vilija and Robert Deutschman into the scoping comments as an example of affordable family based auto drive-in camping as an ORV in Yosemite Valley, which was previously submitted for the record in the previous New Merced River Plan workshop (Planner for a Day February 2008)

11. Do not remove the Northside Drive. It is necessary for emergency evacuation. To change and direct traffic to Southside Drive as a two way drive would cause damage to established geology and vegetation as well as limit evacuation to one side of the Valley only; environmental disaster.

12. Add a bike lane on Northside Drive to the connector road to Southside Drive to Bridalveil Falls and east to the campgrounds to facilitate safe bike riding in the Valley. Bike riding in the Valley is an ORV and the Park needs to make it safe. Add bike repair for outside bikes to the concessionaire's charge to accommodate this environmentally friendly activity. It is a great way to see the Park and absorb all the ORV's.

13. Improve restroom facilities in the campgrounds to enhance the visitor experience. Include updated interiors that all conform to disability standards for federal and state level, including access ramps to potable water on the outside; not just one token restroom per campground. All restrooms need to be accessible. Add cold water showers with waste lines to control human oils and mitigate human impact (oils) induced into the Merced River.

14. Stop the tour bussing. The roads leading into and out of the Valley are designed for auto touring, Inducing diesel emissions on a regular basis adds to the worst of drives when following in an auto that is emission controlled. How can we make sense of the policy to limit campfires to control airborne particulate matter when you allow constant diesel busses to operate and pollute the Park air? This is hypocritical! Also, they are a public safety concern as they are too big for the roads; they must be profit motivated because those that visit via a bus are the big spenders at the concessions and accommodate foreign visitors with deep pockets and are less likely to be U. S. or California residents. How do foreigners gain better access than U. S. residents... because they spend more?

15. Use the excess gate fees to enhance the camping experience. Campers make up the majority of overnight visitation, historically. These fees have not demonstrated improvement for campers since they were implemented.

16. Include the comments of our petitioners, some 1400 attached to this package provided by the Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition website: . These signers were promised influence in THIS planning process and want to be heard. Please include them and access the website on an ongoing basis to capture more as they post.

SEE also the Petition with 1,400 signatures on Entry #367

Newport Beach, CA [attachments available as hard copies with original)

17. Include the 500 hand written petition signatures obtained by the YVCC previously submitted at the Planner-For-A-Day workshop in February 2008 for the then "New Merced River Plan." It was hand delivered to Linda Dahl, the project manager.

18. As this planning project is an epic event that sets precedent to how all wild and scenic rivers in our nation will be studied, it seems imperative that there be a wide outreach of respondents. There was, in the court documents signed the end of September 2009,



a 10 month scoping period, which did not occur. It should have been termed out in May of 2010 but instead cut short to February. It is understood that less than 200 respondents to the public meetings appeared and participated. Hardly enough to warrant a precedent setting event for national policy. A real embarrassment to the process. The YVCC requested that the Park planners contact, via their camping database, all those who camped since 1979 because they were left out of the process since that time and are disenfranchised in this public process. The YVCC directly contacted staff to make this request and NO ONE RESPONDED! As of this writing, it is unclear what outreach basis they used. It is also understood that the most effective method of planning this document is the scoping process versus the comment period on plans and alternatives after the study. The Park continues to mishandle the planning process by not obtaining enough respondents in this epic process and not allow enough public input to be studied. The petitions we have accumulated, on our own dime, will hopefully make better representation for the millions of people who love to camp in Yosemite Valley.

It would be encouraging to be engaged in the process with feedback. Hopefully, a reply would be forthcoming.

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**Correspondence ID:** 373      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** McGinniss, Patrick  
**Outside Organization:** Federal Government  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I want to express my opinion and give you a short background of who I am to hopefully influence this new planning phase of the park's future. I've spent summers and holidays in Yosemite with my Aunt, when she lived in El Portal. I've done backpacking trips with my Father on the John Muir trail and I've swam in the Merced at "Paddy's Hole". I have had grand memories and hold Yosemite dear in my heart, but above all I'm invested in this decision making process because I'm an American. I have spent most of my childhood growing up in California, much of it in the outdoors. I went to school at Colorado State in Fort Collins, CO and now I am stationed in Baumholder, Germany. Should I leave the Army someday, I would like use my Natural Resources Management major and pursue a career as a steward of the land like yourself. I am concerned with the direction the park is heading. I do not think that commercialization and the building of additional structures will be beneficial in the long run. I understand that one of the tenets of the National Park Service is to promote the parks themselves, however; Yosemite speaks for itself. It doesn't need a rafting operation, or a 4 star lodge to attract people. The administration should be concerned with attracting people, not dollars. The Park Service is federally funded after all. I think that if there is any construction that needs to be done, there should be an effort to "recycle the footprint" by replacing areas that are not being used, with the proposed projects. Frankly speaking, I don't think the Park needs anything else and if anything, it should remove some buildings. I think the most important issue is not irrevocably harming the park further, through habitat loss and permanent structures. Yosemite is unlike any park in this country. It could be argued that there is no other place like it in the world. Fortunately in my time off I have had the opportunity to tour a bit of Europe, and I have come across one place like Yosemite. Lauterbrunnen valley in the Berner-Oberland region of Switzerland is spectacular. From the many hanging valleys, 72 waterfalls cascade over the sheer rock cliffs into the valley below. Jungfrau, Eiger and Monch loom overhead and beauty abounds. Lauterbrunnen would compare, or even surpass Yosemite if it were not for one thing: buildings. While almost a cultural attraction in their own right, the villages in this valley do detract from the natural state. The Swiss have altered the river, built cable cars in all directions and left no view untouched by man. It is hard to imagine what it would look like without people living there. I hope we never get to that point. I pray that in an effort to improve the park we don't permanently degrade it. Hopefully what I have failed to provide in detail you can make up for with my intent.

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**Correspondence ID:** 374      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Joseph, LeMay R  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Dear Mr. Superintendent: Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area.

Climbing Should Be identified as One of the Meced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values and should be protected and enhanced as such. Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics, and develops management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions.

Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities. Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Yosemite planners should Lake into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

Additionally, the Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area.

When I am in Yosemite Valley, I spend the majority of my day away from the crowds where I enjoy a quiet peaceful time. I do not use parking areas that are highly congested and will usually walk for distances to access or leave my preferred climbing locations.

Camping accommodations should be structured such that tent campers and RVs are not co-located.

There are two different experiences that these divergent camping groups are searching for, and they do not mix well. There have been attempted policies to eliminate cars in the valley, I can see this being a very workable situation provided a comprehensive transportation system is developed. It will improve everyone's experience.

Lastly, infrastructure and amenities are very important. We rely on having available food, ice, accommodations, and transportation to make each one of our Yosemite experiences.

To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address: A healthy and protected natural environment? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's Wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the MRP.

Redondo Beach, CA

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	375	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Organization:</b>	High Sierra Hikers Association Recreational Groups				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Letter				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	We previously submitted scoping comments dated June 6, 2007 (copy attached; see Attachment 1) regarding your Merced River Plan. Those earlier comments are incorporated by reference and remain just as relevant today as when we submitted them in 2007. We request that they be fully considered. This letter provides additional scoping comments for your consideration.				

High Sierra Camps As discussed at some length in our June 2007 comments, the commercial High Sierra Camps are a disgrace that should be closed, and the sites restored, as soon as possible. We are aware that some staff members at Yosemite have proposed that the polluting commercial camps be grandfathered, and perhaps even codified in your plan as "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" (ORVs). Any attempt to enshrine the High Sierra Camps as ORVs would be ludicrous, and is unacceptable.

In order for recreational uses to be considered as an ORV, a value must be: 1) river-related or river dependent, and 2) rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context. The High Sierra Camps are none of these. The camps simply offer a luxury, catered, pampered lodging experience that is neither river-related nor river-dependent. And those who desire soft bedding, fancy meals, and showers can find such comforts in thousands of locations throughout the region, state, and nation. These elitist camps are nothing more than commercial tent villages catering to the comforts and convenience of a small minority of park visitors, at the expense of everyone else. The camps degrade scenery, pollute water, create noise, and impair Yosemite's river values and wilderness character in many other ways. As discussed in our June 2007 comments, Congress has expressed serious concerns about the camps, and authorized the Park Service to remove them. Any attempt to designate these commercial camps as ORVs would therefore be arbitrary and capricious.

Others have tried to rationalize the retention of the aged, unsightly, and polluting commercial High Sierra Camps on the grounds that they are "historic" and/or somehow an important part of our heritage that should be continued. This is a bankrupt, anti-environmental argument that has been used repeatedly throughout Yosemite's history to justify continuing ruinous practices that were, many years too late, recognized as the uninformed, anti-social, and anti-environmental practices that they were. Several examples in point: The famous firefall. The absurd business of shoving a huge bonfire off a 3,000-foot cliff every evening for the entertainment of the mob. Finally ceased in January 1969, when at long last it occurred to the powers that be that this was probably the worst model for behavior in a national park that one could imagine. During the 1920s and 1930s, by far the greatest tourist attraction in Yosemite Valley was the feeding of bears at a garbage dump. The bear-feeding platform was such a permanent fixture that it even appeared on the USGS topo maps of the time. Initiated by catastrophic ignorance. Eliminated by modest recovery of sanity. In the prewar halcyon days there was actually a Yosemite zoo, featuring lion cubs, bear cubs, and deer. And here we are in 20 still hopelessly mired in the past. The High Sierra Camps are an environmentally degrading creature of the early concessionaires Desmond and Curry. The Park Service climbed onto this money-making (for the Currys) venture in the 1920s, encouraging the building of additional camps in C) order to get more people into the backcountry. But the problem is now reversed so many people want to get into the backcountry that access is rationed. If environmental impacts in the backcountry are to be kept at a certain level, then for every person who goes to a High Sierra Camp you will have to refuse access to ten or more people who travel on foot and do not need to be supplied by packtrains. Is this your policy? Horses and mules are non-native, disease-carrying, weed-spreading animals.

On those grounds alone they should be barred from Yosemite. Yet you persist in encouraging their use, and resist all efforts to reduce or eliminate their damaging and polluting impacts.

Why is this your policy, and how can you justify it?

Stables in Yosemite Valley Your old plan for Yosemite Valley (i.e., the "Valley Plan") recognized the many adverse impacts of stock use in the Merced River corridor and included an explicit provision requiring the removal of the horse stables from the Valley. That provision has never been fully implemented. Your new Merced River Plan should include clear provisions to: 1) end all commercial horse rides in the Merced River corridor; 2) remove the commercial stables from the Valley; and 3) restore the disturbed sites. Your plan should also include an implementation schedule so that this long-overdue project does not languish further.

Our comments of June 2007 discussed at length the issue of invasive weeds. Please refer to those comments for a detailed discussion of this issue. We provide here (copy attached; see Attachment 2) an additional study that documents weed invasions in Yosemite (Exotic Species Threat Assessment and Management Prioritization for Sequoia-Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks, by John Gerlach and others, April 2001). Specifically, more exotic plant species were identified at the concession stables in Yosemite Valley than at any other location Yosemite. This reported invasion of weeds in the vicinity of the stables is further evidence that the commercial stables are causing significant harm to park resources, including the Merced River corridor Your plan for the Merced River should eliminate this ongoing threat.

Water Quality & Water Pollution Our comments of June 2007 discussed and provided a copy of a publication by Derlet and Carison (2006), which documented contamination of surface waters in Yosemite National Park due to pack & saddle stock animals (i.e., horses & mules). Subsequent research has confirmed those findings (copy attached; see Attachment 3). Because stock animals are known to contaminate surface waters with disease-causing pathogens (and because of the many other impacts discussed in our June 2007 comments), the use of stock animals should be prohibited or strictly limited within the Merced River corridor. When stock animals must be used, their numbers should be kept as small as possible, and every feasible effort must be made to avoid water pollution from animal wastes, such as by requiring that all stock animals be outfitted with manure catchers, which are now readily available and inexpensive. (See, for example, [www.bunbag.com](http://www.bunbag.com) and [www.equisan.com.au](http://www.equisan.com.au))

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Please keep us informed of all opportunities for public involvement for this project, and send complete printed copies of all planning workbooks and environmental and decision documents for our review.

ATTACHMENTS 1. HSHA scoping comments dated 6/6/07 2. Exotic Species Threat Assessment and Management Prioritization for Sequoia- Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks, by John Gerlach and others, April 2001 3. Risk Factors for Coliform Bacteria in Backcountry Lakes and Streams in the Sierra Nevada Mountains: a 5-Year Study, by Robert Derlet and others. Wilderness and Environmental Medicine 19:82-90 [Attachments are a part of the ADMIN Record]

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	376	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Palmer, Jim & Lois				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,02,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	My wife and I are seniors from Maryland and we tent camp and volunteer in the Valley almost every year. Our suggestion is to prohibit campfires between June and October. We only allow fires in the colder months (if at all). We and many others are adversely affected by the smoke. And gathering downed branches strips some areas of organic material.				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	377	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Nystrom, Ph.D., Nicholas A				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,09,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	As someone who did my first multipitch climb (with my wife, also a climber) in Yosemite Valley, and having climbed across the U.S. and Europe since, then, I feel very strongly that the singular opportunities in Yosemite Valley (and Tuolumne) must be preserved. I am also a photographer, and I greatly appreciate the Merced as a wild and scenic river. My wife and I enjoy Yosemite in many ways: climbing, hiking, and relaxing. Take away any one of those, however, and it would not be worth the travel. We would happily pay use or camping fees for ongoing access to the resources that are unique to Yosemite. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the Merced River Plan and User Capacity Framework must address: * Transportation into the Park. Shuttles that do not run early enough or late enough do not meet the needs of those who wish to appreciate the grandeur of Yosemite, which often requires long days. * Maintaining or increasing tent camping opportunities in the Valley. * Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. * If the schedule starts sufficiently early and runs sufficiently late (6am-12am?), intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. * Ability to stay in the Valley for at least 2 weeks per season. * Amenities such as showers, laundry, groceries, and the Yosemite climbing shop. Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities: ? A healthy and protected natural				

environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Tent camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code. Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 378      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Sullens, Nick  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** To me, Yosemite Valley is the most incredible place in the world. I began climbing there when I was fifteen or so and the Valley holds a special place in my heart. As a student of Environmental Studies I understand the need to reduce human impact on the Valley but I urge you to not restrict climbing access throughout the valley and camping in Camp 4. Modern climbing was born in the Valley and to reduce access to these historic climbs would greatly affect the climbing community. The climbs on the Rostrum, Cookie Cliff, Middle Cathedral, and numerous other areas along the Merced River Corridor not only have immense historic value to the climbing community; they also are some of the most incredible climbs in the world. I have no problems with a reduction in the number of cars allowed to enter the valley but please do not restrict the most significant free climbing destination in the world.

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**Correspondence ID:** 379      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Cook, Norm  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** What I would like to see in the Merced River Plan is arrangements for more camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley. My family has camped there off and on for the past forty years and I have been disappointed in the reduction in campsites at a time when there is increasing demand for camping. I have suffered through the process of trying to get a campsite via the internet when all the campgrounds for a particular summer month are gone in five minutes. You have thousand of acres of available area that could be suitable for camping...but instead of increasing campgrounds, they have been decreased. Some of this was contrived closing of campgrounds due to the flooding of 1997. But this was a hundred year flood and the river campgrounds did NOT have to be closed as they would have been useful for 99 years before a flood returned (theoretically at least). There are plenty of other locations that could be used for camping and for picnic areas as well that are away from the river...if you are concerned about the infrequent floods.

We would also suggest RV hookups in a campground to reduce the noise of generators and their associated fumes. We recently camped at the Grand Canyon where they have an enormous campground with full hookups that is run by the concessionaire. It was pricey compared to other park campsites, but was great to have during the winter and summer temperature extremes. A hookup campground run by the concessionaire in Yosemite Valley would be a great benefit for the RV users and would help the environment overall. (They also have the best shuttle system ever!!!)

Yosemite is not a user friendly park as it stands....compared to most other parks we visit. Yellowstone has far more camping. We just visited Joshua Tree where they have eight campgrounds that are open all year. Yosemite has just a few open all year. We need more year round camping and picnicking and parking. You are forcing everyone to camp in just a few areas by closing campgrounds close to Labor Day and not opening them until Memorial Day (if then). The valley and Wawona are the best areas for year-round access for camping.

We need more picnic areas with better access for RVs in the valley. The newer paved El Cap picnic area is great, but the others in the Valley are a disaster with poor road access and bad parking. Picnic areas away from the river would be just fine, like on the south side of the one-way road into the Valley. We don't have to be right on the river to enjoy the Yosemite scenery. Likewise, camping does not have to be right on the rivers either....the river areas will still be close enough to access. I think the focus on river access for outdoor activities is an antiquated concept anyway....especially when your river practically dries up during part of the year. The cliffs and mountains can be the focus of the visit to the Park.

I would also stop the prescribed burning in the Valley during the summer and fall months. People travel from all over the world to

view the park and when they get there, there is nothing to see except smoke. If you can't burn during the early spring, then stop it all together. Your prescriptions are too hot (all over the park, not just in the valley). You are leaving more dead trees than you started with. You are simply not benefiting the reduction of the fire hazard with these hot prescriptions...and in fact are adding to the fuel problem. The hand piling work done along the Wawona road was much more effective in reducing fuels (except that they burned to piles when it was too hot).

For parking, the earlier plan of building a parking structure in the west end of the Valley was just fine.....and is a much better solution than the Yarts buses. These buses run empty most of the time and are heavy and destroy the park roads. Also, no one wants to ride on a bus from Merced or Mammoth for a "hundred miles" on winding roads. This is way too uncomfortable...especially for older folks. Build a closer facility were we can park and ride a shuttle when visiting for the day. Forget about what the "Sierra Clubbers" want or don't want!!! It is not fair that we listen to a few just because they are in a club and then ignore the masses. Many of your visitors are coming from all over the world.....they likely will not be heard during this scoping process while ALL of the Sierra Clubbers will be making a lot of noise. They aren't the only ones that use the park. Just look at all the rental RV's that use the park....most of these from folks in Europe and Asia. Is it likely that they will be heard during the scoping process for the Merced River plan??? I think NOT.

Finally, the bike trails that have been added during the past two decades are great. These could be extended to the west end of the valley in order to reduce road traffic. This would be especially useful if there was a parking structure as mentioned above. Those who didn't want to use the shuttle could perhaps ride a bike or walk on the paths. Again, these don't have to be right on the river banks and could be useful in directing folks away from river features to the other great views of the cliffs and mountains.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I have been camping in California for five decades and have also managed campgrounds as an employee of the US Forest Service, LA. County Fire Department and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. I feel that you have enough area in the valley to both protect the values of the Wild and Scenic River while providing for visitation. There are plenty of non-river related values and scenery in the park to make it a fantastic place for visitors from locally and all over the world.

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**Correspondence ID:** 380      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Engberg, Nika  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I'm an avid rock climber from Massachusetts and have visited the park several times. Based on this, I would like to see more camping comparable to that offered in Camp 4 made available. I'd also like to see shuttle services improved, with stops chosen to provide for easy climbing access, and more restrictions on cars in the park. Finally, I'd like to see more free or inexpensive coin-pay showers made available, and more easily accessible grocery stores near the campgrounds.

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**Correspondence ID:** 381      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Marlowe, Nick  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** 1.) The most memorable area to me is the Yosemite Falls Hike. The falls were simply gorgeous up close. One of the views I truly admired from the trail was of Half Dome above the rest of the beautiful valley. All of the spectacular sights within the valley I saw aside from the falls are truly meant to be kept preserved for future generations. 2.) The Yosemite Falls was the most amazing waterfall I have ever laid eyes on. I would very much love for the falls to be protected. I want to see the park itself protected as a whole. If restricting laws are necessary to maintain the awe of Yosemite Valley I would say it is well worth it. 3.) I feel like the constant flow of motor vehicles has developed into some what of an issue. With the Yosemite Valley turned Park turned into a recreation area, in terms of accessibility, some restriction to the number of people should be implemented. A limit to the number of people or cars allowed daily would help protect the natural environment from erosion as well as pollution from the vehicles. An initiative such as discounts for carpooling or driving cars with lower CO2 emissions may help to reduce the effects of cars coming to the Valley. 4.) I would like to see Yosemite Valley keep most of its accessibility, but also I want the nature itself kept the same. I want to be able to come back to the park years from now only to see Yosemite is still frozen in its natural beauty. I want to hike the Yosemite Falls trail years from now and not notice a difference. The thing I want kept the same for sure is the flow of the Yosemite Falls. I have yet to hike to the top to truly appreciate the scenery.

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**Correspondence ID:** 382      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Kauffman, Neil  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** I would like to take this initial opportunity to express my ideas about the Merced River Plan. I spend up to 7 days a week in Yosemite National Park from June to October working on a research project funded by the National Science Foundation. In addition, I also enjoy recreating in the park year-round. In my opinion, the greatest opportunity for the Merced River Plan would be addressing the high number of vehicles visiting the park during peak summer months. The bus system in Yosemite Valley works well, however, I feel there needs to be a restrictive quota on the number of vehicles circulating the valley loop road. There simply is not enough space for such a high number of vehicles. I suspect most visitors do not understand the difficulties of finding suitable parking spaces before entering the park. One suggestion I make is implementing a shuttle bus-only rule for the Glacier Point Road. I believe most visitors driving that particular road go to Glacier Point, then return to the main intersection within a short time (1-2 hours). Perhaps vehicles with overnight backpacking permits could be allowed to park at trailheads to account for late-exits. On another note, I would like to see more affordable, basic camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley, similar to the Camp 4. Also, I feel visitor health could be greatly improved by increasing sanitation levels at Camp 4; I do not understand why soap is not provided in the bathrooms. I look forward to being a part of the Merced River Plan over the next few years!

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**Correspondence** 383      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**ID:**

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** LeBlond, Ned

**Outside** Unaffiliated Individual

**Organization:**

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** Over a hundred years of records have detailed the development of Yosemite Valley from a valley that supported perhaps thousands of Ahwahneechee residents to a World Heritage Site open to more than 3 million people from all over the world. With this evidence, we are better equipped than ever to make good decisions concerning how we manage National Park's integrity for countless generations. In moving forward the question always will become to what "state" should we restore Yosemite Valley. For the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan, I believe, this date is 1987, the date of designation of the Merced as a Wild and Scenic River. This is inherently a shallow question and viewpoint. Yosemite is not a display, it is a living process interrelated movement of water on the land. All these systems are dynamic and Yosemite is always evolving. It is this state that should be protected, the continual movement of the natural processes. There is no ideal "state" to which we should be preserving Yosemite National Park. The National Park has an obligation to bring to light to every visitor that these processes are the tools and hands that created the magnificence of Yosemite National Park. The three processes that should be given priority above all else are the geologic, hydrologic, and biological processes. All work for restoration, mitigation, and future planning must be taken into this context. While the Environmental Impact Statement requires this for all new development in the National Parks, a plan that maximizes natural processes by minimizing visitor impact should be in place for the National Parks. The National Park Service must balance between providing access to natural and cultural resources without undermining the quality of the resource itself. While this is a difficult practice, the question of prioritizing the visitor's experience versus the protection of the resource is simple. Without the quality of the resource there is no value in the visitors visit, thus protection of the resource is takes precedence over the visitor. Protection of the resource will bring visitors. Still, allowing visitors into Yosemite National Park will inherently impact the hydrological, geological, and biological systems. So the question becomes, to what extent do we sacrifice natural systems within the national parks for the visitor experience? The simplest answer to this question comes in the form of a question. What is the least impact on natural systems while providing the amenities that will enable all people to visit and stay in our national parks? There are projects in the past that should be restored, practices that need to be revised, and future projects and practices that will require restrictions or rethinking. Before I visit the above in more detail, please allow me to put these projects into context. I would like to briefly outline the impact visitors and their amenities have had to the natural systems of Yosemite National Park. Geologic forces tend to impact visitors more that visitors impact geologic processes. Rockfall has killed about 14 people on record (Greg Stock). With this in mind should come to recognize that development within the rockfall zone is inherently dangerous. The recent rockfalls in Curry Village have been a powerful reminder of how lucky the Park has been with its current practice of housing visitors and residents within the rockfall zone. I recognize that all the available space to develop in areas that are both outside the rockfall zone and the 100 year flood plain are very limited and have already been developed. But these are the restrictions that nature has afforded planners. We would be wise to recognize these events as inevitable and plan our developments accordingly. Otherwise, many expensive developments will prove to be temporary, if not deadly. Some of the largest impacts are on the Merced River. The historically deep, narrow, and steep sided Merced River channel is now in many places shallow and wide due to user trails accessing the water. There are many drainage pipes that serve as overflow directly from parking lots. The roads themselves have shifted the natural flow of groundwater, which in turn affects the biologic distribution in Yosemite Valley. There are many lessons learned from the 1997 flood, including the removal of River Campgrounds, closure of the Superintendents House, and tent cabins in the floodplain. Serious consideration needs to be given to removing development in the 100-year floodplain. If development is determined necessary, then these developments need to be both sensitive to hydrological systems and flood savvy. Biological function along the Merced River should be a foundation of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. While much of the biological integrity would improve with improvements in the natural flow of the surface and ground water, there is still much management that can actually enhance the biological integrity of native organisms. A useful rule of thumb when managing biological systems is to maximize diversity of native flora and fauna. This does not mean excessive planting to force nature to become diverse, but rather use the tools of fire, and the already stressed restoration crews to enhance biodiversity in National Parks. Other than managing the natural systems to improve their integrity, other management involves the visitor (including residents). Through proper management of the visitor, visitor experience increases as well as ecological integrity. This will one day include managing maximum populations as well as currently managing their behavior. There are various limits that can be expected of the visitor that will improve the natural functions of the Merced Wild and Scenic River.

Past projects to be restored The restoration of the River Campgrounds back to a natural environment has been a symbol of wisdom in Yosemite's management in this powerful landscape. Removal of all the impervious surfaces not only enhances the hydrological function, the beauty of the landscape, but it shows forward thinking in that anything built in the floodplain will be a temporary establishment. The Superintendent's Cabin has been wisely closed. This cabin will be destroyed in the upcoming floods and

restoration will prove to be more expensive. Rather than allow this beautiful building to be slowly reduced to ruin, it should be deconstructed and the site resorted back to its natural integrity. The site, at the confluence of the Merced River and Yosemite Creek, as well as on one of Yosemite's most beautiful meadows means it deserves more attention than it is currently given. It would perhaps be possible to rebuild the cabin on another site outside the floodplain. Moreover, the historic Superintendents House should not be used as a storage yard. The use of this area to store recycling and trash bins, picnic tables, and various sorts of materials is clearly an ad hoc solution that demeans the valuable resources of the National Park. I would simply like to state the consequences of having a storage yard in a historic area as well as within the floodplain.

Practices to be revised The use of pesticides on invasive species should be restricted unless there is no other means possible. Concurrently, other forms of removal should still be researched. Some other potential solutions would be biodegradable form of pesticide is found to be effective on a particular invasive, planting native species after physical removal, and increasing volunteer work. Also, if pesticide use should be monitored Development outside in the rockfall zone and the 100-year floodplain will prove to be a costly if not deadly practice. Yosemite Valley has reached its saturation point of inhabitants, if natural processes are to continue without serious costs to humans and their accommodations and amenities. Instead, a comprehensive and long-term solution involving resident housing and transportation services needs to be devised. This plan is likely to impact the residents within and surrounding Yosemite. Greg Stock has enhanced the predictability of the rockfall zone considerably in the last few years. This more modern analysis should be taken into consideration when planning future projects. Natural hydrological function should be a foundation of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. Past impacts of the surface and underground water systems include roads and other impervious surfaces, campground, sewer and drainage systems. While much impact has already occurred, documenting and reassessing impacts years after their construction will be useful to future planners. A comprehensive report detailing our current baseline will be a useful ongoing process. I imagine that much of this information already exists, but I question if the information can be found in one central and usable format for future planners. From this a comprehensive plan detailing how hydrological function can best be restored. Possible solutions include replacing impermeable roads and trails with permeable surfaces, modernizing the archaic sewer system, and removing barbs from the riverbank. There are several natural areas where visitors can access the river and meadows without damaging the resource. Swinging Bridge and Yellow Pines are great access areas to the river and the Stoneman boardwalk are excellent examples of proactive resource protection. Regulation of social trails by simple use of sticks is enough to keep visitors away from social trails to access potentially damaging areas of the stream bank. This protection is essential for habitat of fish and the declining frog populations. Ad hoc management of eroding streambanks, for example split rail fencing, is a reactionary policy that will not prevent future impacts. Visitors must be educated through their visitor maps and active management of social trails should be implemented before trails give visitors access to erode the streambank. El Capitan Meadow may benefit greatly from the establishment of a boardwalk as well as educational signage. Fire: a practice to be revised Meadows and oak habitat are central habitats for sustaining Yosemite's diversity of life. Historically, fire is the principle tool for humans to manage these large landscapes. Fire, if implemented properly, not only enhances biodiversity, it honors a significant cultural heritage in Yosemite National Park, and enhances Yosemite's famous views. The fire regime is different today than it was when Europeans first arrived. Pictures from the turn of the 1900's show a valley much more wide and open. Then loss of meadow habitat due to conifer encroachment is well known. Yet we have yet to fully understand the ramifications of the meadows we have already lost, let alone those that may be lost in the future. A return to historic burn regimes will open the conifer canopy, widen the meadows, and provide an opportunity for visitors to learn the cultural significance fire played in nearly all indigenous cultures of North America. Proper management of conifers increases biological integrity by allowing sunlight through the canopy, limiting overcrowding of seedlings, and releasing nutrients into the soil. Rigorous management should focus on areas where visitors concentrate their time to maximize effectiveness for management effort. Historic and spectacular views should be managed in road viewpoints and pullouts, in the villages, and perhaps along portions of the most popular trails. Meanwhile the rest of the valley floor should be regularly managed and focus solely on ecological enhancement. Most of the valley should be managed to enhance ecological function. Controlled burns have impacted much of the valley floor, yet conifer encroachment is still continuing. Not only should meadows be increased in size and enhanced, but forest quality should also be enhanced. A Late Successional forest type harbors a maximum of ecological relationships as well as has a "matrix" composition, that is a variety of forest structure from closed to open canopies. I would recommend using Ch. 6 of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) Late Successional Old Growth Forest Conditions for its recommendations in forest management to increase biotic diversity and stability. Also, there are suggestions on how to measure "structural complexity" within a forest, essentially measuring the stage of the forest's progression to late stage successional ("old growth"). I would recommend the reader to focus their attention to p. 101 Strategy 1: Areas of Late Successional Emphasis and read the details in the technical reports cited in this section. These are management practices that would have a high value for maximizing ecological integrity while also opening some of the forest canopy and decreasing overcrowded seedlings. These practices, or those of similar intent, should be given priority throughout most of the valley floor. On the other hand, in some specific Yosemite locations, where visitors concentrate their time and particular historic views area available, I recommend 4 designations for areas. The four types would be unmanaged, low management, medium management, and high management. Unmanaged simply means allowing the area to be untrammelled. Low management means, current controlled fire management under current conditions or with more ecologically sound practices. Medium management would be the use of mechanical removal and trimming of specific trees as well as using fire to maintain open vistas. High management would be more frequent and extensive than medium management to actively open the space using fire and mechanical removal. High management should always be temporary and phased into medium to low management. These areas would be given their designation by the specific outcomes desired at each area. For example, an unremarkable forested pullout may be deemed unmanaged to allow the wild ecosystem, while a bus stop at Curry Village or the popular "fire fall" pullouts would be deemed medium or high management.

Level Style 1: Fire Focused Style 2: Mechanized Only Wild -- -- Low current fire management light trimming, removal of danger trees Medium fire and mechanized mechanized removal High active alteration through active alteration using Fire and mechanized mechanized equipment only equipment Areas: Roads, Meadows Villages

High and Medium management should only be practiced in areas where the conditions are appropriate for the ecology as well as areas where visitors concentrate their time. The outcomes of this management would consolidate visitor impact in sites that have a natural line of view of Yosemite's scenic vistas. I have outlined several areas, some specific and others more generally. These descriptions provide an overall picture of how these 4 designations can be put to use to improve Yosemite's vistas. These areas are historic views compromised by conifer encroachment that are also in places where visitors tend to concentrate their time. Once a high

management area has reached its desired conditions, it should be downgraded to medium or low management.

Before I delve into specific areas I recommend to be managed, I would like to present a few arguments that will reinforce management in these areas. 1. Management of Conifers increases visitor experience by enhancing views in sites clearly designated by previous park planners. Conifer management has the potential to make more viewpoints in which visitors can spread out their time. Many of these views have been compromised in the last several decades (ex. Bridalveil Falls). This spatial separation has the potential to allow visitors an increased wilderness experience, one less impacted by other visitors. 2. Views are a historical resource. There are many historic pictures that prove how impacted the vistas have been in Yosemite. There needs to be serious debate to come to consensus on the primary factor(s) for conifer encroachment (cessation of fires, alteration of the flow of river, etc) to determine whether fire management should become a more widely used tool to preserve historic views or whether ecological function is more important. In the meantime, charismatic views need to be preserved to ensure the integrity of the Yosemite name. Without conifer management, historical views will only be able to be found in discrete locales. 3. By managing conifers we maintain oak habitat. Oak habitat is important for ecological, cultural, and practical reasons. Oak habitat is essential for large and small mammals, birds, and the community of organisms tied to those creatures. Moreover, historical burning by Ahwahneechee allowed oaks sunlight, uninterrupted by large conifers. Oaks also allow sunlight onto the ground in winter in contrast with conifers, so the snow will melt more quickly under these trees. This effect can be clearly seen when looking down on Yosemite Village a few days after the snow. On the other hand, these trees shade people in the summer. Deciduous trees in snowy areas are a unique human relationship with a plant for food as well as protection from the sun and snow. It is a native practice to burn the meadows and forests, while protecting the big and old oak trees (Fire, Wagtendonk et al). There are several sites that would be enhanced by adhering to these practices. By managing oaks through fire, NPS has a unique opportunity to educate visitors about native practices. 4. Proper management will decrease unsightly and unnatural appearance of "wall trees." Wall trees are common alongside many roads, paths, and meadows in Yosemite. These are that awkwardly end in an unnatural line of tall trees. An example of wall trees is along the East side of Ahwahnee Meadow. This is management practice that leads to unnatural outcomes, which should be avoided in forest management. Fire management should be able to remedy these conditions in the decades to come. 5. Proper management of conifers can increase biotic diversity through increasing meadow size and connectivity. According to some measures, two-thirds of Yosemite's meadows have disappeared since they were originally measured. Meadows offer a unique biologic community as well as panoramic views of Yosemite. Both meadow communities and their views are threatened if fire management is not used to maintain and even expand meadows. If meadows are to be enlarged to recapture some of their historic extent, then meadow connectivity should be a first priority. This enables meadow biological communities to be connected and not isolated, enhancing their genetic diversity.

Conifer management on roads and paths: Roads are an area where every visitor will spend some time and every visitor will gain their first impressions of Yosemite. It is possible that the majority of visitors spend the majority of their time on the roads or near the road pullouts. This is one of the places where minimal continued effort will make a large impact on visitor experience. Roads & Paths: Historically many historic views have been lost along roads as the meadows have shrunk. In certain areas charismatic views can be enhanced through management using a line of site that would allow sweeping views for visitors in their vehicles. Management along paths and roads needs to be reduced to specific sites. Some examples would be approaching El Capitan on Northside drive by Manure Pile Picnic Area, along the El Capitan crossover, views of Yosemite Falls leaving from Curry Village, approaching Bridalveil Falls from Pohono Bridge. I believe that most if not all of these views were historically available to visitors. Pullouts: A number of pullouts were obviously designed for the visitor to obtain the best charismatic view, yet many of these views are at least partially obstructed. The result is not only diminished views, but concentrated visitors at few pullouts. By caretaking certain vistas through increased management could enhance visitor experience. The pullouts for the Horsetail Fall firefall is an excellent example. Along Southside road, one cannot even see El Capitan from the ideal and largest firefall pullout. The result is a large number of people along the shores of the Merced that have maintained their seep bank integrity. Pullouts have had their views obscured at Bridalveil Falls, a particular loss, since it is so inviting to all three roads into the park. Another place where conifer growth has caused ecological damage is along the El Capitan pullout. While some damage will always continue, if visitors could view the monolith from the road, the trail network leading into the meadow would be less impacted by visitors seeking a brief glimpse and get a quick picture. Bus Stops: Young conifers block expansive views toward the Sentinel, Cathedral Rocks, and Yosemite Falls within Yosemite Village. Half Dome is obscured by unnatural "wall trees" at Curry Village bus stops in the portion of Stoneman meadow immediately bordering the Curry Village ice rink/bike rentals. Parking Lots: These are impacted areas where visitors concentrate their time. It may be beneficial to consider the few trees that would open up views in these areas as well.

Fire management and Yosemite Villages Villages are areas where visitors concentrate their time, managing these several dozens of trees will make a difference for thousands and thousands of visitors. However, fire management is unlikely due to the difficulties of closing a village, danger to buildings, so it is in these areas that mechanical removal of conifer trees and mechanical trimming will have to be the sole means of management. Also, forward thinking would get restoration crews to the following sites to remove seedlings, while removal is fast, easy, and simple. Around the Yosemite Village Visitor Center, the warm sunlight is diminishing every year as young conifers are allowed to grow unimpeded. There is an array of plants outside of the Visitor Center that must have been planted as a type of educational garden of native Yosemite plants. However, these plants are losing the direct sunlight they need. Black oaks and manzanitas are being encroached upon and the historic sequoias are losing their distinct character due to the aggressive conifers. Yosemite Village Pathways: Looking at the administration building from the Post Office one can plainly see that the same conifers that will block direct sunlight to the Visitor Center will also diminish views that terminate in wonderful buildings and also block views of Yosemite Falls. Curry Village has lost much of its charisma due to conifers blocking the views of Half Dome. While I have not been able to find any record of historic views from Curry Village, by taking a general look into the age of trees in the area, it seems clear that the natural views have been considerably compromised. Not only does this compromise visitor experience, it makes snow removal more difficult by blocking out the sun. The growth of new conifers in Yosemite Lodge should be considered in the long-term. There are trees that should be removed before they become large in order to maximize the views in these areas of high tourist concentration. The trees I recommend are not the large trees, but rather the seedlings that will soon grow into a thick bramble of homogenous forest. It is both a disgrace and a lack of responsibility that the National Park is not preserving integrity of the historic Ahwahneechee village sites. Pounding holes and black oaks are being degraded into obscurity. This is not the honor natives deserve. The most rich, yet forgotten aspect of Yosemite's history deserves the oak trees to be protected at these sites from conifer encroachment. To manage these spaces through the use of fire is a world-class educational opportunity. The wide-open views of Yosemite are due to their wisdom and ability to manage the land. These tools should be celebrated at their traditional sites. The Indian Village and the Museum are great resources, but so are these sites. This is not only one of the most important tools of the



Ahwahneechee, but one of the most important tools to mankind. Not only is this one of the most amazing opportunities for education, but also it can enhance the availability of Yosemite's world-class scenery. Meadows and conifer management It cannot be overstated that ecological and cultural significance of meadows that concurrently provide a views that are threatened. On the other hand, conifer habitat is stable and to my knowledge is not threatened in any known ways. In this light, the enlargement of meadows seems to only impeded by air quality, proper conditions, and the impact upon visitor experience. Although, while the smoke from fires is a short-term impediment not only does it enhance the overall visitor experience, it offers a unique living history opportunity not provided anywhere on Earth. Meadow Connectivity is essential for diversity within the grasses and flowers in Yosemite Valley. These meadows are already divided into many patches by dissecting trails, so connectivity is even more important on a large scale. The larger the barriers that conifers create, the more tension there is upon the ecological community to maintain diversity. By focusing on connecting historical meadow extensiveness these irreplaceable resources can be protected. This is an opportunity that is unlike many other places within the Sierra Nevada. Most areas throughout the Sierra either lack the resources, knowledge, and/or management skill. The most significant impact upon the meadows in Yosemite is the areas around Yosemite Village. Conifer encroachment in this area is startling. These same areas were once meadow in 1899 as depicted in historical photographs taken from Columbia Point. Cooks meadow was once vast from Yosemite Creek to the Ahwahnee and is now divided by many barriers. Serious management should be focused on this area. This area is probably the least likely place to be managed due to high concentrations of people, but this is probably why this area has become an issue in the first place. Perhaps in places, this is an opportunity for Style 2 management. In a few areas, conifers may actually be beneficial by obstructing the flow of light and sound. Conifers block the light and sound of roads very well. Campgrounds could benefit from being sheltered from view for noise and light reasons. In order to provide some open areas, group/public areas such as amphitheaters, views could be opened up and cleared. The views from above Yosemite Village reveal a gaping eye-sore, the Yosemite Warehouse. This is one of the few places I would recommend planting some trees. Black Oaks would be ecologically preferable, however they are slow growing and not very tall. Perhaps then this is my only recommendation to plant conifer trees, especially on the West side. Considering the overall appearance of these recommendations could lead to an unnatural birds eye view of open areas around a network of roads and villages. Yosemite most valuable views are those from above that reveal a stillness and grandeur that downs out the noise of daily human commotion. This landscape, while needing to be managed, should not take on the character of human condition. From this fundamental stance, every choice to condition view and corresponding degree of management should be taken into light with the overall appearance and ecological integrity. There will people who will definitely abhor the idea of conifer management. As long as management is concentrated to specific sites, is properly phased in and out, and is used in ways to enhance ecological integrity, then there is little argument against conifer management when compared to the benefits of enhancing meadow habitat, recognizing cultural significance, protectin Yosemite's viewsapes, reducing river bank erosion, and concentrating visitors on durable surfaces. Not one square foot of Yosemite's Valley floor has avoided impact by humans. We have 100 years of record of what piecemeal protection will do to Yosemite's resources. Impact is going to occur and has occurred for thousands of years, the question is if we will allow casual ad hoc management or visionary management that increases biodiversity, embraces cultural heritage, and protects Yosemite's precious viewsapes.

Future projects and practices Threatened and Endangered species along this corridor are an enormously important issue. From the high alpine lakes to the banks of El Portal, frog populations are diminishing rapidly. Specialists of those particular species from the park service in conjunction with the best in their fields need to be sought out and their recommendations given priority. Not to due so is disingenuous to the mission of the National Park service. It is the role of the planners of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan to seek out these individual's advice and turn those recommendations into law. Steelhead Salmon have historic range in the Merced Wild and Scenic River Corridor. In 2014, the dams downstream on the Merced may receive a fish ladder that would allow salmon to re-colonize their previous range in this part of the Sierra. If the National Energy Commission allows the fish ladders, then there would need to be room in the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan for allocating these species of fish. I would recommend that the designers of this plan are informed and in contact with the upcoming process and provide room for protecting salmon habitat in the future. Fishing restrictions, habitat protection, and access issues are sure to become important if those ladders are built. If the planners are not forward thinking on this issue a great opportunity is likely to be stalled out until another political deadline and a revision of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan is due. Frankly, salmon in California do not have much room for error, if they are to survive this next century. Limiting the number visitors in the National Park will become central to protecting the Merced River's valuable resources. While visitors are central to the national park, their use of this resource has many negative impacts. There are several studies that will be useful in determining a maximum number of visitors in Yosemite Valley at any one time. In addition to these recommendations, I would add the common sense strategy for determining a maximum number of visitors to be the number of visitor parking spaces (campground included) and then add to number Yosemite's roads can handle before a heavy flow of traffic turns to bumper to bumper stalls of traffic. By allowing the traffic to keep flowing and removing undesired congestion, every visitor's experience will be enhanced. Special concern should be given to those visitors who are turned away. First, there should a real-time system for travelers to gather information on the status of visitor saturation. There should be a phone number, AM radio broadcasts, and signs that allow visitors to make educated choices to keep traveling toward Yosemite or make alternative choices, before arriving. For those that are turned away at the gate, the park should seriously consider advocating more inexpensive campgrounds along the three western corridors into the park. So far, most of the accommodations are expensive and disproportionately turn away access to poorer user groups. Also, a handout of nearby National Forest recreation areas and accommodation alternatives would be welcomed. A system that does not limit access to any specific demographic, yet limits visitor numbers in the Park is essential to nearly all stakeholder groups. I doubt that the planners would disagree that whatever system implemented will be watched carefully by other park managers, and as such should be given great through into how well it serve present and future needs to balance visitor experience and that of ecological function. As visitor use stands now, these protocols would only be necessary for heavy use days, such as Thanksgiving and Fourth of July. However, it is likely that this system would be needed regularly in the distant future. For daily visitors, allowing a certain number of visitors on a first come first serve basis would work well. However, this system disproportionately serves the interests of those that can afford nearby accommodation. Advocating for increased cheap camping accommodations along the Western corridors of the Park will enhance the poor socioeconomic group's ability to compete with those who can afford nearby accommodation. It should be recognized that the Park is beginning to limit use in certain areas, most notably, weekend use to the summit of Half Dome. While this is a great step in the right direction, it must be recognized that having the registration online will segregate the poorest user groups from this life changing experience. A system that integrates the use of phones should be integrated. A phone and online random draw may be a solution for overnight visitors, since this system works well for areas that accommodate a few dozen people and can be managed by a single ranger. Yosemite however would need to incorporate something much more rigorous using the same principles. These principles are generally allow people to pay to make reservations, yet when these reservations are cancelled or they simply do not show up, then a lottery is issued for the open spots. Therefore,

planning ahead in not completely necessary. It would be wise to always keep a few spots open for overnight accommodation in the lottery in addition to cancellations. Again, by advocating for increased cheap camping along the Western approaches to Yosemite, those turned away by the lottery can get accommodations cheaply, so that this system does not discriminate against the poor.

List of Recommendations 1. A stricter limit of development impacting geological, hydrological, and biological systems than the Environmental Impact Statement for projects in a National Park. A plan that maximizes natural processes by minimizing visitor impact should be in place for the National Parks. This should replace the narrow conception of restoring the park to a particular "state." 2. Continue all projects that remove development in the 100-year floodplain, such as the removal of the River Campgrounds. 3. Deconstruct Superintendents Cabin, restore the area ecologically, and perhaps rebuild the historic house outside the 100-year floodplain and rockfall zone. 4. Prohibit the use of historic areas and floodplains as storage areas, such as the Superintendents Cabin area. 5. Research planting native species over sites that have had blackberry manually removed in order to decrease the use of pesticides. 6. Cease development outside of the 100-year floodplain and rock fall zones in combination with a comprehensive plan including visitor and resident accommodations and transportation. 7. A detailed report in a usable format for planners to understand the historic and current impacts on hydrological function, so planners can develop a comprehensive plan for how to best restore hydrological function. 8. Regulation of visitor travel in meadows and along the streambank through better education, regulation of social trails, and the development of more boardwalks. 9. Increased implementation of controlled burns to enhance biodiversity, embrace cultural heritage, and protecting Yosemite's world-class views. 10. Listen to specialists on how to best protect threatened and endangered species. 11. Open communication to the National Energy Commission about the possibility of a fish ladder on the downriver Merced dams in 2014 and plan for possible regulation of salmon resources. 12. Comprehensive management plan for maximum visitor populations that is concurrently nondiscriminatory, allows traffic to maintain flow, provides realtime communication to visitors at home and en route, and provides peripheral accommodation to all visitor demographics.

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**Correspondence ID:** 384      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Desai, Nalin  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
Feb,09,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I have been regular visitors of Yosemite since 1985. I love Yosemite so much that I used to have my peaceful vacation for two weeks in house keeping when the price I believe was \$19.95 per night and was very affordable. The prices for house keeping tents look outrageous for primitive facility. Camping reservation has almost becomes impossible to find. For the last six years or so, only one time I had been able to get reservation in the entire summer time. I tried to book the reservation right on few second of the opening of the reservation and they are not available. Either there is some flaw in the reservation system that I could not figure it out or simply there are not enough camp sites. Vacation in Las Vegas has become cheaper and luxurious than in Yosemite. I would prefer to come back to Yosemite more often for camping if there are more sights available and or if House Keeping Tent becomes affordable. Expand the 20 miles area of the Yosemite Valley by Building more camp sites and Building more house keeping tents There are more space available by the Mirror Lake as well.

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**Correspondence ID:** 385      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Kober, Brenda  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I would like to add my voice to support any plan that preserves free and open access to the world class climbing that is unique to Yosemite. I feel that it is a unique resource both physically and historically that deserves to remain open to all. I also support the continued access that Camp 4 provides. This is a vital facility that offers the only walk-in camping in the area. Without Camp 4 the local and international flavor of the Yosemite climbing community would be severely limited.

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**Correspondence ID:** 386      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Dodge, Mike  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Dear Sir, Just my own two cents here. My family has been making a yearly "pilgrimage" to YNP for 20 year now, and it has only been the last two years we have not been able to get campground reservations. How heart breaking! My entire family was so dissappointed. Please do not close down North Pines Campground. There are other ways to preserve the Merced River without closing off this treasure to even more people. Besides, it has always been my opion that campers are the most respectfull visitors in the valley.

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**Correspondence ID:** 387      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Mierke, David  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I received a post card asking for ideas related to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan...

Time to get serious about the concept of limiting motor vehicles inside the valley. Will need to allocate land for parking space outside the valley and provide free shuttle service from that new parking lot. Allow only those with camping reservations, emergency vehicles, service vehicles, and those with a "auto reservation" (new system to be developed) into the valley.

Need to expand bike trails to include western section of the valley.

Need to improve camping facilities (dirt roads) in Tuolumne Meadows camp ground and add bike trails too

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**Correspondence ID:** 388      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Toney, Dr. Michael F  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I would like to comment on scoping for the new Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (MRP/EIS). Please place my comments in the public record for the scoping of this document. I have visited Yosemite for more than 40 years and I care deeply about this region. The Merced River Plan needs to address the currently excessive impacts due to pack and saddle stock uses throughout the Merced River watershed. One specific aspect of this is that the riding stables in Yosemite Valley result in contaminated water in the Merced River. Use of pack stock also results in eroded trails that are polluted by offensive manure, urine, odors, dust, and flies. The riding stables should be closed, and the site naturalized, as called for in the Yosemite Valley Plan. Commercial pack stock enterprises must be strictly limited to protect the Merced River corridor and the experience of park visitors who are adversely affected by the many impacts of these operations.

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**Correspondence ID:** 389      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** McAllister, Steve  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Sorry for the form letter, but I would like to share climbing and responsible ecosportsmanship with my son. I love Yosemite and I want to climb with him there one day the same way I can today (he is only 5 right now). Please consider climbing in your preservation plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP). Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is perhaps the most important climbing area in the world and Park planners should use this plan to protect and enhance climbing opportunities.

Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally. Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite

climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP.

#### The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor. Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	390	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,07,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Any plan for Yosemite Valley must include limiting the number of cars. The limitations in Zion National Park have improved the experience in that park so immensely. Yosemite must implement something similar. Due to the nature of the activities that we conduct in the valley, a bus service needs to cover the entire valley, and include late hours for people who unexpectedly run later for their adventures. People should be able to access all of the traditional climbing and hiking areas. Tent camping opportunities should be increased and should be available separately from vehicle camper camping so that people can experience semi-quiet.				
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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	391	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	1. What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp? I love the free flowing nature of the river. The pristine watershed. 2. What do you want to see protected? Everything within the gorge should be wilderness. 3. What needs to be fixed? Boating should be allowed, as there is minimal impact and lots of great opportunities in the basin. 4. What would you like to see kept the same? Rafting and boating should continue to be allowed as it is at present.				
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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	392	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Acree, Lisa  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,07,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** Hi, This is a resent comment. Please recognize the Biological and Ecological outstandingly remarkable values of the Merced River corridor. These unique and exemplary values are regionally and nationally significant for reasons that include: ? The Merced River corridor in Yosemite is one of the largest, most biologically diverse, and least-fragmented habitat blocks in the Sierra Nevada ? The importance of this habitat in protecting the long-term survival of certain species and overall biodiversity of vegetation and wildlife in the Sierra Nevada was recognized in the Congressionally-mandated and supported Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project ? The corridor is of high ecological value ? 21% of vertebrates and 17% of plants in the Sierra Nevada are associated with aquatic habitats ? Some of the least altered aquatic ecosystems in the Sierra Nevada are found in Yosemite. This is of particular importance as the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem project identified aquatic and riparian systems as the most altered and impaired habitats in the Sierra Nevada (SNEP 1996). Despite these impacts on aquatic and riparian habitats, basic hydrologic process and water quality remain in relatively good condition in Yosemite (Kattelman 1996). Ecological and Biological ORVs need to be on the table with the rest of the ORVs when making land use decisions such as desired conditions, zoning and appropriate uses. What do we need the W&S River to protect? ? Meadows and wetlands. While occupying a small fraction of the land area in the Sierra Nevada, meadows are a key ecosystem element. Meadows are extremely productive ecosystems, and provide critical breeding and foraging habitat for a suite of animal species. Laws and policy direct parks to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts to wetlands, but not all the acreage within meadows is considered a delineated wetland. For example, only parts of the Ahwahnee Meadow are considered a wetland. We need the W&S Rivers Act to protect entire meadows, and restore impacted meadows to the extent possible. ? Riparian Areas. Riparian systems form a dynamic and intricate buffer strip along stream banks between base flows and high water levels. Riparian areas slows runoff, serve as important nutrient sources and sinks, stabilize riverbanks, and provide a source of organic matter and input such as woody debris, and habitat. Large terrestrial woody debris alters channel hydraulics and provides unique aquatic habitat. Many of the same issues with meadows apply to riparian zones. Not all riparian zones are considered wetlands. We need the W&S Rivers Act to protect entire riparian zones, and restore impacted riparian zones to the extent possible. ? Special-status plants and animals. The Endangered Species Act protects only listed species. Many plants and animals in the corridor are considered special status and at high risk, but they are not listed as federally threatened or endangered. NPS policy directs parks to protect unlisted special status species in the same manner as federal listed species to the extent possible, and to use management plans as a tool for protection. We need the W&S Rivers Act to protect unlisted special status species such as the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and the saprophytic sugar stick. ? Floodplains. Laws and policy require consistency with Executive Order 11988 with regards for actions that would result in occupation or modification of floodplains, or impacts to floodplain values. We need the W&S Rivers Act to bring floodplain values to the table along with other ORVs. ? Special habitats such as the Happy Isles fen Most citations refer to the SN Network Vital Signs Monitoring Plan - 2008)unless called out. Thank you,

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**Correspondence ID:** 393      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Holzman, Jim  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** I am a rock climber and I am writing to comment on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan (MRP).

I am a long time climber from the San Francisco Bay Area. I did my first rock climbs nearly thirty years ago in Yosemite Valley. I currently live in Kentucky, and have been volunteering for over five years in the development of Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) on the Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF), as a member of the Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition (RRGCC).

Yosemite has had an historic influence on technical rock climbing for well over eighty years. It may be the single most desired climbing destination in the world. A recreational resource of this age and magnitude is worthy of preservation.

The cliffs climbed upon within the MRP are rarely out of earshot of the river, are often on the banks of it, sometimes accessed across it and are constantly influenced by hydraulic forces.

This establishes climbing's exemplary worldwide historic significance and its relationship to the Merced.

As such, climbing should clearly be included as a recreational Outstanding Remarkable Value (ORV).

The User Capacity Framework (UCF) should be developed to accommodate access to the cliffs under current use levels, while insuring the protection of sensitive resources.

This could be accomplished through processes such as LAC (currently being conducted in the DBNF) or VERP (proposed in the 2005 draft MRP). Processes such as these, develop desired resource conditions with measurable standards, which are maintained through management action. Thus, a reasonable balance between resource protection and recreational opportunity is established.

Key points in creating a balance between resource protection and recreational opportunity, that should be addressed in the MRP include, maintaining current use levels, sufficient climbing area parking, ample primitive campsites and convenient transportation into/through Yosemite. As well as adequate climbing area access trails into/through the MRP area, managed climbing staging areas and the opportunity for extended stays in the Park.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment.

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**Correspondence ID:** 394      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Spatz, Mark  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** We need more campsites! With the reduction of campsites in the valley over the past few years it is getting to be nearly impossible to secure a site during the summer for the family. Camping is a great way to experience the park and create family memories but greater availability is desperately needed. There is obviously a great demand for these sites by the users of the park so I think it is vital that the new plan accommodate the people's wishes and how they wish to use the park. Please, please, please add/return more campsites to the valley. This is a huge priority that should not be ignored. Thank you for listening.

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**Correspondence ID:** 395      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Vernallis, Margaret  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,25,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** The Merced Wild and Scenic River should be wild and scenic!. That may be best accomplished by eliminating camping, reducing lodging and restricting recreational activities to walking, hiking and backpacking. Park operations and lodging should be outside the Valley and away from the river and the excellent shuttle system expanded to serve them.

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**Correspondence ID:** 396      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Pearson, Leslee  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Greetings, I was thrilled to receive a card from you asking for my thoughts and ideas. I live in Michigan and have traveled to Yosemite 3 times. Most recently in June 2009. Having had the opportunity to do extensive world travel I feel Yosemite is one of the most beautiful places on earth. That being said, my family and I were extremely disappointed on our last visit. The village was like a big dirty city, and the campgrounds were like a housing project. There were so many cars, buses and people that we couldn't wait to get out. Long lines in the stores, and everywhere else made this feel like a place we wanted to leave, not like Yosemite Park. We talked at that time about limiting traffic and people into the park. We would make a reservation and gladly wait our turn to avoid some of the traffic, people and noise we encountered. That being said, we were able to get away from all of that once we got off the beaten paths and enjoy the beauty and serenity we have come to expect. The village is out of hand though. It is extremely difficult to get around due to the traffic and people. It is noisy and dirty. Please limit the traffic, and people. Could there be a shuttle to take people in and out and no private cars? What about limiting the number of people that can come in on a daily basis without a reservation? Please do something before it is too late.

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**Correspondence ID:** 397      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Guitierrez, Laura  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,05,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** We love visiting Yosemite! We try to visit once a year and we look forward to this summer. Unfortunately, I don't look forward to all the traffic up in the Valley. It can be dangerous for kids on bikes and people walking. I would love for the park services to come up with a plan to decrease traffic in the Village.

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**Correspondence ID:** 398      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Hodge, Bonnie  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** In revising the management plan for the Merced River I feel it is very important to stop blocking public access to the Merced River as it passes through Yosemite Valley. With hundreds of miles of riverbank in more remote parts of the Park, that are generally in pristine condition, the 7 miles that flows through the Valley needs to be focused on man's needs, rather than the habitat for fish and frogs. The removal of split rail fences in camp grounds and along trails beside the river should be mandated. An exception should be permitted where an embankment higher than 10' involves public safety. Flora planted by the Park Service in the 1990's has grown to the point where the river is no longer visible. Plants with thorns and berries, also planted by the Park Service along the river in campgrounds and at places with more or less level access to the river, inflict injuries to children who cannot read the warning signs and attract bears to these locations, thereby endangering all of the public. Currently accessible river viewing areas are too few and much too crowded, for visitors to be able to experience a "back-to-nature" environment. There is no place left to simply sit in solitary splendor for a few hours and relax. While the intention of the past decade was laudable, it has not worked out in practice and a new direction is needed. The same thing applies to letting pine trees grow unchecked in the Valley. Planting new oak trees will not work unless the surrounding pines are removed so that the seedlings have adequate on-going sunlight to grow and mature.

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**Correspondence ID:** 399      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Lem, I  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** What is important to me is to be able to enjoy the beauty of God's creation in Yosemite and that future generations will also have it to enjoy. Personally, camping in Yosemite Valley is one of the highlights of the year and I try to do so on a regular basis. So to not be able to would be sad, but it would be worse if Yosemite could not be protected. I am unsure of the present issues; I am guessing they are about allowing the Merced to take its natural route, which may mean reducing camping/lodging areas. My bottom line is, I would be okay with not camping in the valley but would prefer to still be able to drive to and through the valley for day use. Thank you for asking.

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**Correspondence ID:** 400      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Sydnor, Nathaniel J  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail

**Correspondence:** As a climber with deep ties to Yosemite National Park in general, and Yosemite Valley in particular, I feel compelled to offer some input into the decision-making process.

Please consider the following points when developing a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Yosemite is definitely one of the most important climbing areas in the world, and Park planners would be wise to consider how the use of this plan can at least protect, and possibly enhance climbing opportunities.

Climbing should be identified as one of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values, due to its long and varied history with regard to the area, as well as the low-impact nature of the climbing community.

The Wild and Scenic River Act provides for the preservation of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values." Climbing in the Merced River planning area fits the "recreational" category for an outstanding remarkable value and should be protected and enhanced as such. To be included as an ORV, a value must meet two criteria. It must be (1) river-related, and (2) a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Climbing in Yosemite obviously meets these two criteria, particularly the latter, more so, in my opinion, than any other activity in the Valley.

Much of the climbing in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge segments of the planning area lies within a quarter mile of the river and is undeniably linked to the river and its processes. On another note, the river also plays an important aesthetic and even spiritual role to many climbers. The internationally famed climber and Yosemite fixture Ron Kauk should certainly be consulted as an adviser who can speak both for the climbing community, and for the land itself.

Climbing in Yosemite has also inspired several guidebooks, thousands of unique routes, and countless stories and legends. It is well established that climbing in Yosemite Valley's Merced River planning area is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity, unparalleled in the world for its historical and contemporary value. It attracts visitors regionally, nationally and internationally.

Accordingly, YNP should reference climbing as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River Plan.

Yosemite National Park should consider the unique characteristics of climbing, and develop management policies in the MRP that at least preserve, and possibly enhance the climbing experience while protecting current use levels and environmental conditions. To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:

? Transportation into the Park. ? Increased camping opportunities, with more primitive sites. ? Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. ? Intra-Park transportation with bus stops placed at major climbing access trailheads. ? Maintained climbing access trails, staging areas and descent trails. ? Ability to stay in the Valley for extended periods. The climbing in Yosemite is among the most difficult in the World and takes weeks to master even for expert climbers. ? Amenities such as groceries and showers and the climbing equipment shop. ? Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. ? NPS support facilities and services, including Search and Rescue and the Climbing Ranger program.

Critical to maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the climbing experience in Yosemite Valley and Merced River Gorge are the following qualities:

? A healthy and protected natural environment. ? Reduced development in Yosemite Valley. ? Primitive camping opportunities. ? Effective transportation to and from climbing access trails. ? Maintained climbing access trails. ? A quiet soundscape consistent with the Valley's wilderness designation, NPS regulations and the California Vehicle Code.

Unlike other recreational activities, climbing is a widely dispersed activity taking place in a vertical landscape with thousands of possible routes and destinations. Other uses, by comparison, are limited to far fewer established trails, picnic sites, and boating locations. Accordingly, Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. In addition, in general, it has been my experience that climbers in particular are often more environmentally conscientious than the general user community, and limit their impact through such practices as Leave No Trace. This is a generalization, and there are certainly exceptions, but this should definitely be considered when evaluating climber's impact on the Valley.

The Merced River Plan must allow for access to areas outside of the Planning Area Boundary

The Merced River Plan and any user capacity model adopted by the NPS must allow climbers to access areas outside the Merced River Plan boundary. Many approach trails used to access climbing walls (such as El Capitan and Half Dome) pass through the MRP planning area. Yosemite's user capacity model should not unreasonably restrict access to outstandingly remarkable recreational values within the planning corridor.

Importantly, YNP should also not place unreasonable restrictions on legitimate activities located just outside of the Merced River Plan boundaries but which require access through the planning area. No other activity has the same dynamic as climbing whereby passage through the planning area at many dispersed locations is necessary, and it is critically important that YNP recognize this circumstance and manage for reasonable use limits at least consistent with existing low-impact climbing use levels.

In short, I support recognizing climbing as an "outstandingly remarkable value" for the Merced River planning area, and believe that Yosemite's user capacity framework should accommodate climbing's unique characteristics in Yosemite Valley and the Lower Merced Gorge. Thank you for considering the importance of Yosemite to climbers worldwide and for your hard work on this extensive planning process. I recognize that it is a difficult process to accommodate all interested parties, while also keeping the protection of natural resources as the foremost concern.

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**Correspondence ID:** 401      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Shekelle, Paul  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** Letter

Dear Superintendent: I am writing about the Merced River Plan. I've lived in California for almost 30 years, and spent much time in Yosemite. For 10 years a group of us had an annual winter weekend in Yosemite, staying in Curry Village cabin 819, spending the day cross country skiing out to Glacier Point and concluding with Sunday brunch at the Ahwahnee. There's also been camping trips and hiking trips galore. I've slept on top of Cloud's Rest and slept outside at Glacier Point in January in 6 degree weather. I watched bears rip apart a poorly stowed food cache at Lower Cathedral Lake one September, and that same night listened as the bears thwacked away, unsuccessfully, at our food stored in bear canisters (this was 1991, before such canisters were in popular use). I know of what I speak.

The biggest threat to the high country of the Yosemite that is within your power to mitigate is the pounding the place takes from commercial stock animals. I have great respect for many of the commercial packers, and think some of them are great people, but I'll bet the folks who used to do the Glacier Point firefall were great people too, and the time has come when the commercial stock animals simply have got to go, or at a minimum be vastly restricted below their current level. The problems with the stock animals are great - you can have 100 hikers pass over a trail, and at appropriate intervals none of them might ever know the other ones were



ever present. You send one stock train over that trail, and everyone behind them knows they were there - both that day, and the next, and the next, and the next. The filth is repulsive. Then there's the excess trail maintenance that needs to be done to make trails accessible to stock animals. The blasting of smooth granite surfaces defaces them and contributes to erosion. And then there are the smaller irritations. I've been kept awake almost all night long one night listening to the gently "tinkle tinkle" of stock animals bells as they lolled about in a meadow perhaps 100-200 yards from where I was camped. I had camped there in midafternoon, and the stock showed up at dusk, so it wasn't as if I had chosen this site next to stock. There might have been 100 other hikers camped in small groups of 3 or 6 people each in that same area, and none of us could hear or see each other. One group of stock spoiled this for everyone. I could go on and on - fouling the water, bringing in invasive weeds, etc. etc. It's all we'll know and there IS really no debate about whether the stock cause these degradations.

So - as much as I recognize the High Sierra camps and pack animals as things from former days in Yosemite, like so many other former aspects of Yosemite that we've come to recognize were destructive to the prime purpose of Yosemite - preserving the country for future generations - their continuation can no longer be justified and it's time for them to go. Global warming causing snow pack melt, the loss of high altitude frogs due to ozone thinning, the danger to the continued survival of the cony due to climate change these are all formidable challenges, but ones that require nation-wide or planet-wide solutions. The stock problem is entirely within your control. Do the right thing.

Los Angeles, CA

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	402	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Aceto, Jeanne and Lou				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Following are scoping comments that we hope will be useful in developing the Merced River Plan/SEIS. We trust that the National Park Service (NPS) will enthusiastically embrace this unique opportunity by truly wiping the slate clean, as repeatedly stated, and designing a plan with specific measurable goals and objectives that will truly protect the Merced River and its environs while improving the quality of the visitor experience.				

Comments are organized around the three legs of user capacity as defined by the still valid 1982 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) Guidelines: the quantity of recreation use which an area can sustain without adverse impact ? on the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing character of the river area. ? the quality of recreation experience, and ? public health and safety. When the three legs are factored together, we are hopeful it will result in a numerical capacity that can be scientifically and objectively determined and applied with consistency across all projects.

Additionally, a transportation component has been included at the end along with some final comments.

As an aside, scattered throughout this letter are numerous questions. These are not rhetorical questions but questions deserving of a response. We trust they will be addressed in the Scoping Report and in the Plan.

... WITHOUT ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE ORVs AND FREE-FLOWING CHARACTER OF THE RIVER AREA 1. All ORVs must be clearly and thoroughly defined so they can be easily understood, accepted, and supported by the public.

In reviewing various WSRA guidance documents, it is acknowledged that there is no "official" definition of ORV. However, there is common agreement that an ORV should constitute the very best of the best and that it be river related or river-dependent. Is there anything regionally or even nationally to compare-and what specifically was used as the basis for comparison? Do visitors travel great distances specifically because of a particular ORV-something not available anywhere else?

For example, visitors come from all over the globe to view the Scenic and Geologic ORVs associated with Yosemite Valley-Half Dome, El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall, Yosemite Falls, etc. These iconic wonders are world renowned. Recognizing the importance of ORVs, the WSRA Interagency Commission (2002) published the following management directive: "Thoroughly define the ORVs to guide future management actions and to serve as the baseline for monitoring." Such a definition should include documentation and justification for selection, denoting goals for protection, and specifying how management prescriptions would achieve stated measurable objectives. Descriptions should be in easy-to-understand language so as to be meaningful to a scientifically challenged public. An oft-repeated statement that ORVs may be in conflict appears to be a barrier to providing adequate protection for any of them-are there too many; do ORVs need to be weighted; what are the specific measurable goals and objectives for each ORV that will guarantee their protection within each project and plan.

Decisions in past plans/projects as to which ORVs are protected and which are pushed aside using the "net gain" argument appear to have been made in an arbitrary and inconsistent manner by the NPS based on existing commercialization and infrastructure as well as laying the groundwork for future, perhaps already funded, pet projects. Money, whether appropriated by Congress or the Yosemite Fund, and how to spend it often seem to be the driving force, often complicated by politics and influence.

There must be clear and objective methodology that can be explained to the public and consistently applied. 2. The new Plan needs to

clearly explain the relationship between the selection and the protection of ORVs and the nondegradation standard and how the Park applies that standard.

As stated in Section 10(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the "primary emphasis shall be given to protecting [the River's] esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features." The 1982 Interagency Guidelines go on to state that "each component will be managed to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated, while providing for public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values." This is referred to as the nondegradation standard. WSRA then provides examples of possible River values such as scenery, recreation, fish and wildlife, geology, history, culture, and other similar values-but the primary emphasis still rests with the esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features.

An example of a "disconnect": WSRA mandates 'Scenic' and 'Esthetic' as primary emphasis elements. 'Scenic' is also an ORV for the segment of the Merced River corridor in East Yosemite Valley. That being the case, WHY was the Yosemite Fund allowed to construct a restroom that looks more like a mini-lodge, and an outrageously oversized bus stop structure that looks like a monument to the Yosemite Fund's private architect as part of the Lower Yosemite Fall project? One would think "fundraising" was the ORV rather than preserving the scenic value of Yosemite Falls and the Merced River corridor. 'Archeologic' features are also primary emphasis elements, yet the NPS allowed the desecration of subsurface archaeological deposits in the project area including the prehistoric/historic February 1, 2010 village of Chief Tenaya. This project is the ultimate example of how money and influence can corrupt the goals/objectives for protection of the Merced River corridor.

Future decisions must be consistent across the board based on clear and objective methodology. Past public frustration (even outrage) has occurred when decisions appeared to be arbitrary administrative mandates based on the special interest group and political agenda of the day.

3. The Park Service must provide documentation of baseline resource conditions along with an ongoing program for monitoring.

A recent (2002) technical assistance paper published by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Interagency Commission states as a management directive: "To achieve a nondegradation standard, the river-administering agency must document baseline resource conditions and monitor changes to these conditions." Such a scientific base of information would need to document the resources that are to be protected and preserved in the park; the condition of those resources; any changes in condition over time; and actions needed to ensure preservation (Natural Resource Challenge Action Plan, 1999).

Aside from an occasional newspaper article, there has been little to no communication to the public with respect to resource conditions along the Merced River corridor. For example, in 2004, the Park Service urged the Court to allow them to proceed with data collection studies that included installation of 110 ground water monitoring wells and soil pits; collection of tree coring samples; geotechnical subsurface exploration and wetlands delineation; and debris flow research. There have been no updates to the public as to how those activities are proceeding. In fact, a FOIA request for the results of the debris flow research was actually denied because management had decided to leave it in "draft" status, thereby exempting it from FOIA.

An additional concern is what condition will actually be determined as "baseline" and factoring in that in many instances, conditions have been allowed to deteriorate due to poor management oversight. For example, the Park arbitrarily removed the group campground after the '97 flood; even though there is a Park rule of up to 6 people in a campsite, groups of up to 30 have been using individual campsites for lack of anywhere else to go and there has been no enforcement of the existing rule. Trampling, overuse and radiating impacts in an area caused by as many as 30 people in a campsite vs. 6 people, multiplied over 10 years, will most certainly cause resource deterioration. It is up to the Park Service to accept the onus of responsibility for failing to provide oversight and enforcement instead of using the current state of affairs as justification to penalize the visitor with ever more regulations and reduced opportunities. Fences have been installed with urgent calls for restoration activity, yet the 6 person/ campsite rule is still not enforced. Is this an example of "let's make it look like we're doing something while we continue to do nothing?"

Another example is the concessionaire's raft rental operation. Excited rafters race down to Stoneman Bridge to put their raft in the water and then wait for the gigantic diesel bus followed by a box truck to drive through sensitive Sentinel Beach picnic area to pick them up and bring them back to the rental facility. Why does the NPS allow the concessionaire to operate a busy raft concession that accelerates severe erosion of the river bank alongside Stoneman Bridge; drive huge diesel vehicles through peaceful Sentinel Beach wiping out picnickers enjoying natural quiet (who apparently aren't of the same financial priority to the concessionaire) while ultimately degrading the entire area. Though the concessionaire may profit from rentals, concessionaire profits should not determine park policy. And these areas now become examples of resource degradation blamed on visitors-when it's really a situation of "cause and effect" as initiated by the Park's own concessionaire and allowed by the National Park Service.

Protection of resources cannot occur without a sound scientific base of information with respect to resource conditions and monitoring. The Park cannot achieve the nondegradation standard mandated in WSRA without such documentation, but is there sufficient information available to enable the planning process to proceed with integrity and transparency? An immediate improvement in resource conditions would be noticeable if managers would just enforce the rules that are already on the books as an evaluative first step before implementing more draconian (and punitive) measures. Such management oversight and enforcement could begin right now while the Plan is being prepared.

As an aside: Not all visitors coming to Yosemite have the keen eye of the scientist. And though visitors deeply love Yosemite and want to see it protected, they may be viewing resource concerns raised by the NPS through a different lens of urgency. Consequently, it will be very important for planners to bridge the gap by seriously considering who will actually be reading and commenting on the yet-to-be-developed plan. Most likely, the audience will comprise few biologists, hydrologists, anthropologists, historians, or other

scientific experts. But readers will definitely include "experts" in the kinds of activities experienced at Yosemite that have shaped their lives and are the source of lifelong memories. Therefore, it is critical that explanations of resource conditions-both existing and desired-be explained not only in clear, easy-to-understand language but in a way that the reader can relate the information to what s/he likes to do on the ground. The dots need to be connected between ORVs, management prescriptions and visitor experiences; ifnot, this Plan will face the same difficulties as other plans where the public perceives the Park is just using (even manipulating) the science, ORVs, etc. as an excuse to do what management wanted to do all along. That's not to say the Plan should be a public relations document, but it definitely needs to keep the reader in mind. 4. The entire 81 miles of the Merced River should be studied and evaluated as a comprehensive living ecosystem-the primary artery of Yosemite National Park.

Many actions have dealt with the River in small segments, even down to linear feet of shoreline, as part of numerous stop-gap measures. Planners need to step back and view the River as a complete free-flowing system as part of a long-term vision, not one to be controlled by rip rap, fencing, bank stabilization, re-vegetation, diversions, road construction, El Capitan moraine, etc. As stated by David Cehrs, a registered geologist and a certified hydrogeologist with years of experience with Yosemite: "The NPS does not seem to be cognizant of the fact that the river has infinitely more power than the NPS does and the river will do whatever it wants, whenever it wants to any and all anthropogenic structures within Yosemite Valley." (Declaration to the Court; October 3, 2006)

"Within the confines of Yosemite Valley the Merced River is a meandering river. The meandering Merced channel migrates laterally across the Valley floor and over time the channel occupies all locations within the Valley, talus slope to talus slope, and this action forms the floodplain. Channel migration is natural river behavior and is the result of river hydraulics within the channel curves. Water moves faster on the outside of the channel curve and slower on the inside of the channel curve. This results in erosion on the outside of curves and deposition on the inside of curves; the resulting deposit is called a point bar. The top of the point bar deposit is the flood plain. Most of the Yosemite Valley floor (river channel, floodplain, meadows, wetlands) is formed from the meandering river point bar deposits reworking past Valley floor glacial sediments with the additional input of new Sierran derived sediment; the remainder of the Valley floor is formed by alluvial fans from the tributary side streams entering the Valley, for example Yosemite Creek. Old Merced River locations can be located by their remnant oxbows observable on portions of the Yosemite Valley floor. The oxbows are abandoned channel meander curves. " (Declaration to the Court; September 6, 2006)

The draft ORV Report explains the Hydrologic ORV as: "The rivers start in high alpine settings, drop down sheer cliffs and steep gradients at high speeds with large springtime volumes, and then become calm and meandering before tumbling down another steep gradient. This hydrologic variability caused by abrupt elevation changes of the two branches of the Merced River is unique."

That description is certainly easy to understand, but how does it translate to the average visitor on the ground participating in the activities she has always enjoyed. When she sees the Falls, the rapids, the quiet meandering flow of the River it is deeply appreciated, even taking on a spiritual significance-but the Park has used the Hydrologic ORV as a primary determiner of land use and justification to take arbitrary management actions in the front country (i.e., regulations, restrictions, removal of campgrounds, etc.).

Why are wetlands important to the river system and why is it OK for the Park to destroy some and not others-again the "net gain" phenomenon-and what objective methodology is used to make those decisions? What is the role of meadows to the river system and though there's been a reduction of meadows, why does that matter? Why are oxbows important? Yosemite's Merced River portion covers 81 miles; can planners better explain how management of the 3-5 miles of the River at the busy East end relates to the health of the other 76 miles? If campgrounds have been located in the floodplain for multiple decades, and are not occupied during winter/spring runoff thereby not posing a safety risk, does their presence really impact the hydrology of the River and how? What is the justification for locating some campgrounds in the floodplain and using the floodplain as the excuse for not locating others? WSRA guidelines state that ORVs must show regional or national significance; is the Hydrologic ORV different because protection of meadows, wetlands, flood regime, etc. is specific to the health of this particular river?? This raises an interesting question as to whether Hydrologic is really an ORV by segment at all; thinking outside the box, should hydrology be discussed instead in terms of the larger comprehensive "free flow" process that caused the River to be designated Wild and Scenic in the first place?

As mentioned before, the general public is not as well-versed in science as those who may be developing this Plan; it is imperative that planners communicate in simple, easy-to-understand terms the importance of hydrology to the Yosemite visitor experience and the activities that visitors enjoy. The above hypothetical questions must be answered in a scientifically supported and objective manner to the satisfaction of the public.

5. The Biologic ORV needs particular specificity since it is often a primary determiner of land use and the ORV that is most frequently used as justification to take front country management actions (i.e. restrictions, regulations, etc.). When visitors look out at the River, what are they seeing biologically that represents the best of the best-regionally or even nationally to compare; and what specifically is used as the basis for comparison? Is what constitutes this ORV unable to survive anywhere else? And what exactly constitutes this ORV-is it primarily special status species? Visitors especially enjoy being able to observe bear, deer, squirrels, birds, raccoons, coyotes, and other more visible and recognizable species; how does the biologic ORV impact those species or does it, since those species are not of regional or national significance? There have been many land-use changes in Yosemite over the decades; what is different now with respect to wildlife health and survival (not just special status species) that could demand greater regulation and restriction? The draft ORV report on the Park's MRP website discusses how the River runs through "5 major life zones, from alpine to foothill, while supporting large areas of riparian, wetland, meadow, and riverine habitats." That sounds good, but what does that mean to the public? Do people even understand what "riparian" or "riverine" mean? There was mass destruction that occurred when the sewer line was forced across the River at Housekeeping which most certainly destroyed substantial riparian and riverine habitat not to mention altering the flood regime; why was that of no concern yet family camping continues to be threatened because of alleged visitor impacts (even though most Valley campgrounds are only used 5 months of the year)? Since most of the controversy over development and access appears to be in Yosemite Valley, it would really be helpful to spend a lot more time explaining the importance of the Biological ORV in this particular segment. What occurs in this segment that must be preserved because it doesn't survive/cannot survive anywhere else-whether regionally or nationally OR even along another segment of the Merced River further

downstream/upstream?? What condition is it in now and what are your goals and measurable objectives for protection? Support for this ORV will largely be based on the Park's ability to communicate in simple, easy-to-understand language as to its purpose and how it might actually improve the visitor experience and the activities visitors enjoy. And there MUST be consistent application across the Board-the River's values cannot be ignored based on the NPS priority of the day. 6. Resolving the deep-seated controversy concerning Yosemite's lineal descendants (Paiute vs. Miwok) is critical to adequately defining the Cultural ORV and ensuring its protection and enhancement. The Paiute people have reams of documentation validating their ancestral ties to Yosemite which the Park Service has continued to ignore. Meanwhile, Park managers continue to sign cooperative agreements with, hire as site monitors, and rely heavily on negotiations with the American Indian Council of Mariposa County/AICMC (Southern Sierra Miwok), a non-recognized tribe functioning as a non-profit organization. From the Paiute perspective, the National Park Service is committing "cultural genocide" against their people by refusing to accurately recognize their ancestral ties in the Park's historical archives. There was hope for resolution when Acting Superintendent Ueberuaga announced the following study as reported to the Associated Press: "Yosemite National Park will review its visitor brochures, information booths and historical archives to ensure that local tribes' ancestral ties to the treasured landscape are accurately reflected." Acting Supt. Dave Ueberuaga last month requested the sweeping reexamination of the park's tribal relations program, including an oft-visited American Indian replica village built near Yosemite's falls. National Park Service officials say no other park has undertaken such a broad review of its storytelling about the sometimes brutal confrontations that helped create the country's cherished preserves." (AP, May 2009) There have been no further updates as to whether the study has actually been launched, what outside experts were contracted to perform the reexamination, the methodology, or if there has been any resolution. Meanwhile, shortly after the study was announced the Miwok/AICMC (with support from the Yosemite Fund) were allowed to break ground on a new Indian Cultural Center-in effect "staking their claim" in Yosemite Valley. Such an action would appear to predetermine/unduly influence what was supposed to be an independent study. This unresolved controversy was especially visible during construction of the Yosemite Fund's Lower Yosemite Fall project which resulted in the desecration of subsurface archaeological deposits in the project area including the prehistoric/historic village of Chief Tenaya. The controversy was further escalated when the Park Service proposed removal of the old El Portal Sewer Plant-resulting in the project being enjoined by the Court pending Park Service negotiations with Paiute lineal descendants. The latter has yet to be resolved (an understatement) with legitimate concerns ranging from the Park's plan to use heavy earth-moving equipment and invasive construction techniques in an area of known burials to the potential release of toxins including mercury into the Merced River as well as the groundwater supply from removal of the cistern or sump.

Cultural ORVs are unique among ORVs in that once a cultural site is destroyed or desecrated it is an irretrievable, irreversible loss. WWSRA mandates that 'Archaeologic' and 'Historic' are primary emphasis elements; therefore it is imperative that the Cultural ORV be clearly defined with goals, measurable objectives, and management prescriptions that explain specifically how the agency will protect the archaeological, historic, or cultural values of the Merced River Corridor. What about ORVs specific to the Paiute culture-and does the NPS even acknowledge them? And now that the Miwok Indian Cultural Center is under construction, will it provide sufficient "net gain" points to allow desecration of all other cultural sites along the River Corridor? This would be a tragic loss especially in light of the justifiable concerns of the Paiutes and the failure of the Park Service to recognize their ancestral ties to the Park. Native American values must be embraced by the Park and embedded in park plans. Tribal representatives (not just those employed or contracted by the Park Service) must be included as a critical part of the planning team-not as window-dressing but as a highly valued resource.

7. In light of the 9th Circuit ruling, special attention must be directed to clearly defining the Recreation ORV to prioritize the protection and enhancement of low impact and resource-focused activities conducive to the National Park experience & significantly reduce/eliminate the proliferation of profit-driven commercialized applications (e.g., raft/bike rentals, trail rides, special events, etc.) and facilities. In order to broaden our understanding of Recreation as an ORV, we researched approximately 50 Wild & Scenic Rivers on-line to see how this Value is handled at other sites and in other plans, if available. Some of these rivers were managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the US Forest Service which operate under a multiple use mandate; we also reviewed the 32 rivers managed under the more protective mandate of the National Park system. Though each river unit has been designated for its unique characteristics, we were in hopes of finding a common theme that could be applied to reflect what makes Yosemite special. So here are some thoughts: In the high country Yosemite hosts numerous trails that showcase 13,000-foot peaks, dozens of lakes, canyons and granite cliffs and cross land "blessed with the mildest, sunniest climate of any mountain range in the world." These trails include a segment of the Pacific Coast Trail which was designated one of the first scenic trails in the National Trails System, largely through the efforts of hikers and equestrians. Many backpackers say it is the "finest mountain scenery in the United States," offering hikers and equestrians a unique, varied experience. Yosemite also hosts a 37-mile segment of the John Muir Trail which begins at the east end of Yosemite Valley and ascends in the view shed of such classic sights as Vernal Falls, Nevada Falls, Half Dome, Cathedral Peak, and more. Largely through the efforts of the Sierra Club and LeConte, the trail was constructed for recreational purposes to make the area accessible. It would seem that appropriate recreational activities in this "wild" segment of the Merced River Corridor would be hiking, backpacking, fishing, well-managed equestrian use, primitive camping, snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing, viewing scenery, wildlife observation, nature study, and photography; a true wilderness experience in a scenically diverse river setting with opportunities for solitude while developing a deeper relationship with nature. For example, citing some parameters from a version of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: "Primitive settings are characterized by an unmodified natural environment of fairly large size. Interaction between users is low and evidence of others is minimal. The area is managed to be essentially free of man-made "improvements" and facilities [e.g., absence of Merced Lake High Sierra Camp glamping/"glamour camping"]. Experiencing isolation from sights and sounds of humans is probable. Opportunities for independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skills abound and present high degrees of challenge and risk." As the Merced River drops into world-famous Yosemite Valley, its gentle meandering beneath towering granite cliffs and scenic waterfalls enables visitors to enjoy a spectacular front country experience. While many people use the river for traditional recreation activities, others see it as an opportunity for spiritual growth, inspiration, or meditation. Low impact activities along the river corridor include waterplay, sunbathing, exploring the rock formations, picnicking, fishing, bird watching, photography/videography, painting, writing or just appreciating nature and enjoying the scenery and peacefulness of the river. In addition to the river-associated activities, users like to hike on the natural trails along or near the river, bicycle on one of the paved multi-use trails in the East end, or enjoy the challenge of Yosemite's world-renowned big-wall climbing; drawn by the scenery, there are opportunities to explore and photograph the spectacular falls, float the river, and camp or picnic on its banks--or snow-shoe or cross-country ski as snow permits. Easy access by private vehicle enables visitors to enjoy pleasure driving and sightseeing, with the freedom to explore nature on our own terms, while experiencing solitude within this world-renowned environment. This is scenic viewing at its best where all of the senses are

engaged-the opportunity to listen to the sounds of the river and the wind blowing through the trees, to smell the freshness of the great outdoors, to see the natural dark night sky filled with stars and maybe even witness a moonbow, to feel the soil beneath our feet and the weather-and to do so in the absence of the elements of suburbia with the bustle of crowds. The sun shines not on us but in us, The rivers flow not past, but through us ... The trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies as well as our souls, and Every bird song, wind song, and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song... --John Muir

Such activities could be accommodated in what might be referred to as a Rural/Roaded Natural Setting: should provide an opportunity to relieve stress and to get away from a human-built environment; preferred activities should be resource dependent (e.g., wildlife viewing, nature study, hiking) with opportunities to see, hear, and smell natural resources and occasions to enjoy periods of solitude; moderate evidence of development, human activity, and natural resource modifications that are designed to be harmonious with the natural environment; presence of others is expected and tolerated with encounters ranging from low to moderate; conventional motor vehicle use is permitted on paved, graveled, and unsurfaced roads; settings should offer a sense of independence and freedom over comfort and convenience; the challenge and risk associated with more primitive types of recreation are not very important; practice and testing of outdoor skills are important. As the River leaves Yosemite Valley, it drops another 2000 feet as it roars through the rugged Merced River Gorge. Classified as "scenic," road access enables visitors to enjoy sightseeing, picnicking, photography, exploring the rock formations, waterplay in favorite tucked away swimming holes, fishing, bird watching and other low impact activities while appreciating the scenery and powerful dynamics of the river. Though the above description is far from complete, it's an effort to capture the soul of the Yosemite experience-an experience where the visitor leaves a bit changed, coming away with something out of the ordinary upon departure, something much deeper than a trinket purchased at a store. This is what makes the Yosemite experience "outstandingly remarkable"-something not just that you do, but something that is done to you. The low-impact, resource focused activities of the Recreation ORV must be fervently protected from the profit-driven commercialized experience. As the 9th Circuit noted:

To illustrate the level of degradation already experienced in the Merced. . . , we need look no further than the dozens of facilities and services operating within the river corridor, including but not limited to, the many swimming pools, tennis courts, mountain sports shops, restaurants, cafeterias, bars, snack stands and other food and beverage services, gift shops, general merchandise stores, an ice-skating rink, an amphitheater, a specialty gift shop, a camp store, an art activity center, rental facilities for bicycles and rafts, skis and other equipment, a golf course and a [High Sierra Camp] dining hall accommodating 70 people. Although recreation is an ORV that must be protected and enhanced, see 16 USC. ' 1271, to be included as an ORV, according to NPS itself, a value must be (1) river-related or river dependant, and (2) rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context. The multitude of facilities and services provided at the Merced certainly do not meet the mandatory criteria for inclusion as an ORV NPS does not explain how maintaining such a status quo in the interim would protect or enhance the river's unique values as required under the WRSA.

As WRSRA guidance documents have cautioned, river "classification is often confused with outstandingly remarkable values." For example, a river classified as recreational does not imply that the river will be managed or prioritized for recreational exploitation. It is understandable that the Merced River segment in East Yosemite Valley was classified as "recreational" by virtue of the evidence of human impact along its shorelines. However, we continue to be concerned that the classification will be used as justification for prioritizing recreational development (e.g., raft rental facility, RV hook-ups, etc.) along the Merced River Corridor, often to the detriment of other ORVs. Inherent in this discussion is the question "at what point does too much use of the recreation ORV diminish the ORV itself?" What is the quantity and mix of an activity that an area can sustain without adversely impacting this ORV as well as the other ORVs, the quality of the experience, and public safety? When does one person's recreational interest intrude on another person's right to solace? Can an activity be mitigated to the level where it only impacts those in the immediate vicinity of the activity? What guidelines will prevent an activity from reaching critical mass where it can potentially impact nature, history, and large volumes of people? To what degree does commercializing an informal activity significantly increase the impacts? Should the NPS (and by extension, the concessionaire) even be in the business of "marketing" or exploiting recreation (e.g., raft rentals, bicycle rentals, commercial trail rides, fishing/backpacking rentals and sales) or merely be "accommodating" recreational activities for those who supply their own equipment? Does the current park practice of site hardening and erecting fencing and other obstructions to contain and control large volumes of people impact the individualized, self-guided experience free from the bustle of crowds? What levels of noise drown out the sounds of the River and the wildlife-numerous tour buses, RVs, RV generators, loud radios, supply trucks, motorcycles, loud partying, barking dogs, too much construction in the name of trying to "improve" or "exploit" nature? Does the smell of diesel fumes or the stables-byproducts from activities that serve a few-impact the sensual experience of the many? Is the future of Yosemite to be a "nature center," or will it continue its march toward becoming a "profit center"? These questions relate to the second leg of user capacity-without adverse impact on the QUALITY of the recreation experience...

... WITHOUT ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF THE RECREATION EXPERIENCE 1. The Park Service needs to clearly define the recreation experience before it will be able to objectively evaluate the quality of that experience. Visitors come to Yosemite for refreshment of mind and spirit; to participate in activities that refresh and recreate; activities that renew one's health and spirits by enjoyment and relaxation. Opportunities enabling that spirit of renewal are the essence of visitor experience. Consequently, the visitor experience and its intrinsic relationship to the esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features or "core values" of Yosemite Valley and the Merced River corridor must be clearly defined. It is impossible to objectively evaluate/measure any adverse impact on the quality of the recreation experience (as required in establishing user capacity) if that experience is not defined. Interestingly, the 1980 General Management Plan defined the "Park Experience" as "programs for doing, thinking, dreaming, and being in relationship with Yosemite's resources" (page 22); the Plan goes on to state that the "visitor experience will consist of opportunities for educational and park-related recreational pursuits such as walking and hiking, backpacking, and Merced River floating;" "activities such as picnicking, hiking, and camping, which take advantage of the park's natural features ... are the most appropriate uses..." Resource-focused opportunities unique to a national park setting, based on resource preservation as opposed to resource exploitation, provide the framework for such a definition (e.g., camping as a resource-based activity that requires minimal permanent infrastructure vs. the multitude of services and facilities required to support upscale lodging and bus touring). Past planners have stated that the visitor experience is "whatever the visitor wants it to be." How do you evaluate or measure "whatever?" Such a vague description will only continue to facilitate the special interest feeding frenzy taking place in Yosemite Valley. Concessionaires have carried on the 'want' versus 'need' debate for more than a century; using the Recreation ORV as a guide, the Merced River Plan can finally provide the foundational backbone that will guarantee true protection and preservation of

Yosemite. Perhaps a template or filter can be configured to help narrow the focus on the types of activities/facilities that exemplify the national park experience. Words like nature-focused or resource-focused; affordable to the average American; family friendly (across the whole spectrum of family from infants to elderly grandparents); " ... uncluttered by piecemeal stumbling blocks of commercialism...and fragments of suburbia" (1980 GMP); freedom to explore/freedom to just "be"; rustic; etc. Couple that with the GMP definition of "doing, thinking, dreaming, and being in relationship with Yosemite's resources." Every activity/facility can then be evaluated for appropriateness using the template as a filter.

2. The current contract for concessions at Yosemite is due to expire, enabling a new bidding process. Therefore, the new River Plan should be free to make decisions as to what's best for the River Corridor rather than tied to contract specifics requiring a "reasonable profit" for the concessionaire. Rockfalls and floods resulting in a loss of lodging accommodations have undoubtedly been a challenge to Delaware North's profit margin in Yosemite, though the Park still remains one of the most lucrative contracts in the company's Parks and Resorts Division. However, replacement of lost facilities cannot drive decisions in the new Merced River Plan. Delaware North certainly has the option of not bidding on the new concessions contract if what is determined to be appropriate in the new Plan (which will also amend the expiring Concessions Services Plan) fails to fit the company's profit structure. Recalling a 1997 article: "In 1993, Delaware North landed a 15-year contract to manage food and lodging at America's oldest national park. The government and Delaware North negotiated a deal that gives the concessionaire a little more freedom in the park in exchange for a higher percentage of revenue being returned to the park. Under the new contract as much as 20 percent of revenue Delaware North derives will go to the government. However, much of that money will be funneled directly back to the park to improve facilities. "We see this as a win-win situation," Jacobs says. "It is an opportunity for us to 'exploit' the natural assets of the park in a way that actually complements the park, instead of harming it." ("Jeremy M Jacobs: Delaware North's Intrepid Captain Loves The Thrill of the Deal", by Paul King, Nation's Restaurant News, January 27, 1997.) "Exploit the natural assets." "Improve facilities." " ... gives the concessionaire a little more freedom in the park in exchange for a higher percentage of revenue returned to the Park." Such a mindset has been the source of on-going concern as the public sees the Park transition more and more to event visitation catering to well-heeled visitors while becoming less and less affordable to the average American family. Acquiring one park contract after another, it appears that Delaware North has greatly expanded its influence and is redirecting the mission and policies of the National Park Service toward a more elitist, commercialized, and homogenized experience rather than the more traditional back-to-nature experience associated with a National Park. Clearly defining the visitor experience is the first step in deciding what facilities are needed. There is a direct correlation between facilities and revenue generation; the concessionaire claims to want to "improve facilities" (which of course facilitates higher prices and increased profits), but the question should be does the Park even need those facilities. Do swimming pools, tennis courts, pizza parlors, bars/liquor outlets, gift shops, snack stands, art center, ice rink, equipment sales/rentals, in-room TV, Wi-Fi, RV hook-ups, etc. contribute to the uniqueness of Yosemite Valley or are they intrusive "fragments of suburbia"? And perhaps more importantly, do facilities support protection of the Merced River's "esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features"-the primary emphasis elements of a comprehensive river management plan? Past plans claim to be responding to "visitor demand for expanded or additional services." The new Merced River Plan must set objective guidelines for what services and facilities are needed-moving beyond the "want" vs. "need" debate and instead focusing on what is most protective of the river corridor.

Planners need to participate in the exercise of viewing Yosemite Valley as a do-over. If one could start from scratch, what facilities would be "needed" and where would they be placed and what would be the justification. Such an exercise should not only include just an evaluation of visitor facilities but also debate the "need" for an elementary school and the few students it serves vs. the footprint required, amount of NPS and concessionaire housing in the Valley, the Court, the NPS and concessionaire stables, and more-everything should be "on the table." 3. The new River Plan should establish a base level of services to be provided and then decide on the base level of employees-NPS and Concessions-needed to provide those services. Employee numbers seem to be a shell game of sorts; they're very difficult to track. New employee dorms added 217 concessionaire beds in the Valley with the promise to remove the "trainwreck" and housing behind the Post Office-yet nothing has been removed; only more has been added with concern that still more will be needed. As stated in GAO Report GAO/T-RCED-98-35: "Each park that provides housing is required by the Park Service to have a housing management plan. This plan is to identify the park's need for housing, the condition of housing, and an assessment of the availability and affordability of housing in nearby communities. The agency requires that the parks update their housing management plan every 2 years so that it reflects the current need of the park." What is the status of Yosemite's compliance with this system-wide requirement? The Report goes on to state that "In accordance with Office of Management and Budget guidance, the Park Service is authorized to provide park housing to seasonal employees in all locations and to permanent employees (1) whose position description requires them to live in the park to provide needed service or protection or (2) when adequate housing in the local community is not available." Interestingly, a follow up Report GAOIT-RCED-99-119 revealed: "at Yosemite National Park, the contractor determined that, based on agency criteria, the park needed 69 units for staff to respond to after-hours incidents. However, in revising the results of the contractor's assessment, park managers more than doubled this number to 175 housing units. They did this in order to have what they thought was an acceptable number of employees who could be called back to duty during the middle of the night, when there are typically no staff on duty, or during unusually busy periods of the day. The park managers indicated that the park needed the additional 100-plus housing units because it was difficult to get staff to respond to after-hours incidents. These managers said that the park normally must call about four off-duty law enforcement staff or other staff in order to get one to respond to an after-hours incident. The Yosemite park managers' views are not consistent with the direction of the Park Service's policy that encourages parks to minimize its employee housing. In this case, there may be other options for the agency to address its after-hours needs other than providing this amount of housing-for example through using shift work to cover the off-duty period." There needs to be a comprehensive operational study evaluating how many employees-both NPS and Concessions-are needed to perform a base level of services. Such a study should include analysis of seasonal needs, split shifts, how many people does an employee really represent, needs of single employees vs. employees with families, cost-benefit evaluation of shoulder season activities vs. employees required, emergency response criteria, and more. Another component of the study should evaluate how many employees-both NPS and Concessions-should have housing in Yosemite Valley based on the nature of their job function. It appears that the current practice locates employees based on vacancies in existing structures rather than evaluating whether those structures (or employees) are even needed at all. The operational study also needs to analyze the environmental, economic, sociological and sprawl-inducing impacts of not reducing the number of employees but merely moving them to sensitive outlying communities such as El Portal and Wawona. Each employee (single or with family) needs housing, food, water, parking place and/or transportation, HR services and more, requiring an increased development footprint while adding to the overall capacity in the park. At present, it appears that 80% of the development footprint in the Valley is in support of the 20% of visitors and residents who stay overnight in

the park. A reduction in employees would become an opportunity to reduce the development footprint while streamlining operations and reducing impacts. 4. The national park experience is NOT a resort experience. Enjoy magic from dawn to dusk Make yourself at home in a cabin, or stay in secluded campsites for tents and all types of RVs. Hike winding paths, explore nature trails on horseback and have the time of your life in the great outdoors among hundreds of acres of natural beauty. Savor a variety of dining options including sit-down meals, cool drinks and quick snacks to go. Have some rustic fun in the great outdoors with recreational activities for the entire family. Escape to the rustic charm of a Resort that recalls the majesty of the grand National Park Service lodges from the Great American Northwest with a soaring split-log lobby, eight stories high, honoring American craftsmanship and artistry. Pools, beach, banking services, camera rental, guest services desk, children's activities, credit cards accepted, dining, snack bar, laundry facilities, lounge/bar, kennel, shopping, water rentals, bike rentals, fishing, horseback riding and pony rides, campfire sing-a-long. Buses (Motor Coach) service the resort both internally taking guests to the attractions and externally transporting guests to the Ticket and Transportation Center. The previous description promotes Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground at Walt Disney World. And now from a cached DNC Parks and Resorts website promoting Yosemite... Encompassing 1,170 square miles, an area the size of the state of Rhode Island, this unique destination offers both expansive wilderness as well as the guest services and amenities you would find at a year-round resort. This site is managed by Yosemite's primary concessionaire, Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts at Yosemite, Inc. (DNC at Yosemite), which provides the majority of visitor services in Yosemite National Park, including lodging, food and beverage, retail operations, transportation, tours and recreation services.

There's so much to do at Curry Village, you might find it hard to leave to explore the rest of Yosemite! Food and Beverage Services - the Curry Village Pavilion serves all-you-can-eat buffet style breakfast and dinner service daily. Other seasonal options include Taqueria, Pizza Patio and Bar, Curry Ice Cream Stand and Curry Coffee Corner. Gift Shop - Sundries, newspapers, gift items, magazines, books, posters, snacks and ATM machine. Swimming Pool - Outdoor swimming pool with showers and changing rooms. Amphitheater/Ranger/ naturalist programs, slide presentations and scenic movies. Yosemite Mountain Shop - Offers extensive inventory of camping, hiking, and climbing goods, dehydrated food and snacks. Tour & Activities Desk - Obtain information or arrange for tours, transportation, Yosemite Mountaineering School classes, horseback or mule rides and other activities. Curry Recreation Center - Standard bicycles in all sizes may be rented for the day or by the hour. Rafts may be rented from mid-May to mid-July. Yosemite Mountaineering School- Rock climbing instruction, guided hiking and backpacking and rental equipment are available. Cross-country skiing instruction and rental equipment are available November to April. Transportation - Free Valley shuttle service to various locations in the park is accessible, including winter service to the Badger Pass Ski Area. Ice Skating Rink - Open daily from late November to early March, the outdoor ice rink also offers skate rentals and instruction. Nearby Activities - Guided tours, stable rides, rock climbing, hiking, fishing, photography and ranger/naturalist programs, snowshoeing, downhill skiing and cross-country skiing are all located nearby. Is the goal of the visitor experience to encourage the public to spend TIME in direct interaction with the resource or spend MONEY at the resource? A resort is usually privately owned and challenges the manager to design activities that will enable the enterprise to stay in business. Resorts are not subsidized by the taxpayer but must generate their own revenue based on what the market will bear; if visitors don't come, the resort goes under. National parks are publicly funded by taxpayers and owned by the American people; regardless of the number of visitors, the parks will always be funded. Transforming our national parks into concessionaire resorts creates inherent conflicts of interest ranging from capacity issues to preservation to revenue generation. What do Bracebridge Dinners at \$400 (now expanded to 8 evenings rather than 1), Chefs Holidays (\$700-\$1,000/couple), Vintner Holidays, etc. have to do with the central mission of a national park--other than increasing revenue for the concessionaire. Why is Yosemite promoted as a place to hold conferences--other than to increase revenue for the concessionaire? And all the while the increased level of services, employees, and infrastructure required to support such resort-style activities takes its toll in wear and tear on Park resources--frequently during the off-season when the Park needs time to regenerate from busy summer use. If a visitor is desirous of resort-style services and activities, there are facilities in the gateways outside the Park that can accommodate that lifestyle. And finally, how do these programs and activities fulfill the goals of experiencing Yosemite free from the "fragments of suburbia" and "being in relationship with Yosemite's resources," not to mention affordability for the average American. Interestingly, the 1980 GMP clearly states: "Space in the Valley will not be allocated for resort activities, since they are not directly related to the significant resources."

5. Commercial raft and bike rentals and their impact on the river environs need to be thoroughly analyzed. There is no mention in the GMP of a full-blown concessionaire rafting operation. In fact, no such operation even existed in 1980; but in 1982 the Park's concessionaire (Yosemite Park and Curry Company) saw an opportunity to transform a casual visitor activity into a mass-produced, organized, paid Disney-style attraction (aka \$\$\$\$). As detailed in Yosemite, The Embattled Wilderness by Alfred Runte (pages 213-216), use of the Merced multiplied three- or fourfold between 1982 and 1986 as a result of the explosive growth of commercial rafting. "... in a confidential report\* dated March 1, 1986, the division identified twenty-four separate issues affecting Yosemite's air, water, vegetation, and wildlife. In Yosemite Valley the issue posing special problems was rafting on the river. The current high use levels have resulted in extreme crowding, aesthetic impairment for those wishing to view the Valley from the riverbank or from the Valley rim, litter problems in the river and along the banks, increased trampling and volunteer trails through meadows and erosion on riverbanks, and increased pressure to remove trees in the river on which rafts become entangled and those on the riverbank that may fall into the river.' Accordingly, the division proposed limiting company rafts 'to 90 per day and not more than 20 per hour.' Without those limits, the report concluded, issuing a subtle reminder about the alleged purposes of Yosemite National Park, 'the visitor experience in central Yosemite Valley will continue to shift away from quiet appreciation of the natural beauty of the flowing river, the meadows and riparian vegetation, and the scenic vistas toward a more amusement park atmosphere in which the recreational activity itself becomes the focus of attention.' [emphasis added] (\* Confidential Report to the Superintendent, Division of Resources Management, Yosemite National Park, "Natural Resources Management Issue Statements," March 1, 1986, p. 9, Yosemite Park Office Records) And though the GMP mentions providing a facility for bike rentals, did it envision the expanded operation that exists today? The proliferation of bikes, largely exacerbated by a robust rental program, has led to increased pedestrian/bicycle conflicts, a perceived need for more multi-use asphalt trails, vehicle/bicycle conflicts, off-trail resource damage, and more. When visitors bring their own bikes, not only are they familiar with their equipment but there is a greater chance they are more skilled at riding. All too frequently, bike renters haven't ridden a bike in years coupled with rental equipment they're not used to; this poses an additional safety risk when sharing a narrow bike path with pedestrians. We can't even count the times we've been almost run over by bikes or how disruptive it is to hear "behind you" every two minutes and have to move off the trail. The Park Service should be able to develop guidelines that accommodate visitors who bring their own bikes or their own rafts/tubes. It's the overblown commercial rental opportunities, pandering to impulse decision-making, that appear to have tipped the scales to the disadvantage of the resource and the visitor. Conversely, if rentals are not available, visitors self-select their participation in a recreational activity based on

whether or not they've chosen to go through the hassle of bringing/supervising their own equipment. The visitors themselves voluntarily reduce the impacts as opposed to the Park issuing more restrictions. Though rental opportunities may be profitable for the concessionaire, they expand the development footprint while enabling a shift away from quiet appreciation of the natural beauty "toward a more amusement park atmosphere in which the recreational activity itself becomes the focus of attention." 6. Commercial trail rides in Yosemite Valley and the impact on the river environs as well as the visitor experience need to be thoroughly analyzed. Do commercial trail rides support protection of the Merced River's "esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features" or do they exist for the benefit of the concessionaire and a few visitors? It seems that any time an activity is commercialized, the impacts increase multifold. Though riding a horse can be enjoyable, it's an activity that is commonplace in numerous other locations. Is it appropriate in the highly valued resource area that is the Merced River corridor? The smell, the proliferation of "road apples" along the trails, cowbirds, the development footprint required to operate a stable-dependent activity all need to be reevaluated in light of protecting the river environs. As an aside, we know the Park Service is extremely proud of its mounted ranger program. Visitors are excited to see a mounted ranger and these individuals provide a positive public relations role within the Park. However, we find it objectionable when a horse dumps a load in the middle of a busy walkway and the mounted ranger merely rides away leaving the smell and the flies behind for visitors to step around. Dog owners are supposed to clean up after their dogs; why is not the same expected of mounted rangers? 7. Family auto-camping in Yosemite Valley is a nature-focused activity that is often the seminal experience that instills a life-long resource preservation ethic in young and old alike. It is from this idyllic front-country adventure that future climbers, backpackers, hikers, and conservationists are born. There has been a significant public outcry over the 40% reduction in family camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley following the 1997 flood. The Rivers Campgrounds and a portion of Lower Pines Campground were closed by NPS administrative mandate (a loss of more than 300 sites)-even though Congress appropriated \$17 million as part of a flood appropriation package to "restore damaged property to its pre-damaged condition" (U.S. House of Representatives Field Report, 3/97). Additionally, the Group campground was eliminated. In the meantime, it appears more campers are being squeezed into smaller and smaller sites at Upper and Lower Pines Campgrounds creating increased human-bear conflicts, law enforcement conflicts, and greater opportunities for environmental degradation. Our concern is that allowing such a negative situation to continue will ultimately become the justification to get rid of camping in the Valley altogether-as causing too many impacts and being more trouble than its worth. Particularly troubling is a recent quote concerning camping from NPS Director Jon Jarvis in an interview with the San Jose Mercury (10/06/09): "And he said he'd like to see Yosemite Valley campsites destroyed in a 1997 flood rebuilt out of the valley, on Tioga Road and other locations, rather than in the valley along the sensitive Merced River. "Unfortunately, the public's perception is that Yosemite is just the valley, " he said "There are plenty of opportunities to end up with a no-net loss of campgrounds." Such a pre-decisional comment from the top Park Service official is clearly inappropriate and has the potential to poison this entire planning process-which has been touted as being open and transparent. Additionally, the comment fails to consider the transfer of impacts to another area of the Park, higher elevation/colder temperatures not conducive to camping, and putting additional pressure on day visitation by turning thousands of displaced campers into "day visitors" or commuters to Yosemite Valley from their out-of-Valley campsites. Acknowledging the value of camping as a resource-focused activity, the GMP proposed 756 campsites in Yosemite Valley of which there would be 684 "family friendly" auto campsites and 14 group campsites; this number already accounted for the removal of 116 sites from along the banks of the sensitive Merced River. Planners more recently appear to be advocating for more walk-in or walk-to sites which may appeal to the strong and healthy but which would be discouraging for the disabled as well as families camping with infants and young children or with grandparents. There are plenty of opportunities in the back-country for walk-in or walk-to sites but drive-in camping is the introductory activity for the novice outdoorsman and should be preserved. Interior Secretary Salazar and NPS Director Jarvis have both indicated a focus on encouraging young people to experience their national parks. An outreach event here or there may raise awareness but until the young person can enjoy the Park with his family in a manner that is not too expensive or too intimidating, his/her interest will not be long-lasting. Family friendly auto camping bridges that gap. Additionally, campers are self-contained requiring few support services and minimal permanent infrastructure. Unlike year-round facilities, campgrounds are only used seasonally allowing an opportunity for the resources to regenerate. As planners begin to discuss the camping component for the new Plan, we strongly encourage consultation with members of the camping community-an advisory council of sorts. There is much to be learned from those who have been camping in Yosemite Valley for generations. It is also critical for the NPS to tap into camping reservation databases to inform campers about the opportunity to participate throughout development of the new MRP. The camping public, the largest group of visitors to the Park, has been disenfranchised from the comment process for much too long. As alternatives are developed in the new Merced River Plan, we hope that the Park will present choices with respect to the quantity and mix of camping the land can sustain. We trust the following will be specifically addressed: Campsites less tightly configured? Drive-in tent only campgrounds separate from RVs? Limits on length of RV campers considering the fragility of the resources (23' as the limit used at Mariposa Grove rather than allowing as large as 40' RV towing an extra vehicle= 65' trying to maneuver in a campground)? Separate dog campers from non-dog campers as was done in the 50s and 60s? Expanded camping opportunities (Rivers, Lower Pines, North Pines)? More (smaller) campgrounds with fewer sites located in various "pockets" around the Valley? Possibly rotating campgrounds annually or adjusting the length of the season giving the land an opportunity to recover? Replace Ahwahnee cottages with camping opportunities? Reduce Yosemite Lodge development and replace with camping opportunities? The Plan also must eliminate the current management practice of allowing Park Partners and volunteers to camp in the public campgrounds, thereby reducing the number of sites available to the public.

8. The new Merced River Plan must contain and consider as part of the planning process an in-depth analysis of the recreational patterns of low income and non-Anglo populations. Any discussion of user capacity, which as defined includes the quantity of recreation an area can sustain without adverse impacts on the quality of the recreation experience, MUST include an in-depth examination of the recreational patterns of low income and non-Anglo populations. Past plans have stated that "It is generally believed that low-income and minority visitors to the park are underrepresented in the total visitor population. However, the overnight accommodation and recreation patterns of low income and minority park visitors have not been studied in detail. As a result, the impacts on low-income and minority overnight and day visitors cannot be analyzed quantitatively. It may be assumed that visitation patterns of low-income visitors tend toward the more inexpensive methods: day visits, camping, housekeeping, tent cabin rentals ... " How can planners begin to make decisions as to how (and how many) visitors will be able to visit and/or overnight in Yosemite Valley without this important information-especially at a time when the Park Service is trying to encourage greater participation from previously underserved populations. And if managers are not even knowledgeable about the recreation patterns of these populations, how can they be expected to adequately evaluate whether user capacity determinations are having an adverse impact on the quality of their experience? Previous plans document that "the largest percentage of visitors to Yosemite National Park (26%) have an annual household income greater than \$100,000. The smallest proportion of visitors (5%) have an annual household income of less than \$20,000. By contrast, in the State of California the largest percent of the population (37%) has an annual income



below \$20,000. The data illustrate that people from low-income households are largely underrepresented in the population of visitors to Yosemite... This is true on both a statewide and regional basis." As a publicly funded entity, the national parks must serve ALL Americans. It appears that many of the plans and policies now advocated in Yosemite are resulting in economic discrimination- especially for the day visitor. One can't help but recall another Delaware North quote: "I think we would be looking at full-service kinds of parks. I don't think we would be so interested in day-tripper kind of parks." ("A Sharper Focus;" Buffalo News, 10/3/99) Previous plans, including the 1980 GMP, advocate mass transit tourism. By controlling the manner in which day visitors access the Park (mass transit), separating these visitors from their rolling storage lockers (i.e., their personal vehicle), will the concessionaire be offered a way to make "day trippers" more profitable? (Studies have acknowledged that bus passengers spend more money.) Quantitative studies with respect to recreational patterns of low-income and non-Anglo populations are critical to future land-use decisions and user capacity determinations and must inform all alternatives presented in the new Merced River Plan.

... WITHOUT ADVERSE IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY 1. The new Merced River Plan must include updated information and maps concerning rockfalls, debris flows, and other geologic hazards as integral to siting of facilities. The very definition of user capacity requires that decisions about the quantity of recreation use be considered in terms of avoiding adverse impacts on public health and safety. Such a discussion must include a comprehensive reevaluation of rockfalls, talus zones, and shadow zones as they relate to the River Corridor. It is irresponsible to dismiss rockfalls as a common occurrence in the Park when geologists are fully aware of areas where the dangers are greatest. For example, in reference to the Curry Village area, a 2007 USGS Report states that the "rockfall hazard was underestimated when the USGS developed a map of rockfall potential in Yosemite Valley to support the NPS Yosemite Valley Plan." It goes on to state that the potential for debris flows to damage facilities in the Curry Village donitory area appears to be fairly high; "however, donitory planning, contracting, and construction schedules could not accommodate the slowly accumulating evidence from models, field work, and landslide events of potential hazards." The report concludes that "unpredictable landslides might occur in many regions, especially within Curry Village in Yosemite Valley." "Examination of recent landslides and subsurface trenches in the western section of Curry Village has indicated that in some places landslide deposits extend further than the current talus slopes above Curry Village, thus facilities are more vulnerable to landslide hazards than originally assumed." (USGS Open-File Report 2007-1378: Staircase Falls Rockfall on December 26, 2003 and Geologic Hazards at Curry Village, Yosemite National Park, California) The above-referenced report goes on to state: "Subsurface trenching in the proposed donitory area indicated that unrecorded debris flows and flyrock from rockfall reached the donn area and noted that a stream channel mapped in 1934 had been filled by a debris flow. Other evidence of rockfall into the shadow zone appeared when excavations for donn building foundations encountered a 15-foot long boulder two feet under the surface and again when tons of flyrock and rockfall boulders were removed for building foundations. On Oct. 25, 2005, a rockfall from the cliffs above sent flyrock well into the new donn during construction with only one minor injury." It is inconceivable that Park managers placed donitory planning, contracting, and construction schedules ahead of the safety of human life even with significant problems occurring during the construction phase. This employee facility is a ticking time bomb. Previous planning documents (even before the October '08 rockfall) have stated that "redevelopment of facilities within the common area of Curry Village (which includes Curry Pavilion, the historic visitor registration, retail facilities, and employee facilities such as housekeeping, maintenance, and employee lounge facilities) would be within the rockfall zone. All of these facilities are considered standard occupancy [nonessential structures], except the Curry Pavilion... The retention of Curry Pavilion in the rockfall zone would result in a local, long-term, moderate, adverse impact to public health and safety." Meanwhile the Park recently invested considerable funds to rehabilitate the historic visitor registration facility-within the rockfall zone. And though YI students narrowly escaped injury from the October 2008 rockfall, their temporary relocation still requires use of the Curry Pavilion within the rockfall zone. Additionally, a 2000 Geotechnical Engineering Report in support of a seismic study for the Ahwahnee Hotel states that "recent studies in the area suggest that the hazard of rock slope and related phenomena at the site might be sizeable." It goes on to recommend that the "hazard of rock fall be assessed on a more site specific basis..." And currently, the Miwok Indian Cultural Center is under construction in another area of the Valley that is also sensitive to rock fall. In a narrow valley where nearly all land is classified as a highly valued resource, it would seem that any structure determined to be "nonessential" should be removed altogether. Furthermore, there should be no guarantee that accommodations lost in the 2008 rock fall event will be replaced. Though such decisions will impact the concessionaire's ability to make a profit, decisions about the number and future siting of facilities must not be driven by revenue production. Detailed, updated rockfall studies and maps must be included and analyzed in the new Merced River Plan. This information is integral to development of user capacity requirements (which explicitly state no adverse impact on public health and safety) in advance of any site specific planning. It remains very difficult to understand why there is more attention paid to flooding hazards where there is greater opportunity for advanced notice than to a rockfall event which provides no notice at all. 2. There needs to be a correlation between numerical capacity in a box canyon and the ability to safely evacuate should a major emergency occur. East Yosemite Valley is a box canyon. Past plans have directed visitors to the easternmost end of the canyon. The number of visitors that can be safely accommodated must be considered in terms of how they -can be evacuated in an extreme emergency. How do those visitors arrive-by bus? By private vehicle? Private vehicles are easier to evacuate from the Valley and pose less interference to incoming emergency vehicles than buses. Also, buses would have to wait for all of their passengers to board before leaving a threatened area, putting larger groups of people at risk in an evacuation situation. If the vast majority arrives by bus, how many buses are needed to evacuate and where will those buses come from and what kind of lead time would be required? What exit routes will be available? There should be a direct ratio between the number of visitors that can be accommodated vs. the ability of the NPS to successfully carry out evacuation plans. The new Merced River Plan needs to include a risk management component which includes evacuation strategies that relate to a numerical user capacity determination. 3. Day visitor access to and from Half Dome within the Merced River corridor must be included in the Wilderness System for determining user capacity. The existing Wilderness Permit System does not include day visitors. The number of day visitors desiring to access the Half Dome cables is adversely impacting public safety from the start of the Merced River Plan Scoping Comments Page 22 of 32 February 1, 2010 trailhead, along the granite staircase, right on up to the top of the Dome. Recent deaths have magnified the situation resulting in numerous articles and photographs documenting the wall-to-wall crowds at this "attraction." The very presence of cables (i.e., handrails) implies that this adventure must be safe. Additionally, climbing the Dome is marketed by the Park and the concessionaire as almost a "rite of passage" with t-shirts/sweatshirts proclaiming the visitor "made it to the top;" entire church groups reserving weekends to make the annual trek; widespread publicity; and more. The new Merced River Plan must ensure there are no adverse impacts to the Merced River, to the quality of the experience, and to public safety with respect to the number of day visitors coupled with overnight visitors desiring to climb Half Dome. Additionally, it would be to the Park's advantage to provide more supervision and oversight to this climb as long as cables exist. Park-Wide Transportation Component Previous plans, guided by the 1980 GMP, support implementation of the NPS vision of converting the Valley from auto-touring to mass transit tourism-even though environmental rules and regulations as well as technology have drastically improved since 1978. The foundational element of transportation system design is user capacity. In a recent (11/15/02)

report, "National Park Service: Opportunities to Improve the Administration of the Alternative Transportation Program," a U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation substantiated that each NPS busing proposal is supposed to address non-construction alternatives (i.e., simple remedies such as traffic management that would not involve road widening/realignment, bus depots, etc.). Additionally, each proposal must mandate park capacity data (i.e., user capacity) to guarantee that a bus won't bring in more people than what the user capacity will allow. Returning to the basic definition of user capacity as the quantity of recreation which an area can sustain without adverse impact on 1) the outstandingly remarkable values and the free-flowing character of the river area, 2) the quality of the recreation experience, and 3) public health and safety, the concept of mass transit tourism adversely impacts all three. 1) With respect to the outstandingly remarkable values and the free-flowing character of the river area—already irreversible damage has occurred due to the widening and realignment of El Portal Road, a project that destroyed historic, cultural, hydrologic, and biologic ORVs. A primary purpose of the project as stated in the EA was to meet the "long-term need for buses to use the road as part of a regional transportation system" (i.e., YARTS). And should there be a decision to carry forward the conversion to mass transit, Park resources will be at even greater risk as the development infrastructure needed to accommodate buses continues to expand. Recognizing that buses bring in more people per hour than private vehicles, the radiating impacts of busload after busload of visitors loading/unloading will result in toxic hot spots caused by trampling, noise, diminished air quality, and on-going environmental degradation. The Park has already stated that the justification for allowing the obtrusive oversized bus stop structure adjacent to Yosemite Falls—clearly not in keeping with the 'scenic' ORV—was to accommodate increased bus traffic to the Falls. As stated in a 1994 Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study: "potentially higher levels of particulate and nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions would be generated by high volumes of bus travel on park roads;" "increased noise levels on park roads and in the Valley would be associated with high volumes of bus travel." So many negatives—and still the vision of containing and controlling visitors through mass transit lives on. Planners might be interested in reviewing a 2009 report, "Environmental assessment of passenger transportation should include infrastructure and supply chains," (based upon work supported by UC Berkeley Center for Future Urban Transport, and the University of California Transportation Center). The report acknowledges that "Governmental policy has historically relied on energy and emission analysis of automobiles, buses, trains, and aircraft at their tailpipe, ignoring vehicle production and maintenance, infrastructure provision and fuel production requirements to support these modes" with the automobile receiving the greatest attention while buses, rail, and air have received little focus. Researchers found that total life-cycle energy inputs and greenhouse gas emissions contributed an additional 63% for onroad, 155% for rail, and 31% for air systems over vehicle tailpipe operation. Inventorying criteria air pollutants showed that vehicle non-operational components often dominated total emissions. Life-cycle criteria air pollutant emissions were between 1.1 and 800 times larger than vehicle operation. Ranges in passenger occupancy could easily change the relative performance of modes. The report can be found on-line at: [http://www.iop.org/EJ/article/1748-9326/4/2/024008/er19\\_2\\_024008.html](http://www.iop.org/EJ/article/1748-9326/4/2/024008/er19_2_024008.html) Utilizing simple and effective traffic management strategies coupled with a consistently applied, scientifically and objectively determined user capacity to inform planning decisions—the entire issue of mass transit tourism needs to be reexamined from a life-cycle as well as a Yosemite-specific environmental perspective based on facts. 2) The adverse impacts of mass transit tourism on the quality of the visitor experience are well documented. "Because of the serious drawbacks of remote staging for valley access," the 1994 Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study discarded the concept as a viable option because "the cost, visitor confusion, visitor delay, information challenges, and management difficulties associated with operating remote valley staging areas would be substantial. In return, the benefits would be minor, consisting of moderate decreases in vehicle traffic along sections of park road that are not congested. Perhaps the greatest drawback of remote staging would be the loss of visitors' personal freedom to experience portions of Yosemite at their own pace and in their own way." As far back as the 1988 "Feasibility Study Relating to Increased Bus Traffic in Yosemite," then-Superintendent John Morehead warned Congress that "increasing the number of... buses in the park would increase the number of bus passengers who represent an older, slightly wealthier, and a non-family unit, and would cause a resulting decrease in the number of traditional families, especially those with children, who rely upon an automobile to travel." Additionally, previous plans documented at great length the adverse impact busing would have on the quality of the recreation experience for day visitors. The entire issue of mass transit/assembly line tourism needs to be reexamined from a visitor experience perspective. 3) And finally, as discussed above—there are public safety concerns with respect to mass transit tourism from both an evacuation perspective as well as a single accident perspective. A bus going over an embankment can require life-or-death medical attention for 40 or more people all at one time. What, if any, medical facilities are available in the gateway communities or the Park to handle large numbers of people? Are there airlift capabilities beyond 1 or 2 helicopters? How many ambulances are available? Will emergency vehicles even be able to access an accident competing for space on narrow, winding, 2-lane mountain roads? Transportation workshops need to include emergency personnel (e.g., Sheriff, CHP, medical, fire, Caltrans, US Forest Service personnel, etc.) from throughout the region (e.g., local communities, Fresno, Merced, Modesto, etc.) who would be called on for assistance in a multi-casualty or catastrophic incident. Their expertise would be invaluable to the development of a park-wide transportation plan. Additional thoughts to be considered in discussions about transportation: ? Unlimited day visitation is frequently cited as the core of the capacity issue. It would seem that before the NPS can design a plan to manage day visitors, it would be important to know more about who the day visitor is. Guests staying inside the gates at either a campground or lodging, but outside the Valley, who want to visit the Valley for the day? Residents (with guests) living inside the gates (e.g., Yosemite West, Wawona, Foresta) visiting the Valley for the day? A gateway local? A gateway hotel guest? An in-Valley overnigher who checks out of a campground or lodging facility in the morning but doesn't leave the Valley until later in the day? A prospective in-Valley overnigher who comes into the Valley early in the day and checks into a facility later in the afternoon? A tour bus making a brief stop in the Valley on the way to somewhere else? An employee or Park Partner (or family members/guests) living outside the Valley but who goes into the Valley for work or to access services? YI students and staff? Visitors from San Joaquin Valley communities wanting to visit or picnic in the Park for the day? Attendees at day-long meetings (e.g., Gateway Partners, Planner for a Day workshops, Open Houses, etc.)? Vendors? ? Reduce resort-style services and programs which have no relationship to the reasons for which the Park was established (e.g., Chefs Holidays, Vintner Holidays, conferences, multiple Bracebridge Dinners, expanded shopping opportunities, etc.). Fewer programs can result in fewer visitor impacts as visitors desiring resort activities may opt to go elsewhere. ? The NPS has never attempted to manage visitor use other than by eliminating parking and/or closing roads or gates. There needs to be a broad-based discussion thinking "outside the box" rather than just playing "musical chairs" with parking spaces. Reduced opportunities for dispersal results in more and more people confined to an ever smaller area—heightening the perception of crowding. ? There needs to be an enforced length limit on RVs in high visitation areas such as Yosemite Valley. 40' RVs towing an additional vehicle can total 65' and will take away 3 or 4 parking spaces from other visitors. Perhaps the 23' limit that is used at Mariposa Grove would be a place to start using the premise that vehicles must be able to fit into one parking space. ? Maintain the two-lane, one-way circulation system as it exists today rather than converting roads to two-way. Keeping both Northside Drive and Southside Drive open is critical from an Converting Southside Drive to a 2-way, as discussed in previous plans, would entail widening and realigning; additionally, Southside Drive is in the shade most of the winter resulting in greater opportunity for icing—forcing all traffic to that side of the Valley would only increase the risk of accidents. ? Well-managed private vehicle access to Yosemite Valley and throughout the Park is environmentally, economically, and

sociologically superior to any busing scheme and must be retained as the primary mode of travel. Sedan-style vehicles associated with auto-touring have far less impact on park resources than the oversized RVs and buses. ? Explore strategies resulting in better coordination of tour buses including a possible reduction in numbers. ? The decision to substantially reduce parking in Yosemite Valley needs to be revisited. The addition of small, dispersed, unobtrusive parking areas served by a fast, fun, and friendly in-Valley shuttle system needs to be explored and would reduce much of the traffic congestion perhaps parking areas that are less formal and less regimented, not requiring more asphalt. Such lots might only operate seasonally, Memorial Day through Labor Day, enabling resources to recover the remaining 7-8 months of the year. ? Increase shuttle service throughout the Valley including West Valley destinations. Implement aggressive "Ride the Valley Shuttle" campaign: would include restricting overnight visitors to assigned parking; requiring YCSINPS employees to "bus" to work; informing day visitors to leave their vehicles parked until such time as they are ready to leave the Valley. ? Explore strategies for using traffic management personnel more effectively, more broadly, and more visibly. ? Road widening, realignment, relocation, or increasing the number of lanes should not be an option. ? Yosemite Lodge logistics need attention. The area is currently overwhelmed with buses and the parking lot is not large enough to serve both hotel overnights and day visitors wishing to access an overabundance of Lodge services (e.g., food, bike rentals, gift shops, swimming pool, etc.). Lodge patrons who have to pay \$200/night for a room find they can't even get a parking space until evening when the lots empty out. A similar situation exists at the Ahwahnee. Perhaps reduction of services would reduce demand? Perhaps a small overflow parking area to serve those guests who check out at IIAAM but who plan to spend the rest of the day in the Valley before leaving—that way the overnight parking space could be made available for the new check-in? Without such an arrangement, these "interim" day visitors are dumped into the pool with other types of day visitors in need of a parking space. ? Explore creation of a traffic management working group as part of your IS-workshop Transportation Forum. This working group would include shuttle bus drivers, patrol rangers, gate fee personnel, road maintenance, and other employees who have experience working directly with visitors "on the ground;" such individuals often have a wealth of ideas to improve traffic management/circulation (e.g., signage, parking locations/management, traffic circulation patterns, etc.). ? A mandatory employee transportation program must be explored that is the financial and administrative responsibility of the Park or Concessionaire or Park Partner as employers. In designing such a program there needs to be an examination of ways to reduce split shifts, avoid staggered start times, and otherwise consolidate work schedules, etc. Employees commuting to Yosemite Valley using their private vehicle for convenience currently occupy parking spaces that are supposed to be available to visitors. Visitor parking must have priority over employee parking. ? Lodging guests in the Valley typically receive a tag to hang on the mirror of their vehicle guaranteeing them a parking space. They should be advised that this parking space is theirs for the length of their stay and that they will not be allowed to park their vehicle elsewhere in the Valley for the sake of convenience; that in-Valley shuttles are available for their use. That way an overnights won't take away limited parking available to day visitors. The same kind of tag system should be used for campers. ? Coordinate NPS media releases during periods of peak visitation. If Memorial weekend is the most crowded weekend of the entire year, why promote it further with widespread press encouraging people to come see the waterfalls at that time? If people want to see the falls, they will come on their own. Additional hype just makes a busy situation that much more difficult to manage. ? Most of Yosemite is uncrowded most of the time. Any transportation solution must deal with the real Yosemite, crowded only in specific areas a very small percent of the hours of a small percent of the days—and generally between May and September. If the mythical problem of year-round gridlock is targeted for solution a great deal of money will be wasted, the experience of visiting Yosemite will be ruined, and environmental impacts will be increased dramatically. ? Previous studies have revealed that as many as one-third of day visitors enter the Park through one gate and exit through a different gate. Any transportation plan needs to consider this travel pattern so as not to add more vehicles to the road should visitors have to backtrack. ? A primary reason visitors go straight to the Valley is because that's where all the roads lead; that's where the "official" Visitor Center is located; and that's the first place where visitors can actually park and ask a question without feeling rushed. In effect, the NPS is sending everyone down to the Valley exacerbating the traffic management situation. Consider putting Welcome Centers at each of the gates offering visitors a sense of arrival to the Park. Such Centers could also be helpful in better dispersing visitors. Visitors could clarify/confirm their lodging reservations and locations (e.g., Yosemite Lodge vs. Yosemite View Lodge; businesses often put "Yosemite" at the front end of their name to gain attention leading international visitors to think anything that says "Yosemite" must be in the Park); receive assistance planning their itinerary, perhaps taking advantage of attractions on their way down to the Valley instead of finding out what they missed after the fact; restrooms; postcards; guides; books; souvenirs; watch a video; cup of coffee or ice water, or whatever. (Interesting how many times visitors were unable to get answers at the South Entrance due to the line backing up and drove all the way down to the Valley because that's what they thought they were supposed to do, only to learn that they would have to drive all the way back up to see Mariposa Grove, or the Pioneer History Museum, or Glacier Point; though there are signs along the way that direct people to these attractions, visitors often don't understand their significance when first arriving in the Park. Information distributed at the gate usually isn't studied until the vehicle is parked and passengers are settled.) Explore making one of the lanes at the gates for passes only; perhaps visitors to the Welcome Center could purchase a pass inside which would give them quicker throughput rather than having to go back out and wait in a traffic line. Strongly suggest planners consult with gate employees for other ideas to speed up throughput as well as to gather input on the kinds of assistance most frequently requested. What's happening at the gates directly impacts what happens in the Valley. Additional Comments 1. There needs to be a clear and objective methodology used to determine user capacity. Such methodology must be consistently applied to the decision-making process, throughout the Plan and to all tiering projects, to ensure protection of the ORVs and free-flow of the Merced River area, the quality of the visitor's recreation experience, and public health and safety. 2. Since establishing a numerical capacity is a major part of this planning effort, the process for collecting statistics must be refined. The current method of relying on underground mechanical counters at the gates and elsewhere that (when operable) are unable to delineate between visitors, employees, and vendors other than by a formula established in 1994 needs to be reexamined for validity. Consider the following statements made by NPS staff over the past four years as recorded by the NPS Public Use Statistics Office: "Tioga Pass counter broken, BOF [Big Oak Flat] counter broken for last 11 days"; "South Entrance and Big Trees counter out for 7 days. Badger Pass counter out for 30 days"; "BOF traffic counter now uses correct inbound figures. Used lane 2 in error from beginning/installation. Inbound/outbound reversed, but now corrected"; "Arch Rock traffic counter was out 14 days"; "Arch Rock, Badger Pass, & Tioga Pass traffic counters look like they're still having problems"; "Traffic counters at Arch Rock, South Entrance, and Big Trees appear to be out-of-order; traffic counts are estimates only"; "Arch Rock and Big Trees traffic counters were out all month; South Entrance and Badger Pass were out some of the month"; "Broken counter at Arch Rock". It would appear that visitation counts appear to be highly unreliable. Citing 1999 public testimony to the California Transportation Commission from Peggy Kukulus, then Executive Director of the Yosemite-Sierra Visitors Bureau, with respect to 1998 visitation statistics through the South Entrance: +Yosemite says 1,284,967 visitors pass through Highway 41 to and from Yosemite. Caltrans says that 1,714,770 visitors pass through Highway 41 to and from Yosemite. That's a difference of 429,803 visitors. It's a difference of 148,208 vehicles. Who is wrong? Whose calculations are off? Do we believe Caltrans figures? Do we believe the National Park figures? I have had numerous conversations with the department which calculates Yosemite's visitation counts in Denver and have heard on numerous occasions how the actual traffic counters on 2 of the major entrances into Yosemite have not been working for more than a year. Even the

Denver statistician was concerned about how averages from other gate counts were manipulated into complete "guesstimations" to plug into other entrance counts. " With respect to the Park's use of 2.9 persons as the average count per vehicle... Having participated in survey collection during the summer of 1999 standing at the 4-way on Labor Day weekend with the assignment of counting the number of people per car as they drove by, nearly every single vehicle had tinted side and back windows making it impossible to give an accurate count of the number of individuals inside. When this situation was brought to the attention of the survey supervisor, the recommendation was to "make your best guess," and yet from such guesses the figure of 2.9 continues to live on. A fair, accurate, and protective numerical capacity cannot be established by "guesstimation." 3. Decisions made by the Park concerning user capacity also affect the surrounding gateway communities. Once user capacity in the Valley has been determined, the new Merced River Plan must also include an analysis as to how those numbers differ from historical visitor use as well as the socioeconomic impact on the surrounding region. Whether it's 10 million visitors or 3 million visitors-all must travel through one of the four corridors into the park, utilizing the services and infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, roads) within the gateway communities. The Park has a responsibility to evaluate prospective policy changes in light of how those changes might actually advance sprawl and environmental degradation outside its boundaries. Bus access to the Park will force counties to consider infrastructure changes from the standpoint of road safety and maintenance, economic survival, fire and emergency measures as well as other perspectives. Local communities and governments need to be intimately involved in the decision-making process as adjacent Federal land use policy is developed. Likewise, the U.S. Forest Service needs to be intimately involved in the decision-making process as an adjacent Federal land unit. Any reduction in capacity or facilities within Yosemite National Park has the potential to increase overflow activity in the Sierra National Forest, the Stanislaus National Forest, and the Inyo National Forest. 4. Though the 1980 GMP states that "special facilities will be provided for students," there is no mention about the scope or location of such facilities, or that they will provide a "permanent home" for any specific program. Yosemite Institute must not be granted a "permanent home" in Yosemite Valley. Unfortunately, it appears the NPS has cleared the way to allow the well-funded and influential Yosemite Institute to build a large campus/conference center at Henness Ridge, albeit through a flawed process absent an adequate plan from which to tier and absent a reopened scoping period. As such, the Institute would already have a "permanent home" within Yosemite National Park. This group most certainly doesn't need two "permanent homes." On a temporary "emergency" basis only, the Institute has been allowed to use the Boystown facilities at Curry Village. However, YI Directors recently sent out a letter to their member schools stating: "We are happy to report that we have found a short-term solution which may become a permanent home to YI programs in Yosemite Valley." "There are several reasons why we think this is a terrific solution for YI programs: \* Boystown has a clearly delineated periphery which will make free time student management easier and more defined, \* the cabins are currently being insulated so they will be warm throughout the year \* the area and the dedicated bathhouse will only be utilized by YI students, \* the area is beyond a 300foot buffer YI has added to the National Park Service rockfall closure zone in Curry Village, and \*the area still has access to the Curry Dining Pavilion for meals and the Curry ice rink in the winter. ? Merced River Plan Scoping Comments Page 29 of 32 February 1, 2010 The NPS has failed to address the issue as to whether it is even appropriate to have a private entity, rather than a public entity, providing education and interpretation at a monetary cost to children on a public land? (A very high monetary cost...) Why is YI in a more privileged category than the taxpaying public who funds the Park? Additionally, there are concerns the group may still retain an administrative facility at Crane Flat. Their march toward expansion and revenue generation within Yosemite National Park must come to a halt. 5. There has been significant focus on the Merced River as it flows through Yosemite Valley. An equal amount of energy must be focused on the South Fork of the Merced River as it flows through Wawona. Of particular concern is the large maintenance yard alongside the River as well as any future plans for expansion of Park Operations within the South Fork river corridor. Will NPS decisions be directly responsible for advancing commercial sprawl and environmental degradation within the historical community of Wawona? There has also been rapid expansion of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI) and the number of individuals it serves adding to capacity issues in Wawona. And there is the question as to the appropriateness of faculty feathering their nests by acquiring more grants, generating publicity, etc. using public land (Yosemite) as the drawing card-not to mention facilities being used for K-12 programs, retreats, etc., similar uses as promoted by YI. Is this the next group that will be lobbying for a campus/research center? 6. Likewise, significant energy must focus on EI Portal. As previous plans have stated: "The EI Portal archeological district contains 17 known sites. Prehistoric human burials in both isolated locations and in cemeteries, along with burial objects, have been identified. Recent archeological research (Hull et al. 1999) indicates resources in EI Portal may represent some of the earliest human occupation and use of the Merced River corridor, dating possibly as early as 9,500 years ago. EI Portal also may contain the best-preserved archeological resources from the protohistoric and early historic periods associated with American Indian cultural change. Although modern development has significantly changed the landscape and has destroyed archeological deposits in many places, much could be learned from these resources." An interpretation of NHPA by Chief of Resources Niki Nicholas that "NHPA allows digging up as long as there is mitigation. Some of the areas most suitable for development from a construction standpoint are those that include ORVs" is of concern. Cultural resources are not renewable. The entire Merced Canyon is full of natural and cultural resources that are unique, especially in comparison to the rest of the now over-developed western slope of the Sierra. This new planning effort is a great opportunity for the NPS to foster a holistic view of the Merced River west of the park boundary and beyond, to begin to coordinate better with the community of EI Portal, its homeowners, as well as all the various entities and agencies involved with the Merced River (Caltrans, the Mariposa County Unified School District, the BLM, Mariposa County, and the State of California). This better collaboration would ensure that the Wild and Scenic Merced River is protected adequately throughout the Merced Canyon and not just within the boundaries of YNP. The wetlands and archeological sites within EI Portal are highly valued by residents and local Native Americans and should be discussed with the EI Portal community so residents have the information they need to participate productively in this planning process. Such collaboration between the NPS, community members and other agencies 4 ? would result in better communication for the entire Yosemite community and more consistent use of river protective practices by homeowners and all of these agencies throughout the Merced Canyon. In recent years, Mariposa County has been unable to provide an accurate year-round population number for EI Portal largely because of the addition of two apartment complexes and several single family homes in the Rancheria Flat area of EI Portal which is maintained for government employees. It would seem this should be a major river capacity issue since all the sewage from Yosemite Valley flows through EI Portal infrastructure and gets mixed with the EI Portal sewage before being treated and released back into the W&S Merced. In other words, it is important to finally get an accurate count of how many toilets and showers exist in EI Portal now, especially given the expansion in the past several years of the government housing area, as well as new development at both the Yosemite View Lodge and Cedar Lodge. 7. The new Merced River Plan must include a reasonable range of alternatives. For example: increase protections and enhancements of the Merced Wild and Scenic River's ORVs; require vehicles to fit the size of existing roadways rather than expanding roadways; restore certain lodging areas to natural conditions; retain and rehabilitate a larger proportion of the low-cost overnight units; remove a large proportion of the highest-cost overnight accommodations; retain well-managed private vehicle access system with limit on tour buses; increase in camping with respective decrease in lodging; reduce the overall levels of commercial activity in Yosemite including full-service hotel accommodations, restaurants, and retail; not add additional development to areas in the Park outside Yosemite Valley. Additionally, as the Plan discusses the "kinds and amounts of

public use which the river area can sustain without impact to the values for which it was designated," that planners offer the public a range of choices within the alternatives. For example: perhaps an area could support 'x' amount of camping or 'x' amount of day use including picnicking, or 'x' amount of lodging, etc.; such choices would be supported by studies that "will be made during preparation of the management plan and periodically thereafter." 8. At scoping meetings, planners mentioned that there would be numerous workshops held in advance of releasing the Draft EIS. What plan does the Park have for documenting/distributing the information gained from these workshops and will there be any way to track how the input actually helped shape the new Plan? Though the internet is a terrific vehicle, many folks still have "dial up" which makes it difficult to download large documents; and many folks still don't have access to a computer. It is important for the public to understand the value of their participation in these workshops and that they just won't become another "check-off" so the Park Service can tout increased collaboration as part of the planning process. 9. According to the Settlement Agreement, "NPS hired as primary consultants Bo Shelby, Doug Whitaker, and David Cole, recognized experts in user capacity, to work directly with [Kristine Bunnell] in developing the new Merced River CMP. These experts will be involved in the planning process from the beginning..." "[Kristine Bunnell, Jim Bacon], and other NPS staff will work directly with these experts in implementing...tasks." Planners stated they have met with the experts on at least two occasions (a couple of days in both August and October), yet there has been no disclosure to the public as to what occurred at these meetings. What recommendations did the experts make? What recommendations did Park planners accept or reject and why? Did the experts approve the 4 questions on the comment card which served as a primary component of the public scoping sessions? If the experts were to be involved in the planning process from the beginning, why didn't they attend any of the public scoping sessions to launch a discussion of user capacity and get feedback directly from the public? Will the experts be posting their recommendations followed by the planning staffs responses on the MRP website so the public can feel a part of the on-going user capacity discussion? Failure of Park planners to address user capacity in the two previous MRP versions resulted in the plans being declared invalid by the Courts--hence it is critical that the public be able to hear directly from the experts as they lead the user capacity discussion and the rationale used by Park planners as they begin to shape the discussion for implementation along the Merced River Corridor. 10. As the Park continues to recruit more "Park Partners" (e.g., Yosemite Fund, Yosemite Association, Yosemite Institute, Sierra Nevada Research Institute, concessionaires, NPCA, etc.) and volunteers (corporate groups and others), it is critical for managers to clearly delineate a consistent policy as to priorities--especially as these groups increasingly impact capacity, expand the development footprint, as well as intrude on visitor facilities. The power of some of these groups has been elevated to the point (i.e., money and influence) that their desired projects are slipped through under Categorical Exclusions, in effect bypassing the public review process. In many ways, it seems like the Park has passed the tipping point and is now being controlled by Park Partners. The needs of Partners and volunteers must be held in check so as not to compete with the needs of visitors. Of particular concern is the merger of the Yosemite Fund and the Yosemite Association, in effect creating a very powerful "shadow agency" overseeing the Park under the direction of a former Superintendent. What Mike Tollefson was unable to accomplish as a Park Superintendent he can now attempt to accomplish as an Executive Director/Lobbyist for an extremely well-funded and well-connected organization--an inherent conflict of interest. The increased activity/aggressiveness of the various Partners can remind one of the political turmoil that existed in Yosemite during the 19th Century when various private interests created a jigsaw puzzle of sorts, slicing up the Valley floor for marketing and profit. In an effort to eliminate the competing interests, the Park was put under one ownership to be subsidized by the taxpayer for the benefit of ALL. It seems like the Park Service is harkening back to that long-ago era once again as we see YI, SNRI, concessionaires, etc. all striving to carve out their own special interest piece of paradise to advance their own agendas. 11. Public scoping is the most legally significant part of the plan development process. Park press releases have announced that scoping for the new MRP was extended to February 4, 2010. However, to date there has been no Federal Register Notice published that legally authorizes that extension. We expect that such a Notice will still be forthcoming so that our comments can be legally considered and analyzed as part of scoping for the new MRP. ... Merced River Plan Scoping Comments

In closing, we're including an excerpt from "Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness," by Alfred Runte: For Yosemite to remain distinctive, management must practice--not just preach--those forms of behavior ensuring that distinctiveness. Every landscape shared differences; few rose to such uniqueness. That uniqueness, in 1864, allowed Americans to herald Yosemite as a symbol of national pride. ... the gift of preservation is still essential to every future opportunity. Each succeeding generation, like Yosemite's first, must pass the park along, "inalienable for all time." Yosemite is too important to be just another place. Civilization has many undeniable advantages, yet even the most inventive civilization has never built a Yosemite. Yosemite by every imaginable standard is one of a kind. In that perception, and no other, lie the only tried and true principles for guiding the future of the park's natural heritage. We call on the planning team to seize this opportunity to wipe the slate clean and develop a new Merced River Plan that will establish the foundation for truly protecting the Merced River Corridor and Yosemite. Setting politics and profits aside and putting protection of Yosemite first, this planning team can leave no greater legacy.

Oakhurst

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	403	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Strachan, Bill				
<b>Received:</b>	Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition Recreational Groups				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Feb,04,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Fax				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	On behalf of the Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition (RRGCC) I appreciate this opportunity to provide you with scoping comments on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. I have personally enjoyed climbing in the Yosemite Valley and I am sure many of our members have also. The RRGCC represents over 1,000 rock climbers who enjoy recreating in the Red River Gorge area of Kentucky. Like the Merced, the Red River is also a National Wild and Scenic River and the climbing in Red River Gorge is also intimately linked to the river and its processes. Thus we are concerned about the precedents that the Merced River Plan might set that could in the future impact access to rock climbing opportunities in Red River Gorge. As a sister organization of the Access Fund we strongly encourage you to consider their points and comments concerning the development of a user capacity program for the Merced River planning area. Namely:				

? Climbing Should Be Identified as One of the Merced River's Outstanding Remarkable Values ? Yosemite's User Capacity Framework Should Consider Climbing's Unique Characteristics ? The Merced River Plan Must Allow for Access to Areas Outside of the Planning Boundary Also like Yosemite, the climbing in Red River Gorge is a unique, rare, and exemplary recreational activity that attracts thousands of visitors regionally, nationally, and internationally each year. This provides a significant tourism and economic impact to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Thus as you move forward through the planning process, please consider the precedents that you will be setting that might affect other climbing areas in the U.S. It would be a tragedy if the precedents set by the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan led to a loss of climbing access in Red River Gorge and created a negative impact on tourism and economic development in Kentucky.

Lexington, KY

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**Correspondence ID:** 404      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Dan, Jensen  
**Outside Organization:** Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts Business  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter  
**Correspondence:** We are pleased to participate in the Merced River Plan ("MRP") public scoping process and provide the following comments for consideration by the National Park Service (NPS). Many of our associates have attended various meetings and appreciated the open discourse and friendly outreach they received. We especially appreciate that the MRP Planning Team took time to host a special public meeting primarily for the benefit of our employees who wanted to participate in the process.

We hope the MRP Planning Team finds our employees' comments and the comments in this letter helpful in further defining the scope of this very important plan for Yosemite National Park ("YNP"). We respectfully submit the following comments for NPS' consideration: 1. The NPS Participant Guide indicates that it is anticipated that the MRP will amend the park's 1980 General Management Plan ("GMP"). At various public meetings, NPS staff has indicated that the GMP is the plan of record for Yosemite Valley. However, neither the Participant Guide nor the NPS staff has referenced the 1992 Concession Services Plan ("CSP"). We have understood that the CSP amended the GMP and we are now uncertain whether the plan of record is the GMP or the OMP as amended by the CSP. The CSP modified the OMP in a number of areas relating to visitor services in YNP. In particular, the CSP modified the GMP with respect to the number, location and configuration of visitor overnight accommodations. The MRP Planning Team should consider clarifying which document constitutes the plan of record for Yosemite Valley for visitor services, whether changes identified in the CSP will be implemented during the MRP planning process and resolve any conflicts between the CSP and the OMP. 2. The NPS has noted there have been previous planning efforts in YNP and that those results, while no longer constituting a valid plan, will be considered in the current planning effort. Please consider explaining how the previous efforts will be considered and whether individual comments will be reviewed for relevancy. We provide this comment because the people who submitted specific scoping and review comments for previous plans may decline to comment at this time assuming their previous comments remain under NPS active consideration. 3. Though we do not believe that it is intended, we believe some of the statements we heard at public meetings and information we read in the exhibits from the meetings include language that could be misinterpreted and result in pre-determined outcomes. Examples include a statement about the "100 peak days when there is gridlock" made in a public meeting we attended. Certainly several days with heavy traffic congestion exist. The statement about 100 days with gridlock, however, seems like an exaggeration and we are curious whether empirical data supports that statement. Another example is the question, "What do you want to see preserved?" in your scoping document. On its face the question seems perfectly acceptable and innocuous. Upon further consideration, however, we believe it may bias against receiving a range of responses. We suggest a more open-ended question be used, or an appropriate follow up clarifying question be included. For example, the question "What experiences would you like to retain in the Merced River corridor?" is more or less the same question, but expands the range of possible responses and alternatives. 4. Visitor enjoyment is a very valuable part of a National Park experience, and historic and family activities have a place in the planning process. It also needs to be recognized that an absolute scale of impact does not exist and mitigating measures are routine, practical and cost effective when it is considered appropriate to provide for visitor experiences. A perfect example is the addition of boardwalks in the meadows of Yosemite Valley. They were constructed to preserve historic views and provide access to various locations in Yosemite while protecting the natural ecosystem of the meadows. The language used in public outreach efforts should indicate all opinions are welcomed and reaffirm that predetermined outcomes are not part of the planning process. If there are foregone conclusions, such conclusions should be clearly communicated to the public so the entire process is transparent and the public can participate accordingly.

5. The MRP Planning Team will need to calculate the appropriate number of employees required to provide the visitor services that may be incorporated in various alternative plans and the level and location of housing required to accommodate the required workforce. We make this comment because we are concerned about the provisions of the Settlement Agreement relating to the removal of housing in Valley and EI Portal locations. Should the MRP include a reduction in employee housing, the Settlement Agreement terms require the use of housing identified for removal cease within 3 months of the date of the Record of Decision ("ROD") and its physical removal occur within 6 months of the date of the ROD. Unless careful analysis of required workforce and employee housing is completed, the MRP may result in either an erroneous reduction in, or premature abandonment of, employee housing. If the MRP provides for construction of replacement housing, the MRP also must include a timeline that does not trigger premature abandonment of existing housing. Replacement housing must be in place before necessary housing is abandoned.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the MRP scoping process. We look forward to participating in this public process

throughout your planning work. Should you have any questions about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

YOSEMITE,CA

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**Correspondence ID:** 405      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Otter, John H  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** I have hiked and backpacked in Yosemite National Parks many times. Those activities have been greatly enjoyable except for the adverse effects from stock use and the presence of High Sierra Camps. The reason for visiting was the enjoyment of the wonderful naturalness of the land and plants. The fouling of the trails and air by stock and the degradation and destruction of the land and vegetation by the stock and Camps was most disagreeable. Such exploitation by commercial interests is contrary to maintaining the features the Park was meant to preserve and protect. Those impacts are too great to be suitable to this National Park. I once caught a commercial pack animal with my fly while trying to fish near the Merced HS Camp. The animal did not think it funny.

Commercial developments and the use of stock animals in and near the Merced River corridor are not in keeping with the purpose of providing a quality experience for visitors. The pollution from the commercial stable in the Valley and the High Sierra Camps is bad for the Park. I have seen all of those. For the sake of all visitors, I want the Plan to stipulate their removal and restoration. The era where such facilities may have been appropriate has passed. They are not in concert with today's environmental consciousness. I want the Plan to be leading the way to greater respect for the environment, particularly Yosemite Park as one of our best, and not an example of outdated deprecations on our spiritual and physical resources. I used to enjoy the firefall, but I recognize and accept that it is inappropriate now.

If (unfortunately) any stock animals are allowed to be used in the Park, please require that they do not deposit manure on trails. If possible, require stock use trails other than those used by hikers to save hikers the smells, air containing pulverized manure-laden dust, and rock-exposed trails that they suffer now.

In formulating the Merced River Plan, please provide for protection of the Merced River and its corridor from further deprecations by removing the High Sierra Camps by banning commercial use of stock.

Santa Fe, NM

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**Correspondence ID:** 406      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Acree, Lisa  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Hello,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments. Thank you as well for your hard work on the plan- especially those folks going through our comments. I'm submitting these comments as a public citizen. I wrote these comments on my own time, with my own computer.

Please address the following issues in the Merced River Plan EIS: ? Recognize the unique and exceptional ecological value of Yosemite Valley floodplains. Protect and restore hydrologic and biological connectivity between the main river channel and its floodplains.

Background. The precipitously steep gradient of the Merced River in Yosemite is obvious from the eye of a bird. The only segments in the main river corridor that flatten out enough to form floodplains, Yosemite Valley and Little Yosemite Valley, play critical ecological roles that are quite different from the steeper segments of the river corridor, particularly in the way nutrients are cycled through the system. In steep segments such as the thundering drop from Vernal Falls to Yosemite Valley, nutrients and organic materials move quickly down the river in a longitudinal fashion. For example, river currents would carry a spider that accidentally drops from an overhanging tree quickly downstream, perhaps feeding a fish lurking in a rare eddy.

In a river floodplain such as Yosemite Valley, the main river channel and the floodplain become one during high water events. As floodwaters recede, nutrients and organic materials congregate and pool in lower, wetter floodplain areas such as ponds in Yosemite Valley meadows. This dense stew of leaves, twigs, invertebrates, cysts, seeds, microscopic life, and other organic material sequesters through the summer and winter until annual high water events flush it back into the Merced River. In this manner, backwater areas of the floodplain store an annual source of food for life the main river channel, and a summer source of food for meadow wildlife.

These backwater areas often are the foundation of the food chain in the entire river ecosystem.

Map 1. Lower River Campground in the early 1900's. Note ponds and braided streams. [Caption to Photo - Photo is in Admin Record]

To protect vital floodplain values:

- o Recognize the unique ecological value of floodplains in Yosemite Valley, Little Yosemite Valley, and Wawona

- o Restore low-lying wetlands where possible, such as areas in the former Lower River Campground (See Map 1) [in admin record]

- o Explore alternatives to restore overbank flooding adjacent to the river, such as the placement of woody debris islands in the main river channel

- o Recognize cliff-water as an important source of water for certain meadows such as Stoneman Meadow and Ahwahnee Meadow

- o Remove the road out of Stoneman Meadow, and route it closer to Curry Village (with accommodations in the road to retain natural cliff-water flows to the meadow)

? Recognize and consider the comprehensive history of changes and Impacts to the Merced River as a whole, to form a basis for meaningful restoration activities.

Background. Impacts to the Merced River ecosystem since historic times are numerous and well documented. Some anthropogenic impacts are purposeful, such as ditching a meadow for hay production, and some impacts are inadvertent, such as installation of a sewage line that diverts subsurface hydrologic flows (Cooper 2007). Documentation can be found in references such as 'The Influence of Modern Man on the Stream System in Yosemite Valley' (Milestone 1978), which painstakingly documents a myriad of anthropogenic changes to the Merced River. For example, in 1934, Yosemite Creek was resloped, straightened, planted with willows, lined with rocks, filled with 2,040 cubic yards of gravel, 560 yards of large rock, and 1,214 cubic yards of sod and soil, while a gravel dam was constructed across an overflow channel (see Figure 1), Monthly Superintendent's Reports and other letters and reports are also a wealth of information on human caused impacts to the river system. For example, the March 1934 Superintendent's report states, "Conspicuous blasted rock on both sides of the north road from the bear feeding pits to El Capitan were removed with a hoist and dump trucks: the rocks were used to fill a large mosquito pond in back of the chapel" (see Figure 2). [in admin record]

Figure 1. Constructing a dam across an overflow channel at the confluence of Yosemite Creek and the Merced River. [Caption to photo; photo is in admin record]

Figure 2. Filling in ponds behind the Yosemite Chapel [Caption to photo; photo is in admin record]

- o Synthesize and summarize the current state of knowledge on human-caused influences on the functioning of the Merced River ecosystem. Figure 2.

? identify functional areas where the ecological integrity of the river ecosystem is in decline (based on human-caused impacts), and develop ecological goals and objectives for river restoration

Background. Human-caused impacts in upland areas of the river corridor often cause corresponding impacts in the river bed. For example, campsites directly on riverbanks encourage foot traffic on the riverbank. As vegetation trampling increases, vegetation can die. Without a network of roots to hold together highly erodible riverbanks, riverbank erosion can accelerate, resulting in a constantly widening riverbed (Figure 3). The river becomes shallower and warmer, without the habitat diversity of deep pools and other features.

Two recent studies in Yosemite Valley provide fundamental information on ecological impacts. The National Park Service document, Analysis of Bank Erosion on the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Yosemite National Park (Madej 1991) documents unnatural channel changes and bank erosion, evaluates possible causes of bank erosion, and recommends management and restoration goals and options for the river corridor in Yosemite Valley.

The report, Yosemite Valley: Hydrologic Regime, Soils, Pre-Settlement Vegetation, Disturbance, and Concepts for Restoration (Cooper 2007), studies the hydrologic processes, soils, and vegetation of pre-settlement ecosystems. The report specifies priorities for restoration.

Figure 3. Riverbank at Devil's Elbow in 1992 prior to ecological restoration [caption to photo; photo in admin record]

- o Estimate the degree of floodplain and wetland loss that has taken place in the river corridor since the mid-1850's to provide overall context in the plan. Estimate the corresponding loss of function and species richness.



- o Develop resource-based ecosystem objectives for the river corridor. Consider the long-term viability of wildlife associated with the river, natural channel migration, vegetated riverbanks with overhanging vegetation, inputs of woody debris, and natural pool and drop morphology.

- o Protect natural riverine processes such as river migration and erosion, and restore riverbanks that sustain accelerated erosion o Identify locations where ecological restoration is necessary to meet ecological objectives, and specify where it will take place in the context of other actions in the plan.

- o In Yosemite Valley, restore natural riverine processes in at least a minimum-sized footprint, at an adequate scale to restore a functioning and sustainable floodplain with natural hydrological processes and physical form.

- o Build in monitoring and the flexibility of adaptive management, to be able to understand whether restoration goals are met, and to be able to respond and change as necessary to meet goals.

? Protect and restore riparian habitat

Background. In addition to providing sources of food and water for both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, riparian habitat provides wildlife with a structural complexity that includes mosaics of shade and sun, shelter, and protected corridors between adjacent plant communities (Rundel and Sturmer 1998). Riparian vegetation also sustains in-stream habitat. Riparian habitats are the most critical habitat for conservation of Neotropical migrants and resident birds in the western U.S. (RHJV 2000).

- o Assess the fragmentation and degradation of riparian habitat in the river corridor

- o Assess the status and vulnerability of birds and other wildlife associated with riparian habitat in Yosemite, due to fragmentation and degradation of riparian habitat

- o Promote restoration actions to restore degraded riparian habitat such as the restoration of the former Group Camp (where the bathrooms and asphalt were removed).

? Protect and restore water quality

Background. A number of historic trash dumps lie in the west end of Yosemite Valley, created when early park settlers placed refuse in (former) low-lying wetlands of the river corridor. There are at least three main issues associated with these dumps: (1) Toxic materials may be present and leaching into the water table, (2) Historic archeological materials and information on the culture of early Euro-American settlers may be buried in the dumps, and (3) The functionality of former wetlands and floodplain values are lost.

- o Support an interdisciplinary team action to document, extract cultural information, clean up toxic materials (if present), and restore historic trash dumps to wetlands. Consider "impacting-out" this project so that work could begin as soon as the Merced River Plan Record of Decision is signed.

- o Ensure that the Odger's fuel storage facility in EI Portal is protective of water quality in the river corridor. At least one functioning well (serving EI Portal residents) is directly downstream of this fuel storage facility.

Figure 5. Historic sewer line (still existing in places) (Cowell 1931) [photo in admin record]

? Protect and enhance water quantity and storage in the river corridor

Background. Meadows in Yosemite Valley can be likened to giant sponges, storing water after peak snowmelt, and releasing it slowly to sustain meadow communities. High water tables are the main driver that sustains the flora and fauna of meadow communities. Sewer lines that are historic and out-of-service may be carrying water out of meadows, as water infiltrates leaky lines and flows downstream. The locations where natural water flows enter the leaky lines, and the effects the shuttled water has on natural meadow water tables, is unstudied. Regardless, road workers on the Valley Loop Road Rehabilitation project accidentally broke one of these lines in 2008(?) near Black Spring, and found it was running artesian, carrying a high flow of water. This particular historic sewer line begins near the base of the Three Brothers (at the site of an early sewage treatment facility), runs through EI Capitan Meadow, and downstream to Black Spring (Figure 5).

- o Consider actions to identify and remove or burst historic sewage lines that carry water flows out of Yosemite Valley meadows.

? Protect oak woodland communities in the river corridor

Background. Oak woodlands are revered for their aesthetic and ecological values. Acorns served as a fundamental food source for Native Americans. California black oaks (*Quercus kelloggii*) and Valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*), in particular, are associated with the

main river corridor and its floodplain. California black oaks outline meadow margins, and to some degree are adapted to sustain annual flooding. The only population of Valley oaks in the park is in El Portal, where large majestic specimens have lived for centuries across from the Yosemite Association office. Valley oaks are considered a riparian species, and are adapted to survive with periodic high water tables.

- o Protect California oak woodlands as a highly valued resource in planning efforts

- o Protect Valley oaks in B Portal as a highly valued resource. and do not allow parking or other development beneath the dripline of Valley oaks. Maintain or set-aside habitat that sustains a range of age classes of Valley oaks in B Portal.

- o In developing design guidelines for El Portal, recognize the importance of oaks in the landscape (six species of oaks thrive in the 8 Portal area).

- ? Delineate wetland boundaries in potential development and infrastructure sites during early planning stages, and consider potential wetland impacts before alternatives and design products are developed

- o Delineate wetlands (to GIS mapping standards) where development or redevelopment may take place in the EIS. This may include Wawona, Yosemite Valley, Little Yosemite Valley, Merced lake, etc.

- o Ensure that areas where infrastructure may be constructed are delineated as well. Infrastructure has the potential to interrupt vital ecosystem processes that sustain wetlands, such as subsurface flows.

- o Recognize the ecological importance of the wetland pool adjacent to the Odgers Fuel storage facility in B Portal. In high water events, this off-channel wetland is a sanctuary for river-dependent wildlife such as beavers.

Protect subalpine meadows in the river corridor, and understand the impacts of pack stock use associated with these meadows

- o Conduct condition assessments and monitoring in the Merced River corridor in meadows with high stock use and reference sites and begin to monitor site conditions. Several years of monitoring data may be a critical piece of information, necessary to defend stock use management decisions in the Merced River Plan EIS.

- ? Protect rare plants in the river corridor

- o Conduct comprehensive rare plant surveys in areas proposed for development where development or redevelopment may take place in the EIS. This may include Wawona, Yosemite Valley, Little Yosemite Valley, Merced Lake, etc.

- ? Protect and restore highly valued low-elevation riparian habitat

Background. The Congressionally-funded Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (1996) concluded that "foothill areas below about 3,300 feet appear to have the greatest loss of riparian vegetation of any region in the Sierra Nevada."

- o Restore the Greenmeyer Sand Pit to natural conditions.

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**Correspondence ID:** 407    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** Silver, Scott  
**Outside Organization:** Wild Wilderness Conservation/Preservation  
**Received:** Feb.02,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Fax  
**Correspondence:** The following are the comments of Wild Wilderness regarding the development of a new Merced River Plan.

Wild Wilderness is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit based in Bend Oregon. Our mission is to preserve and protect opportunities for low impact recreational activities on public lands. Created in 1991, Wild Wilderness has since 1997 spoken consistently about the efforts of Federal Land managers to "commercialize, privatize and motorize recreational opportunities on America's Public lands." We have similarly, and consistently, warned of the ongoing efforts of land managers, working at the behest of, and in conjunction with, the recreation, travel and tourism industries to affect "The Corporate Takeover of Nature and the Disneyfication of the Wild."

It is our opinion that the decision-makers for Yosemite National Park have been amongst the worst offenders and, if left to their own devices would further transform Yosemite, a prime example of "America's Best Idea," into a mere Popcorn Playground", to use a favorite expression of our national's foremost living National Parks champion, Michael Frome.

Wild Wilderness actively supported Friends of Yosemite Valley and Mariposans for the Environment and Responsible Government in previous efforts to preserve and protect Yosemite NP. We find ourselves once again in this position. We have read the recent comments of Jeanne and Lou Aceto and support those comments in their entirety. These comments are, in our estimation, a nearly perfect statement of the values and specific issues which must be considered as part of the development of a new Merced River Plan. We can not improve upon those comments and so we ask that they be given the highest attention possible and that park managers apply a simple test as they respond to those comments and as they develop a new Merced River Plan.

We ask that when park managers ask themselves whether any action they are considering will have the effect of further commercializing, privatizing, motorizing or Disneyfying Yosemite National Park. If any such action facilitates any of those outcomes, we ask that the NPS rejects that proposed action and instead chooses an action which protects and preserves the park for less base purposes.

And finally, we ask that park managers reflect upon the following few carefully selected expressions of park values as they go about their job of protecting such values. The following quoted passages are not to be taken as flourishes. They are the meat of our comments. Each quote addresses one or more actual issues relevant to the process of developing a sound and supportable Merced River Plan. We offer these quotes to serve as guidance. Since the parks are nature sanctuaries to be held intact for all time, there must be no activity within them such as mining, logging, dam building, airport construction, and grazing; nor nonconforming, crowd-attracting facilities such as golf courses, Swimming pools, tramways, ski lifts, tennis courts, dance halls, nor pastimes such as hang-gliding and snowmobiling. Like literature, music and art in their highest forms, they contribute to our spiritual well being, and they require unending vigilance to preserve them for that purpose. --Devereux Butcher, in Exploring Our National Parks and Monuments.

Consider, for example, the question of "accessibility." An area that cannot be reached is obviously not being put to use. On the other hand, one reached too easily becomes a mere "resort" to which people flock for purposes just as well served by golf courses, swimming pools, and summer hotels. Parks are often described as "recreation areas" and so they are. But the term "recreation" as ordinarily used does not imply much stress upon the kind of experience which Grand Canyon, despite the flood of visitors that comes to it, still does provide namely, the experience of being in the presence of nature's ways and nature's work. --Joseph Wood Krutch - What Men? What Needs?

"National Parks weren't designed as an extension of everyday life but as a refuge from it." -unknown

"It is easy enough, in this way, to understand how a political constituency could have been brought together for the Parks, noting in addition that many of the early parklands were remote and thought to be of little value for economic development. But the more interesting question is Why the idea of parks should have made, and should continue to make, such a strong appeal to such a large and diverse citizenry? The answer, I suggest, is that there is something about the idea of an encounter with nature that has a powerful hold on the American imagination-an idea of independence, of self reliance, self-sufficiency and autonomy. These are ideas that lie very close to the heart of the culture values we prize most, and that seem peculiarly to be threatened by the style of modern, urban, industrial society. The opportunity for engagement with nature-of which the Parks are a physical symbol-can be seen as an act of resistance against the threat. Rather than being a symbol of escape from the harsh reality of the real world, the parklands can be seen as a Culture-bearing medium, a setting in which deeply held values can be renewed, reaffirmed, and realized as a source of strength and confidence to bring to bear on the pressures continually being exerted against them in the workaday world." --Joseph L. Sax, in Recreation Policy on the Federal Lands

"And our management problems have become increasingly complex as we have watched visits to the national parks increase from 37 million in 1951 to 139 million in 1967. And yet, the policy that governs the preservation of park resources remains essentially unchanged. We still strive to attain for the parks the goal so eloquently expressed by Director Newton B. Drury in his 1951 introduction: "to conserve them, not for commercial use of their resources but because of their value in ministering to the human mind and spirit" --From the Forward to the 1968 edition of "The National Parks" --by Freeman Tilden

"The primary duty of the National Park Service is to protect the national parks and national monuments under its jurisdiction and

keep them as nearly in their natural state as this can be done in view of the fact that access to them must be provided in order that they may be used and enjoyed. All other activities of the bureau must be secondary (but not incidental) to this fundamental function relating to care and protection of all areas subject to its control. " --Stephen Mather

"I think the parks ought to be for people who love to camp and hike... and have renewed communion with nature. I am afraid we are getting gradually alienated from that ideal. We lie awake at nights wondering whether we are giving the customers all of the entertainment and all of the modern improvements that they think they ought to have. But let's keep away from that, because once we get started, there will be no end. 1/ --Harold Ickes, Former Secretary of the Interior 1933-1945

"The making of gardens and parks goes on with civilization all over the world, and they increase both in size and number as their value is recognized .... Nevertheless.... they have always been subject to attack by despoiling gain-seekers and mischief-makers of every degree from Satan to Senators, eagerly trying to make everything immediately and selfishly commercial. --John Muir

"The National Parks should be totally inviting: free of the complex jangle of the cash registers, the auto horns, and the crowding of confused flesh. The basic mood must always be protective of the area and create respect and affection. " --Ansel Adams

Right now the National Park Service, which cherished Yosemite as the story of a great idea, now wants it to be the story of a profit center, with pricier hotels, scater camping, fewer modest accommodations) wider roads to field bigger diesel busses, create ecological roadside mayhem, increase atmospheric damage statewide, so that people who want to celebrate Yosemite Valley can tie their cars outside, in various still unspoiled places, ride snug in busses that tell them where to look at their expense. -- David Brower 2000

"If we are going to succeed in preserving the greatness of the national parks, they must be held inviolate. They represent the last stands of primitive America. If we are going to whittle away at them we should recognize, at the very beginning, that all such whittlin~ are cumulative and that the end result will be mediocrity." - Newton Drury

The real challenge as I see it is not whether to build the proposed road, nor what kind of recreation to foster at the monument, but how to look at the landscape with a point of view that rises above the ordinary into the higher order of ethics and spirituality -- Michael Frome

Bend, OR

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**Correspondence ID:** 408      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Casey, Mike  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,10,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail

I would like to suggest what appears, to me, to be a simple plan to reduce vehicle traffic within the park. This won't reduce "daytripper" traffic but would significantly reduce all others. Create a series of colored plastic tags (similar to the handicap placards) designed to hang on the vehicles rear view mirror. I would think that about 14 colors would be needed. A different color would be assigned to each day for 14 consecutive days/ to repeat and run in sequence. At each park entrance every vehicle would be given two cards, one being the appropriate color for the date of entrance (lets say blue-for monday) and a second being the appropriate color for the planned date of departure (lets say red - for friday). Day trippers would only receive the color for the day of entrance. Vehicles would then drive to their destination (hotel, campground, cabin) and park their vehicle. Using the colors suggested above a vehicle with a blue tag could only be driven on monday - essentially new arrivals, day trippers or persons that arrived previously and were scheduled to leave on monday. Using the same example, the car that arrived on monday also received a red card to depart on friday. Changes in plans after entering the park could easily be handled by the reservation desk or campground host having a supply of cards to issue for such changes. Enforcement is simple since all vehicles being driven on a given day would have the obvious colored card hanging from the rear vier mirror. i.e. all cars/rvs driving on mondays must have a blue tag in evidence or receive a ticket (self funding the program). All vehicles moving on fridays a red tag, other colors for the other days over a 2 week period. Cards would be dropped of at the gate on exit and be reused for the next cycle. Seems to me that this would be a rather simple, easily enforced program the would help to reduce a lot of the daily traffic and parking in the park. It would most likely require more trams, but isn't it the objective to get more people on the trams and out of their cars? Second thought is to rebuild the flooded out campsites. Nothing special, just some grading a fire pit and a bear box. If graded properly I would expect that flooding occasionally would not be anything that couldn't be fixed with a couple of days of grader work. That's my thought for the day, hope someone finds it worthwhile.

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**Correspondence ID:** 409      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Mark, Suterlin  
**Received:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Correspondence Type:** Feb,03,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence:** E-mail

**Type:**

**Correspondence:**

Yet another new addendum to my former scoping plan submission, as follows: I would like to submit as a part of this letter, an internet link to a comprehensive article about the Drakes Bay Oyster Farm and Yosemite's new Park Supervisor, Don Nubacher's penchant towards absolute wilderness, in recreation areas, at the possible expense and exclusion of what have been historic human use of an area, for thousands of years. How this relates to Yosemite, is something I wish to explain in some detail below. Here is that link. Please read it as part of this submission, so as to save me from reprinting it here: <http://www.coastalpost.com/07/04/02.html>

Human recreational use in a Wild and Scenic river area, such as the portion of the Merced River in Yosemite Valley, is the issue I wish to speak of in this addendum to my other submissions. This use is also known as a variety of specific "Outstanding Remarkable Values", is an important topic that has to be discussed in this planning process. Outstanding Remarkable Value, is, as you would know of course, a term used for these studies, meaning that if something is valuable enough, it can be allowed as an exception to an otherwise restrictive designation of an area, as could become reality in Yosemite Valley for camping advocates, due to the designation of a Wild and Scenic River there, should strong advocates for complete Wilderness use of Yosemite Valley prevail. I am familiar with your new Park Supervisor, Mr. Don Nubacher, and how he has demonstrated in the past that he can be a very strong advocate for designated wilderness. I am concerned that perhaps National Park Director Jon Jarvis may have selected him to push through such an agenda at Yosemite Valley, which could be detrimental to the many Yosemite Valley tent and auto based camping advocates like myself, making the public scoping process something other than a level playing field. Mr. Jarvis has shown a predetermination to plan Yosemite's future, outside of any planning process, a very concerning prospect, by comments he has already made in the past. Now that he is Director of the National Park Service, and has appointed someone who may be viewed by some as a controversial person, due to his history at Point Reyes National Seashore, to head Yosemite National Park, I am more concerned. Jon Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service, in an interview with the San Jose Mercury, October 6, 2009, was quoted as saying that "like to see Yosemite Valley campsites (that were) destroyed in a 1997 flood rebuilt out of the valley, on Tioga Road and other locations, rather than in the valley along the sensitive Merced River." "Unfortunately, the public's perception is that Yosemite is just the valley," said Jarvis. "There are plenty of opportunities to end up with a no-net loss of campgrounds." End quote. Does Mr. Jarvis's appointment as Director of the NPS with such strong views circumvent an otherwise balanced planning process? It seems he already has an agenda, and, as was also able to appoint what may be someone who thinks like him into the top job in The Park, as Park Supervisor, Mr. Don Nubacher, of Point Reyes and Drakes Bay fame, I am even more concerned. Is this process going to be open and transparent, or is there already plans being pushed through, before the very first scoping study of this new planning process? We will see if Don Nubacher agrees that an ORV can allow for the continued use of family auto friendly camping in areas of Yosemite Valley that have been used historically for that purpose, and which can continue to support such use with the proper management, so as to protect from excessive human impacts, inside Yosemite Valley, without mirroring Mr. Jarvis's stated view that he would like to move campgrounds outside of Yosemite Valley. That article above is very cogent and timely, as it reflects not only that newspaper's view of Don Nubacher and his reputation while Park Supervisor at Point Reyes, but is also a balanced representation, perhaps more than is deserved. The Drakes Bay scenario mirrors my concerns for Yosemite Valley, and just how Park Planners are going to be able to work towards a balance of historical camping areas in Yosemite Valley, if Jon Jarvis and Don Nubacher have preconceived ideas. While advocating the time honored Outstanding Remarkable Values represented in low impact auto based camping in Yosemite Valley, are our words going to fall on deaf ears, like in prior planning processes, where Yosemite Park Planners had hidden agendas. Agendas, which were made clear by the appellate court's having to restart a new planning process simply because the National Park Service hadn't complied with the requirement of a proactive User/Carrying Capacity component as part of the former Merced River Plan. We all remember when and how that plan was pushed through with faulty environmental science in that regard, as was apparently also the case at Drakes Bay, with the National Park Service's negative environmental representations of the oyster farm there, where it was later discovered by an independent environmental research firm that under Park Superintendent Don Nubacher's supervision, a miscarriage of justice took place when that National Park Service faulty environmental research represented incorrect, and misleading information. Don Nubacher's boss at the time, Jon Jarvis, as NPS Western District head, is his new boss now, yet again. It is my request that you take the time to read the article linked to above, as it is very relevant here, for the current scoping endeavor. Like the Drakes Bay Oyster Farming comparison, where at Drakes Bay, oyster farming had historical use of the area for 12,000 years, so has Yosemite Valley been used for family camping, over perhaps a similar amount of time, by Native Americans, and modern Americans. In more recent times, Outstanding Remarkable Values, or ORVs are what the park will use to earmark specific historic uses of a place that is designated "Wild and Scenic", if in a National Park, so as to allow its continued use in that area. In the case of the Merced River, impacts are well known and identified. Those impacts can and must be managed so as to be minimized, something that was outlined in the respected 1980 General Management Plan, as it relates to the Valley Campground areas, and can again be adhered to. Like in a Wilderness Area designation, some uses are allowed, as was the case for the Point Reyes National Seashore where dairy farms who had originally agreed to revert back to nature at the end of negotiated leases from the 1960s, where in some cases allowed to renegotiate their lease, so that their farm use of the area could be continued. These are not necessarily double standards, but instead they are allowed exceptions to general rules that apply to areas, like Point Reyes, and like Yosemite Valley, if the National Park Service does not take too heavy of a stance against recreational use of a place that is partially designated for that purpose, and recognizes the former campgrounds, closed inappropriately in 1997, to be allowed under a special ORV auto based camping designation. Those specific areas that were formerly used for camping, are now closed due to mismanagement by former park managers who did not involve the public in the removal, took money from congress under the pretence that they were going to replace them to pre-flood conditions, and then did not. They also circumvented carefully constructed 1980 GMP plans that had already been designated for those camping areas, that had involved many years of public input and negotiations with the NPS, environmental groups, and others. The GMP was going to be adhered to by park planners when they drafted the Yosemite Valley Plan, the NPS told the public, but it was not. These closed campground areas should be reopened for that use, with planned minimal impacts, as was specified for in the 1980 GMP, but, to also comply with any relative to overall carrying capacity restraints that are determined as part of this process, which should not impact camping too much. A Yosemite Valley Camping experience, if you make the right decisions, should impart a more valued experience than a day trip. And because this is the case, I feel that day trips should be curtailed before restricting camping in Yosemite Valley, so as to impart this highest quality Yosemite Experience possible to future generations.

[Attachment Copy Below] MARIN COUNTY'S NEWS MONTHLY - FREE PRESS Ollie Erster versus Smokey The Bear Kevin Lunny is a passionate man. Interviewing him at Drake's Bay Oysters on a sunny day quickly turned into a fascinating private lesson on the ecology of Drakes Bay, the Native American heritage along those shores, aquaculture, sustainability and politics. I had wanted to interview him for quite a while, ever since I heard he had purchased the place from Johnson's with a warning that the Park Service

wanted to close off aquaculture in the Bay by 2012.

Johnson's Oysters had left an environmental mess for the Lunnys to clean up. Several hundred thousand dollars went into just basic cleanup, which continues to this day. I thus wondered why someone would take on such a massive clean-up job, all the while knowing that the new business could be closed down by the landlord, the National Park Service, in 2012. So I went to Drakes Bay to ask that question and to learn what it means to farm oysters there. I found that out, and much more. Johnson's Oysters was not the first oyster operation on Drakes Bay. Large mounds of ancient oyster shells are visible in several places on the Bay, with some exposed mounds over 15 feet high. It is estimated that at least 500 generations of oyster harvesting settlements have been on Drakes Bay. Most of the ancient mounds have not even been excavated.

7 Unfortunately, no serious attempt has been made to find and detail the Native American settlements around the Bay, which frustrates both the ? Lunnys and others interested in the real history of the area. Educated assumptions have been made by experts that show that the area of Drake's Bay has been "managed" to enhance food production by Native Americans for at least the last 12,000 years. In other words, the Native Americans ? "farmed" oysters in Drakes Bay and Drakes Estero. Europeans began harvesting oysters there over 150 years ago. Early 7 harvesters sold oysters to both San Francisco and miners during the Gold Rush. They quickly overdid the harvesting and the population of native Olympia oysters collapsed. The oyster companies reached out to Japan for a more hearty shellfish, the Pacific oyster. Johnson's sold both Olympia and Pacific oysters until around 1960, when they changed exclusively to Pacific oysters.

Johnson's Oysters started in 1957 and ended in 2005. Of the several 7 companies in the same place on Drakes Bay before Johnson's, one was 7 named Drakes Bay Oysters during the 1920 and 1930s. The present : Drakes Bay Oysters, owned by Kevin Lunny and his family, revived the 7 name of one of the old operators out of respect for the past. The Lunny family bought Johnson's Oysters in 2005, at a point when Johnson's had serious environmental and other problems that needed to be ? cleaned up. Everyone with any knowledge at all of the area now agrees that ? the present oyster operation on Drakes Estero is a dream-come-true as far 7 as its adherence to sustainable and environmentally-positive practices. 7 Meet the Oysters of Drakes Bay ..... The native species of oyster for Drakes Bay and Estero is the Olympia oyster, which is native all along the Pacific coast, from British Columbia to Baja. It is smaller than most other oysters, an undependable spawner but considered very tasty. The Olympia's problematic spawning is a big reason the population collapsed through overharvesting. The oyster simply could not reproduce itself on its own fast enough to keep up. These native oysters have to be tough little critters to survive, because the waters on the coast here are relatively cold and not conducive to easy reproduction. Drakes Bay and Estero, however, offered pristine waters, so they survived in not-large numbers. I saw them there still, small and feisty, living in small clusters just off shore. Kevin Lunny looked wistful when he said that he really wanted to grow the local Olympia oysters again in Drakes Bay, not just his prize-winning Pacific oysters. Oysters, either Olympia or Pacific, are an ideal sustainable food. Local oysters, grown right here on Drakes Bay for local consumption even beat lettuces in environmental sustainability, since it takes so much less water and oil-based inputs to produce the shellfish. Their protein is much more efficient than that of beef, etc. The characteristic of the oyster most prized these days is its ability to clean its environment. One oyster filter 55 gallons of water down to 5 microns every day. In an environment such as Drakes Estero and Bay, nitrate and phosphorus comes into the water from the farms on the edges of the Bay. Oysters filter these excess nutrients polluting the water. Oysters are the only food that can do that. The oyster thus cleans its own environment and provides us with super protein. The oyster also sequesters hundreds of tons of carbon in its shell, which helps climate change. No wonder the Greeks thought it was the food of the Gods.

Oysters are delicious, but they're also one of the most nutritionally well balanced of foods, containing protein, carbohydrates and lipids. The National Heart and Lung Institute suggest oysters as an ideal food for inclusion in low-cholesterol diets.

Oysters are an excellent source of vitamins A, B1 (thiamin), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), C (ascorbic acid) and D (calciferol). Four or five medium size oysters supply the recommended daily allowance of iron, copper, iodine, magnesium, calcium, zinc, manganese and phosphorus.

Drakes Bay Oysters are only sold locally in order to avoid the global impact of shipping. Unlike the oyster companies on Tomales Bay, Drakes Bay Oysters are sold shucked and canned or in the shell. Only oysters in the shell are sold on Tomales Bay because they do not have a license that allows them to shuck or can. Drakes Bay Oysters are also "fully" approved to harvest oysters 365 days a year, because the water quality is so good, whereas other oyster companies on Tomales Bay have "conditional" approval to operate and can be closed down when pathogens are shown to be in the water, which has happened a number of times in recent times. I have also found that Drakes Bay Oysters were recently voted the best Pacific oysters in the nation by its peers. Although asked multiple times to ship their oysters around the nation and even around the world, the Lunnys have continued to refuse all requests. Kevin Lunny is adamant that he is growing the best oysters possible only for the local markets in order to avoid shipping and its negative environmental consequences. So What's the Problem? The problem stems from the original purchase of the land by the National Park Service. When all of the ranchers within the new Park boundaries (agriculture or aquaculture) were given contracts of varying lengths of time (chosen by the rancher) to stay in place to ranch, Johnson's Oysters choose a time span that ends in 2012. Beef and dairy ranchers, who chose shorter lengths of time in negotiations, of course, have already had their contracts renewed, some more than once.

Drakes Bay is within a pastoral zone, which means the process of allowing the continuance of commercial ranching within the Park was and is considered normal and beneficial to local agriculture, its culture and its communities. Which is why you see cows on the land almost all around the Bay, as well as Drakes Bay Oysters. Since Johnson's Oysters was not a very good steward of the land, I'm sure the Park Service and environmental organizations were anxious for 2012 in order to get rid of them. But then the Lunnys showed up and gave the Park Service an early present by cleaning it all up for them in record time, at their own expense. Also, when the Lunnys bought Johnson's with the approval of the Park Service, they did not sign any statement promising to decamp in 2012 or any other date. So what's the problem? The facts are 1) that the area of Drakes Bay has been home to oyster-harvesting communities of humans for thousands and thousands of years and the native flora and fauna includes the oyster, 2) the super-filtering capabilities

of the oysters in large numbers counteracts the pollution coming into the Bay from the surrounding cows (who keep getting their own contracts to stay renewed), 3) the ecology of Drakes Bay at this moment, with Lunny's oysters there, is considered of excellent water quality, touted by Fish & Game and others, 4) county and state ag agencies support the continuance of Drakes Bay Oysters, considering it an important mainstay in Marin Agriculture, as do the county Board of Supervisors, the County Ag Commissioner, Marin Organic and MALT. Of utmost importance to the ag agencies is the fact that the Lunny operation is such a great example of aggressive and creative quality land stewardship, but also that the operation represents a heavy percentage of marine aquaculture in the state. Without it, the state loses what little it has left of historic aquaculture,

So what's the problem? Why cannot the Park administration (i.e. Don Neubacher) just contract the same as he renews the beef and dairy contracts in order to continue a pasture in West Marin? If a Citizens Advisory Committee existed to interface with the Park administration on such issues, it is highly probable that such a scenario is exactly what would happen. Unfortunately, there is no longer any Citizens Advisory Committee for the local Park, so the decision is left to Don Neubacher and those who have his ear. Who has his ear and what philosophy is taking precedence over community-based agriculture in West Marin? The philosophy is thought by many to be based on the superiority of "wilderness," over all other considerations, be they historic, cultural, agricultural or political. "Wilderness" is then defined as a form of virginity of nature, without human endeavors or communities. Actually, I personally know quite a bit about "wilderness," having spent quite a few years backpacking and exploring in so-called "wilderness" areas of this country and in other countries. I can guarantee you that the Point Reyes National Seashore is not "wild." The local National Seashore is highly managed, inch-by-inch, with large expanses even rented out for commercial uses by ranchers. The National Seashore, which has a slightly different definition than does a national park, is supposed to provide the public with the means to both enjoy it and learn about it. Drakes Bay Oysters is the only entity within the park boundaries that offers visitors a hands-on tour and education in the history, ecology and agriculture of the area. When our interview was concluding, Kevin Lunny told me he wanted to introduce me to Jorge Mata, who had lived and worked at Drakes Bay for 24 years, mostly in production management. Mr. Mata offered me a wide smile when I asked about his wife and children. He has one son and 2 daughters, all of who grew up on Drakes Bay and went to school in West Marin. His family, which lives on site, is joined by 5 other families who live nearby. In total, 15 families have long been dependent on the continuance of oyster farming on Drakes Bay. This is a tradition that goes back thousands and thousands of years, to those who first harvested oysters there. The Lunny family's attachment to Drakes Bay is obvious, as is the corresponding attachment of Jorge Mata's family. My hope is that I will be able to interview them again in 10 years, buy some oysters, and watch the shell mounds increase in size.

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**Correspondence ID:** 410      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** N/A, N/A  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Mar,10,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** The road congestion within Yosemite Valley is in dire need of change. The situation on busy holiday weekends is intolerable. The confusing one way roads and crossovers are frustrating year round. Gridlock has no place in our National Parks

NPS should rearrange Valley roads so that they are easier to navigate (perhaps like Zion?). All Valley workers should be provided housing within the Valley so they do not add to the traffic (and environmental) problems. Holiday weekends should have a set cap on how many vehicles can pass as well as stringent warnings posted at park entrances. Park entrances should be made wider. Other parks have 3 or 4 lane entrances. The bottleneck at the El Portal entrance is horrendous.

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**Correspondence ID:** 411      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** McMillian, MBA, Linda  
**Outside Organization:** Protect Mountains Representing 4 groups Conservation/Preservation  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan (MRP) as a representative of The American Alpine Club (AAC), the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA), the California Recreational Resource Advisory Committee (CARRAC), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

#### BACKGROUND

The simple act of learning to climb in Yosemite Valley in the 1980s has led to my decades of advocacy work on behalf of mountain regions and protected areas, like Yosemite, around the world. Being able to freely explore and experience the unique climbing areas of Yosemite over the years steadily converted me from a park "user" to a park steward and advocate for its protection. As a result, I have been actively and collaboratively engaged in park planning efforts in Yosemite since the flood of 1997, and continually work to improve and expand the valuable long-term relationship between climbers and rangers. A notable outcome of that relationship has been the growing participation of climbers as high-value Volunteers in Parks in Yosemite, organizing successful projects such as the annual Yosemite Facelift (organized and managed by the Yosemite Climbing Association) and the Lichen Inventory Projects (organized and managed by The American Alpine Club) conducted in 2008 and 2009 as part of the on-going NPS effort to compile

an All-Taxa Biodiversity Index for the park.

As a member of the AAC for 22 years, I have served as Vice President, a member of the Board of Directors, and now lead its Yosemite Committee. I also serve as President of the Mountain Protection Commission (MPC) of the UIAA based in Switzerland, representing millions of climbers and mountaineers worldwide, many of whom have climbed or aspire to climb in Yosemite Valley. As member of the CARRAC, I represent summer non-motorized recreation, including climbing and mountaineering. I also serve as a Deputy Vice-Chairman of Mountains and Connectivity Conservation for the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of the IUCN.

#### CLIMBING IS A UNIQUE HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND RECREATIONAL ORV OF THE MERCED RIVER CORRIDOR OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

The Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan could have significant impacts on the ability to climb or access climbs within the Merced River corridor. Given the significant amount of historic and internationally popular climbing areas that exist within the river corridor and the fact that climbing does not conflict with the natural processes of the corridor, I believe that climbing should be listed in the Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs) as an appropriate recreational use. In addition, the dramatic cliffs created by the Merced River in Yosemite National Park offer to climbers, in contrast to virtually all other recreationists active in the river corridor (fishermen, swimmers, hikers, horseback riders, rafters, ice skaters, etc.) both historic and cultural ORVs because a very large and important part of our international sport and its equipment, history, culture, and traditions have been created and shaped there for over a century. For example:

**Historic ORV:** In 1903 John Muir (who became the AAC's second president in 1908) was, in today's vernacular, a "Yosemite climbing bum"? living marginally in Yosemite Valley so that he could explore and climb its soaring cliffs and domes. In early May that year he was asked to accompany President Theodore Roosevelt (who in 1905 became an Honorary Member of the AAC) on his visit to the park. No doubt the two avid climbers discussed the remarkable cliffs, geology, and natural splendor of the Merced River corridor in Yosemite Valley, plus the need to preserve and protect this for future generations. The historic place where these two climber/conservationists camped together in Yosemite Valley is actually in the Merced River corridor, and is highlighted by a roadside commemorative plaque (restored in 2003 for the centennial celebration of Roosevelt's visit) along Southside Drive.

**Historic Recreational ORV:** During his time living and climbing in Yosemite Valley, John Muir also developed climbing techniques that enabled him to climb the Valley cliffs and establish some of the most difficult climbing routes of his era, including the first ascent of Cathedral Peak in the Tuolumne high country and the second ascent of Half Dome. He also pioneered the sport of waterfall ice climbing in North America by climbing ice formations at the base of Upper Yosemite Falls in the winter of 1870.

**Cultural Recreational ORV:** Another important part of John Muir's climbing legacy which is still used today is his innovative "light and fast" style: rigorous minimalism (taking only the minimal amount of time, equipment, clothing, food and supplies needed) and rigorous vigilance in protecting mountain ecosystems as he passed through them (tread lightly, leaving no trace). These concepts still serve as hallmarks of the Yosemite Style of climbing, and have shaped the development of its minimized equipment and techniques of climbing, such as using no-impact removable anchors instead of pitons and fixed anchors. They have also been incorporated into the ethics of the business world by innovative entrepreneurs such as Yvon Chouinard (another legendary Yosemite climber and former "climbing bum") with his eco-conscious company Patagonia, and by educational NGOs such as Leave No Trace.

**Cultural Recreational ORV:** To climbers around the world, Yosemite Valley is known simply as "The Valley"; no other in the world compares. The amazingly accessible, sheer, and solid granite "big walls" of The Valley, which are within the Merced River corridor (0.25 miles from the river) or accessed via the corridor, rise from comparatively little talus at their base. Most other large cliff areas of the world are much more remote and difficult to access, are not as continually vertical, and are ringed with massive talus fields. So it's easy to see why Yosemite Valley's walls are unique in the world and have earned the name "The Granite Crucible", where climbers for decades have come from around the world to test their skills, equipment, strength, and mettle. This unique crucible of nature continues to forge the skills and fuel the aspirations of generation after generation of climbers from around the world. For them, scaling those cliffs becomes not simply "recreation", but a special, easily and quickly accessible type of spiritual and cultural pilgrimage to a historically sacred place. These extraordinary cliffs, carved by and reflected in the Merced River, are a unique testing ground for equipment and determination ? a touchstone for our sport.

**Historic Cultural ORV:** Another important historical and cultural component of the ORVs of climbing in the Merced River corridor is Camp 4, the world-famous "base camp" in Yosemite Valley, where generations of climbers, those who aspire to be climbers, those who have a fascination with the spirit of climbing, and those without a campsite reservation have come together in a uniquely inclusive, friendly, rustic, and collaborative way. As the sport of climbing grew in the 20th century, Camp 4's free-wheeling, collaborative culture and its special setting near the river and the cliffs enabled it to serve as, and become world famous as, "The Laboratory" within The Granite Crucible. Here climbing equipment and techniques could be quickly created, tested, modified, and shared with others.

**Historic Recreational ORV:** Here also is where most of the innovations in modern mountain search and rescue techniques, safety equipment, clothing, and safer climbing and rappelling methods were developed over the decades. These "Yosemite style" innovations are used worldwide not only for climbing and mountaineering, but also for water crossings, hazardous rappelling descents and swift-water rescues in water-related sports such as kayaking, canyoneering, river rafting, and spelunking. They are also used by the renowned Yosemite Search and Rescue team (assisted when needed by a reserve corps of Yosemite climbers) to keep the park's 3.5 million annual visitors safe each year.



The significance of Camp 4 as part of the historical, cultural, and recreational ORVs of climbing in the Merced River corridor has also been clearly affirmed by the National Park Service (NPS). In February 2003, Camp 4 was designated as a National Historic Place by the Department of the Interior. One of the key decision-makers in the designation process, former NPS Pacific West Region Director John Reynolds, pointed out in the award-winning documentary on the history of climbing in Yosemite, "Vertical Frontier" the special cultural and historical significance of Camp 4:

"The world came together and said 'There are three important places in the world in the history of climbing. They are the base camp at Mount Everest, the base camp at Chamonix (Mont Blanc), and Camp 4.' Suddenly, the whole evolution about my thought of what Camp 4 was just took a huge growth, or flip-flop? to recognize that in fact we had something of at least national significance and maybe international significance right there in Yosemite Valley.

This broadened by view of what history can be. It made me think of how those big walls relate to the whole stretch of American history, and that little campground down there. And the kind of people who make history are not necessarily just the Thomas Jeffersons and General Grants of the world. It might just be the kids who are coming out there and are passionate about expanding themselves in a place like Yosemite."

Clearly, climbing is a unique historic, cultural, and recreational ORV of the Merced River corridor of Yosemite Valley. Therefore, special care must always be taken by park planners to avoid any potential negative impacts or restrictions on access to climbing areas and staging areas (used for preparation before and after climbs) during and after development of a user capacity framework for the Merced River corridor and other parts of Yosemite National Park. To help you and your team in developing an appropriate user capacity framework, here are points you should consider.

#### CLIMBING ORV CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MERCED RIVER USER CAPACITY FRAMEWORK

What climbers love about Yosemite Valley and the Merced River Climbers love the extraordinary cliffs and climbing areas of Yosemite Valley and the Merced River corridor and cherish having unfettered and spontaneous year-round access to them. Climbing them is akin to visiting wise old friends if we have climbed there before, or if new to us, meeting intriguing "friends of friends": inviting, inspiring, challenging, rewarding, sometimes humbling, but always enriching. Being able to see and hear the shimmering blue-green Merced River with its lush green banks and golden granite sands below adds an enticing element of contrast to the struggles and privations of climbing.

Climbers cherish easy and spontaneous year-round access to the Merced River to be refreshed by its clean water, rich and beautiful seasonal habitats, and special viewsheds throughout the park. We cherish the sights and sounds of animals in and around the Merced River, and its energizing soundscapes during the high water seasons as it roars down the Valley, dampening non-natural noises and restoring a sense of wild nature to our Yosemite climbing experience.

Climbers also cherish easy, low-cost and spontaneous access to quiet, rustic campsites at Camp 4 and other campgrounds in Yosemite Valley and in the Merced River corridor.

What climbers want to see protected: Yosemite's special ecosystems, biodiversity, and precious natural resources Climbers deeply appreciate the natural world and support efforts to preserve and protect its special ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources. Evidence of this is the continued success of voluntary seasonal climbing bans on some popular climbing cliff areas to protect Peregrine Falcon species. Another example of this are the Yosemite Lichen Inventory projects, which partnered climbers from The American Alpine Club with park scientists to inventory lichen species on the unassessed cliffs of Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows.

What climbers want to see protected: Yosemite's unique cultural resources Climbers enjoy preserving and sharing with visitors our rich and remarkable history, culture, and traditions of climbing in Yosemite, as described above, through interpretive programs, presentations, and events. We have enjoyed providing free presentations about climbing in Yosemite to the visiting public (sponsored by The American Alpine Club) from May through September for the past nine years and look forward to continuing that interpretive service in the future. We look forward to collaborating with the NPS and park stakeholder to create a much-needed Climbing Museum in Yosemite Valley to make this process more accessible to all Yosemite visitors, as surveys have shown that visitors ask more questions about climbers and climbing than other subjects such as bears and waterfalls.

What we want to see protected: universal access and enjoyment worthy of a World Heritage Site Yosemite is not a regional park. It is not a state park. Yosemite is a national park. But Yosemite is not just a national park. It is also a World Heritage Site and so in a sense belongs to all mankind as a special place on Earth. This means it should be managed and accessible in such a way so that it can be enjoyed universally by people from around the world, not just those who live in the US, California, or the nearby Yosemite region. As mentioned previously, the international climbing community and other international visitors have always cherished Yosemite as a special place on Earth, and they expect and appreciate continued easy spontaneous access to visit for the day or find opportunities to camp in the park, especially during the spring, summer, and fall.

What problems need to be fixed? / What are possible solutions? Limited access to Yosemite / Offer extended stays for climbers participating in park stewardship projects John Muir's ability to spend extended periods of time living and climbing in Yosemite clearly created conditions and opportunities which enabled him to develop his deep sense of connection to the natural world, then expand and very effectively communicate his global message of the need for its careful stewardship. This remarkable transformative process in The Granite Crucible has continued over the decades, spawning a growing legacy of some of the most passionate and effective conservationists in the world, including David Brower, Dick Leonard, Ansel Adams, Yvon and Malinda Chouinard, Doug

Tompkins, and Galen Rowell. Their activism, persistence, and global conservation successes show the transformative power of climbing in Yosemite, and its ability to inspire people to play larger roles in the conservation of our natural world.

I suggest that the NPS work closely with organizations focused on park stewardship to offer greatly increased possibilities of extended stays in Yosemite for participants committed to working on a variety of valuable stewardship projects in the park, such as Citizen Science projects focused on understanding and protecting Yosemite's natural and cultural resources. This type of system can create fertile "soil" for creating more outstanding and effective conservationists and park stewards in the future. Yosemite will need them.

What problems need to be fixed? / What are possible solutions? Overwhelming, dangerous vehicular traffic and crowded visitor areas / Offer easy and inexpensive ways for visitors to enjoy Yosemite away from vehicles and traffic I believe one of the easiest and most effective ways to reduce traffic congestion in the Valley would be for stakeholders to agree to allow the NPS to restore and widen the peaceful and currently vastly under-utilized Valley Loop Trail that circles the entire Valley away from roads and traffic and closer to the cliffs. It can offer individuals, families, and groups 13 quiet miles of moderate terrain through a variety of landscapes with stunning views of the Merced River corridor and its spectacular cliffs. Visitors then could at last safely hike, bike, or run to all parts of the Valley without being forced, as they have been for years, to either drive their cars or try to share the road as a hiker or bicyclist with its dangerous traffic and easily distracted drivers. Unlike driving or using public transport, the Loop Trail would allow visitors precious opportunities for solitude plus the freedom to pause and linger along the way in order to enjoy more fully the natural surroundings. Rehabilitating the Valley Loop Trail would also greatly help to disperse visitors more evenly in the Valley, instead of having them compelled to congregate in a few predictable areas. Increasing the numbers of bicycles available for rent in Yosemite and reducing the rental rates would also help to get visitors out of their cars and on to the appropriate hardened paths.

Another way to reduce traffic would be to contract with local transit providers to offer inexpensive minivan shuttle services to popular parts of Yosemite Valley during high-visitation periods of the year. These smaller shuttle vehicles would be very useful for offering visitors connections beyond the El Capitan bridge shuttle stop to popular areas like Gates of the Valley (Valley View), then along the El Portal Road, to areas such as Cookie Cliff, Cascade Falls, and along the Merced River to Arch Rock. These could also go up the Big Oak Flat Road to Half Dome View and back down to the Valley, stopping at the very popular Reed's cliff. This would also offer visitors a relatively safe place to watch climbers in action on the nearby cliffs, and talk with climbers as they prepare for their climb. It also offers nice views up and down the Merced River.

What would you like to see kept the same? Retain and expand the very successful and effective combination of proactive self-management of climbing with collaborative ways to manage climbing areas and any impact with the NPS and its highly-capable Climbing Rangers. Climbers are setting a high standard in stewardship activities, not focused solely on climbing areas, but on the park as a whole. An example of this is the annual Yosemite Facelift event which attracts over a thousand climbers from around the country to spend four days working together to remove and recycle rubbish from the park's climbing areas, trails, campgrounds, roadways and the Merced River corridor.

#### HOW BEST TO PROTECT YOSEMITE IN A WORLD OF INCREASING IMPACTS

Suggested vision: Continue to find and implement ways to transition from protecting Yosemite from user groups to protecting Yosemite with user groups

I believe that the only viable, effective, and sustainable way for the NPS to achieve its mission to preserve and protect Yosemite and other parks unimpaired for future generations in a world of rapidly increasing impacts from climate changes and expanding human populations is to continually engage with user groups to find ways to protect park resources through active, long-term collaborations with these groups to effectively address impacts, instead of having to rely on complex, imprecise, and difficult-to-monitor methods designed to protect park resources from these groups. This requires a dramatic shift of perspectives, but I am very encouraged to see that the innovative NPS leaders in Yosemite NP, Great Smoky Mountain NP, North Cascades NP and some other parks are now moving along that fruitful path. I remain hopeful for the future of our beloved Yosemite and other national parks, as evidence of America's Best Idea.

#### CONCLUSION

On behalf of the groups I represent, I would like to express appreciation for the significant time and effort you and your planning staff have expended to inform the public about the development of the new Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and to solicit our comments. I look forward to actively participating in this process as it moves forward.

Best regards,

Linda McMillan, MBA \_\_\_\_\_

The American Alpine Club Past Vice-President President, The Yosemite Committee

International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation President, Mountain Protection Commission

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature WCPA - World Commission on Protected Areas Mountains and Connectivity

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**Correspondence ID:** 412     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,15,2009 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** #1 Question-This is where my heritage is from. Please no more destruction! #2 Question All should be protected. The rivers, land and most of all the peoples history. #3 The NPS of Yosemite. Let the elders speak and all to listen with what they're saying. #4 The Gatherings of the Natives of Yosemite

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**Correspondence ID:** 413     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Northern Yosemite and Sierra Burping and Farcing Club Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,12,2009 14:03:35  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** In no particular order, here are some concerns: 0. Most important! DO NOT PROHIBIT AUTOMOBILE USE IN THE VALLEY. A bus and schedule is NOT the answer for Yosemite Valley. 1. plan for poor and underclass visitors. DNC charges too much for their goods and services. 1a. include retaining and increasing low cost camping opportunities in the Valley 2. Raptor nesting closures should be based on objective measures, not wholesale areas for limiting either cross country hiking or climbing. 3. parking should be increased for summer visitor use, particularly around the lower yosemite falls and lodge areas. Also, improved parking locations at popular climbing areas would be a bonus. 4. "out of bounds" camping should not be enforced by law enforcement when safety of drivers is concerned. Park exits are too far if driving late due to unforeseen delays. This is a lawsuit hazard that the NPS is ill equipped to handle, and Rangers are belligerent about enforcing this issue. Provide alternatives! 2-3 hr bivi sites to sleep in car? not 'camping' but not driving while tired either. save lives! 5. Large groups of picnicking users should be monitored for trash clean up after their events. 6. Provide for trash pick up and restrooms in El Cap Meadow area if possible. 7. Allow for climbing in lower yosemite falls amphitheatre and other areas typically off limits. Use education of climbers to prevent user group conflicts or resource management. 8. Add a spring runoff bridge to allow crossing of the lower merced river at key points. Dispersed use of the Valley minimizes impact to a single or limited set of areas. 9. provide for a YCA partnered Climbing Museum. 10. Most important also, INCREASE ANNUAL CAMPING STAY LIMIT and continuous camping stay limit. 10.

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**Correspondence ID:** 414     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Oct,21,2009 16:47:04  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** please add my name to the Merced River plan mailing list

thank you

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**Correspondence ID:** 415     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,14,2009 17:01:18  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I am a retired public-sector senior environmental, current, and long-range planner and university landscape architecture teacher, so hope that my comments will be understood to derive from a grounding in both ecosystem design and applicable regulatory and planning law.

The Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan ("CMP", hereinafter) poses a rare and crucial opportunity for the National Park Service ("NPS", hereinafter) to update and clearly publicize its commitment to its mission as stated in National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 ("the Act", hereinafter), ". . . which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The opportunity is crucial because the policies and actions of the NPS has for decades been divided between the mission clearly stated in the Act and advocated by John Muir and the policy initially advocated by

Gifford Pinchot that all of America's publicly owned natural resources -- including those within our national parks -- should be managed as harvestable and consumable national materials.

The Act in no way supports Pinchot's position; rather, it clearly defined the parks as "scenery . . . and objects . . . and . . . wildlife" to be conserved "unimpaired". The Act also defined sustainability before it became fashionable to use that term, and in similar language to, and long predating, the definition proffered by the United Nations December 11, 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

It is time for the NPS to accept and adopt the position that sustainability of our National Parks and Wild and Scenic Rivers can ONLY occur if the NPS uncompromisingly subordinates land use and the number of visitors given access thereto to the unimpaired and permanent conservation of the scenery, resources, and species within parks and river corridors. It has long been widely understood and accepted by physical and natural scientists and environmental designers that natural processes, watersheds, floral and faunal assemblages, and food chains are inextricably intertwined: the diminishment of any single aspect of any of those interplaying elements diminishes and perhaps irreparably harms the whole, and the whole is far greater and far more critical to planetary survival than any of the individual parts or the sum thereof.

Given this widely accepted understanding of ecosystem and natural process integrity, and recognizing that humankind as yet has growing but limited knowledge of natural forces, landscapes, and species, the NPS should base its management planning on Aldo Leopold's wise approach to intelligent tinkering: to paraphrase mLeopold, "Don't take it apart or tinker with it if you don't know exactly how to put it back together."

Given the above preface so kindly provided by the U.S. Congress and many several centuries of environmental science, my comment is simple: you, the NPS, representing We, the People, are embarking on a plan to manage the Merced Wild and Scenic River; any such plan MUST not impair any natural force or function, species or food chain, watershed process or landform, nor environment or ecotone. Not a simple task, but crystal clear. The best way to avoid any impairment is: to (a) plan restoration insofar as possible to pre-European contact state of all Merced River landforms, functions, habitats, faunal and floral relationships within the 1/4-mile planning boundaries; and, (b) to plan and emplace strong and clear limits upon: - further human development and land use therein; - human visitation therein; and, - vehicular routes, parking, and maintenance therein.

What does this mean for, say, Californians like me who have easier access to Yosemite than might a Texan or New Jerseyite or Carolinian? It means giving up what we have long perceived as a right to visit whenever we wish. It means establishing a mechanism -- such as a lottery system -- for determining who gets access to Yosemite and the Merced. It means setting visitor priorities, such as giving priority to school groups, relevant scientific researchers, the terminally ill and elderly, perhaps to Make-A-Wish Foundation clients. It means setting EFFECTIVE and meaningful limits on visitor numbers at any given point in time. It means devising, emplacing and administering non-polluting large-scale public transit into and out of Yosemite and the Merced River corridor, and limiting private vehicle use and parking to Park-And-Ride-type facilities outside environmentally sensitive areas. It means limiting or completely forbidding take of waters of the Merced River and its watershed, including both surface- and ground-water resources. It means understanding and protecting the crucial relationship of Yosemite high country to the Merced River and the Yosemite National Park.

The NPS will be loudly criticized if it emplaces the measures and policies I advocate herein. The NPS will also have taken a giant leap forward in performing its mission, in sustainably providing for the enjoyment by the public of Yosemite and the Merced River, and in doing its part to reduce environmental irresponsibility and, in the process, the global warming that threatens planetary survival.

Thank you.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	416	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	-				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Nov,14,2009 20:53:13				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Web Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	The first question is difficult, what don't I love. I live close enough that I visit all four seasons for a variety of reasons, day hikes, camping, hiking, backpacking, day trips, and the more leisurly activities of Wawona and the Valley. For me what needs to be protected is the balance that allows for that variety. Certainly the wildlife and nature need to be protected, or their would be no reason to visit. I also think that those things that allow the public to experience this beauty needs to be protected: that is the trails maintained, a variety of different types of accomodations from camping, to Curry Village, to the more traditional hotel accomodations of the Lodge, the Ahwahnee and the Wawona and of course the High Sierra Camps, and the wonderful Ranger led and interpretive activities through the NPS. For the most part I wouldn't change too much because I think that there is a balance between the environmental needs and the needs of the traveler. I also think the shuttle bus system in the Valley works well. The two thing that I think need to be fixed are: a more consistant/more often running bus system in the Tuolumne Meadows area (which includes the drop off for the hike to Merced Lake) and a management plan for the high travel time of the summer months. The summer season is the one season that I don't particularly enjoy Yosemite Valley (this does not hold true to Wawona or Merced Lake) because of the crowds in the Valley. But it is also true that there are some things that can only be enjoyed during the summer season. I love the convenience of being able to drive to Yosemite on a whim and I know that if I was coming up from a distance further than the two hours I drive, I wouldn't want to reach the entrance to be turned back, so I don't think closing the park when the Valley is full is a option, but maybe some type of reservation system, like a wilderness permit system. If you have reservations for housing or camping,				

that you have access to the park, but for those who are coming up just for the day maybe there also needs to be a registration system based on numbers coming in the Valley, what your activity will be (staying in the Valley, going up to Glacier, driving through to some other part of the park, or hiking or backpacking) in order to control the impact of a large number of people on the environment, on parking, as well as the overall experience of visitors to the park. Thanks for your openness to public opinion and your valuable work of maintaining this wonderful National Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 417      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,14,2009 21:09:30  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** This comment is supplemental to my earlier comment of this same date submitted several hours ago: The NPS would be prudent to consider that scoping as it has been traditionally conducted in the world of planning has served to both focus and narrow policies, goals, actions, and discussion of the topic being addressed. In the instance of the present proposed Comprehensive Management Plan, the very nature of scoping must be re-examined to avoid narrowing an inherently "big picture" key topic: the inextricably intertwined natural forces, watershed, habitats, faunal and floral assemblages and succession, and ecotones that comprise Yosemite and the Merced River. Thus scoping should attempt to provide not a narrowing but an embracing of that big picture and strive for goals and policies intended to conserve that interaction permanently.

A second concern is that the NPS recognize with clarity that there is not now nor ever was the much-discussed contradiction purported to be inherent in the National Park Service Organic Act. The key language in the mission clause is not a "conserve-versus-enjoyment" conflict but rather the concept of "leave . . . unimpaired . . ." Similarly, in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act the key language is neither "benefit" nor "enjoyment" but rather "preserved in free-flowing conditions" and "protected for . . . present and future generations."

Finally, the NPS is obliged to some extent by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Architectural Barriers Act to remind the public in the current scoping period that the provision of equal and integrated access is both a law-mandated obligation of the NPS and an ethical and conscience-directed concern for us all. I have learned in the fairly recent past from a very highly-placed officer of the NPS that Congress removed the NPS' authority to oversight and review of work by contractors under the NPS' purview. This removal sets up the situation, for example, in Yosemite wherein purported accessibility improvements -- specifically, wheelchair-maneuverable curb cuts -- were incorrectly performed by contractors but the NPS could do nothing to correct the essentially useless "improvements" thus rendered.

Perhaps I am not fully or correctly informed on this matter. However, it is essential that -- within the consideration of numbers of visitors to Yosemite and the Merced River -- effective and real accessibility be fully within the scope of the proposed Comprehensive Management Plan. Thank you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 418      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** private dweller of the valley Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 08:15:02  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I have lived in the valley and worked for the concessionaire since 1985. It is hard to pick or list all the things I love about living here but a part of it is seeing the joy and rush people get from coming to see it. If anything needs to change I would say that the number of day visitors in peak season needs to be reduced and/or controlled in some fashion. I don't really have any good ideas for you about that unfortunately but I think being proactive in the surrounding communities and thru the media would be helpful. It is very hard on visitors when they are made to sit at the gates or are even turned away at the gates. But I think it is the overcrowding on peak days that is hard on the valley certainly.

I don't believe that anything in the river corridor should be taken away. As many have said before, the park is in better shape than it was in the 1960's & 1970's (although I have only heard that and read about it, I wasn't here). I think over all, a great job has been done to contain the overcrowding on a busy day to a narrow corridor in the valley which helps the greater Yosemite. Perhaps limiting more of the areas along the riverbanks to help with erosion would be a good idea.

I don't think that El Portal really has as many problems with people and overcrowding or river impacts as Yosemite Valley.

My greatest concern with this planning is that Merced Lake HSC might be removed. I would like it to be kept as is as long as the High Sierra Camp Loop is kept in existence.

I don't believe that the camp greatly impacts the river. If anything, it helps to keep campsites away from the river and lake by creating

a buffer zone of sorts.

Merced Lake HSC is the oldest HSC and as such should be considered historical, not only in its structures but the idea and culture of the camp itself-its purpose. Without the High Camps many guests that come to the park and end up fighting for it, would never be able to get back in to the back country. For many nowadays, it is the first glimpse people get of the enormity of Yosemite's back country. Please consider that it is an important aspect of the visitor experience in Yosemite and as such, should be preserved. The areas around the High Sierra Camps should be designated in our park appropriately for them to be preserved. The High Camp Loop itself should be protected and preserved as a historical part of the park.

Just hiking along the Merced River corridor from Little Yo up is a majestic experience that everyone should be encouraged to do once in their life. My usual experience on the trail is that after the Half Dome exit it is blissful and peaceful with no people for much of the way into Merced Lake.

Maybe the number of guest beds could be reduced to make it more in line with the other camps?

Please also consider installing composting toilets in place of the current leach field and septic system (as well as in Glen Aulin and May Lake-the systems in Vogelsang and Sunrise should be fixed). They have plenty of sun and should be able to support more solar power in camp somehow also. Maybe running the showers and kitchen on solar to reduce propane transportation and mule traffic into camp.

Thank you for adding these comments to the scoping process!

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	419	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	-				
<b>Received:</b>	Feb,04,2010 14:50:59				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Web Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	I would like to see the current climbing plan stay in tact. I would hate to see access to climbing in this area restricted. Access has unrestricted for years. Climbing is a huge part of what Yosemite is all about. Please keep this in mind when creating the plan.				

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	420	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project Name:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	-				
<b>Received:</b>	Nov,25,2009 09:04:29				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	Web Form				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	My favorite part of Yoesmite is the access to rock climbing. The ability to access all cliffs and climbing areas within the park is, for me, the most important of the park that must be protected.				

There are three major impediments to accessing the wonderful climbing, hiking, and site-seeing opportunities: lack of camping/campsites in Yosemite Valley proper, a shortage of bear boxes, and insufficient public transportation within the park. Each will be addressed in turn.

Camping shortage: This is the largest headache and source of tension in the park for me and all of my friends. Quite simply, there is not enough camping available from April through October on the Valley Floor (the area from camp 4 to curry village, which includes Camp 4, Upper Pines, Lower Pines, and Northern Pines). As someone who comes for each weekend during May and October, it is virtually impossible to find camping in these campsites--forcing me to pursue one of two options: camp nearly an hour from the climbing cliffs (either outside the park or at an outlying campsite) or find an illegal solution. The first solution increases the amount of driving congestion and pollution within the Park; the second is one of the main drivers of the animosity between climbers and rangers. Heightening the tension is the the one week limit imposed on camp 4 patrons from May until October. This solely leads to illegal camping--as climbers who are spending a month in Yosemite have no other option than to break the rules. I believe this scenario--lack of camping on the Valley floor--has lead to the deterioration of relations between climbers and rangers, especially camp 4 rangers.

I propose three solutions that could remedy this situation: First, expand camping in camp 4, upper pines, northern pines, and lower pines--leaving a certain percentage available for a first come, first serve basis in the later three campsites. Second, explore the possibility of building a climbers-only campsite just out the park in El Portal. Three, eliminate the one week camping restriction in camp 4 (plus, please add soap dispensers in those bathrooms!)

Bear Box Shortage: I fully applaud and follow the policy of placing all food and odoriferous items in bear boxes. Unfortunately, bear boxes are almost harder to find in Yosemite than camping spots. Other than a paltry row in the curry village parking lot, there are no

publicly accessible bear boxes in on the valley floor. Compounding this problem, there are no or insufficient bear boxes at popular climbing destinations, including Arch Rock, the Cookie Cliff, El Cap Meadow, Cathedrals, the rostrum, reeds/five and dimmed cliff and the Ahwani Hotel.

A simple fix would be to either install or expand bear box coverage at all of these locations.

Public Transportation: In order to cut down on both carbon emissions and noise pollution, I take the bus in Yosemite whenever I have a chance. Unfortunately, while this service is wonderful for areas currently served, the buses do not serve the majority of popular climbing areas west of El Cap meadow. Thus, I consistently drive more than I would like in Yosemite. I would recommend running a bus once an hour from the El Portal Entrance to camp 4. This could catch the majority of climbing traffic. Perhaps it would be possible to offer discounted camping for those who agree to use this service.

On the whole, I love Yosemite, and I think that the NPS does a great job of managing it. This fixes will enhance both the experience and reputation of Yosemite!

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**Correspondence ID:** 421      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,25,2009 09:31:47  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Thankyou for making this available. I worked in YNP for over 10 years on and off. The most brilliant memories of it were early morning before visitors had risen--when coyotes were actually hunting in the field instead of begging from cars on the road. The first light on El Capitan...where in the world would anyone find that scene. Nor the rainbows from the lower falls. I can't express in words how valuable the resources--the rock, the river, the falls are to me and the American public at large. I want to make sure that all the stuff that has to be put in place to sustain visitors is just that...a Necessity. Extra gadgetry including high end housing, rafting, tricket shops (selling mostly made in China stuff anyway), etc. You get the picture. I am for backtracking to find a sane way to let people see and enjoy this amazing resource without all the hype. The activities that should remain, need to be specialized to the resource. Rock climbing for example. I understand the need for accessibility for those that are disabled but again, wonder how to draw the line in preserving the resource. With the Merced River being a centerpiece of the park, it is especially critical to protect it from much of the past errors. (One of which was removing all the dead trees so rafts could float effortlessly by--which was later found to have caused a decline in the native fish). I hope that the planners of this new document will look at Yosemite and all it has to offer, and then put restraints on development to keep the Park's integrity intact. Developmnet should be at a minimum supporting the employees who live there, and basic needs of visitors. A food store, information center, parking, and even bikes if its an alternative to driving--rather than just another activity to distract visitors. My favorite thing about the Merced was its ability to reflect with such clarity the looming rock walls of Yosemite Valley. And after the flood to see its incredible power to move such immense pieces of rock. Thanks, Kim

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**Correspondence ID:** 422      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 15:32:40  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I finally made it to Yosemite in 2008 and it was one of my favorite vacations. While the Valley is amazing, my tastes run to the backcountry expanses where I can only reach on foot. We car camped at Crane, hiked the Four Mile Trail to the Panorama Trail, then back to the Valley for the bus. And last but not least we enjoyed lunch on the summit of Half Dome (should be renamed Half or Mostly Scared Dome!) My boundaries have been stretched but the world seems closer to home for having been there, so many miles from home. Hope to be back soon for the northern part of the park and maybe the John Muir Trail.

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**Correspondence ID:** 423      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 18:13:37  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I wish Yosemite would incorporate a system like in Zion National Park with shuttle busses. The traffic in the Valley is unsightly, bad for the animals, and defeats the purpose of a National Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 424      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 18:17:22

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Correspondence:**

I am a climber who has been to Yosemite and Tuolumne Meadows on two occasions, and feel that the new land use plans should err on the side of disallowing any new commercial development in the Valley, and err on the side of preserving the existing primitive campsites and foot trails that provide access to the existing areas. I love the beauty that is Yosemite, and the still largely unspoiled areas that exist IN the Valley DESPITE the impact of loads of out of shape tourists that are looped through there every year. Yosemite is as accessible as it needs to be. It does NOT need more paved roads, or more professionally maintained trails. Yosemite should be allowed to be as wild as it can be, without expressly prohibiting foot access anywhere.

The vast majority of the people that visit Yosemite lack the fitness to journey by foot very far from the spot they step out of their bus. This is good, and as it should be. Nature should not be mowed down to facilitate an ease of access that caters to the lowest common denominator of the human fitness spectrum. The wild places in Yosemite should remain wild...and accessible by foot. Attempting to put up the equivalent of a velvet rope to make areas that are near paved roads "off limits" misses the point, and should not be done. If you wish to make areas "off limits", let it be done the natural way: By REMOVING THE PAVED ROADS. This will create a simple self selection of the access issue. Those that have the fitness can walk right up to the area, those that don't can just view it from afar. This is as natural as nature can be.

Do NOT "outlaw" climber access to any area. Climbers are some of the best stewards of wild property across the USA. Singling out climbers is both a statistical error (climbers comprise less than 2% of the visitors), and a behavioural error (climbers are typically GOOD stewards of the land).

Leave the area open to climbing. If you need to reduce access, cut out the buses and let people walk. We need fitter people in the US, not paved, motorized access for unfit people.

Cheers, and thanks.

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**Correspondence ID:** 425      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 18:52:55

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Correspondence:**

Guys, I'm going to make this short and quick so please listen up. I'm a conservationist and all - I give tens of thousands of dollars to help preserve wildness - but taking away climbing access around the Merced is NOT protecting wildness, it's hurting humanity. Remember Royal Robbins--without El Cap he probably would have committed suicide. Cookie Cliff, Arch Rock, El Cap, Sentinel etc. are MORE than just impediments to the natural qualities of the Merced, they're climbing spots. And in the end, climbers (like myself) are very, very good at conserving the places we love, perhaps better than if climbing access was taken away and no one went to Yosemite. Thanks, and don't take away access!!!

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**Correspondence ID:** 426      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,03,2010 15:38:16

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Correspondence:** Ignore. This is a test. 201002031439

--Jeffrey

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**Correspondence ID:** 427      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Dec,17,2009 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Correspondence:**

I work for Yosemite Institute and recently had a program day at Yosemite Valley School (4-6 grades) where we learned about and discussed the Merced River, with a specific focus on how we can affect watersheds. At the end of our day, I brought up this planning process and told students to talk to their parents about being involved. I also asked the students what do you think should be done in the Valley to help the Merced River and told them I would pass along their responses to NPS Planning. Keep in mind that they are



elementary students so some responses are very simplistic and at an individual level, but others are using their experience to try to think broader. Here is what they wrote: --2 clean-ups per year (1 more than the Face Lift and possibly river focused) --Limitation on number of visitors --Make pathways out of dirt not cement. --Not littering --Recycle and throw away trash in appropriate bins. --Don't feed fish and keep wildlife wild. --Ask people to be nice to the river because many people like it and use it for drinking. --Don't have roads close to the river. --Do a skit to show visitors and others how things affect the water. --Put rangers on alert to make sure no one litters or feeds the animals by the river. --Put trash and recycle bins around major swimming spots. --In the flyers (DNC activities and NPS newspaper), put an article about not killing our rivers. --Put up signs that say don't feed the animals. --Have volunteer programs on planting native plants. --Have restoration projects in impacted places making them restricted. --Trash cans on buses, trams, and public transport. --Have less packaging on store bought items. --Convince people to use a car less.

Thanks for providing an avenue to help our local students feel empowered during this planning process.

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**Correspondence ID:** 428      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,18,2009 19:24:46  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** What I love about Yosemite Valley is having a job or employment in such sacred surroundings and perform my simple task of raking leaves and look up at the magnificent embracing uplifted cliffs and take in breaths of air as pure as newborn and see the tallness of long lived evergreens and dogwoods shouldering all human efforts. Yosemite is alive with new creation and we live in the midst of its 104 million year old rocks sharing a portion of united time.

Everyday now at the Ahwahnee I see an 8 point buck who sort of follows me around. He loves to bring his family of doe and fawn to nibble on the greens. They should be always protected.

A fox or coyote walks the grey slate flagstone path around the pond and then crosses the flag lawn...I find this maneuver fascinating. This creature shows deliberate intent and walks the way of humans.

A fat brown running bear hurries away from my gator...I am sure he wishes there would be less frightening noise.

We are instructed to scalp the garden in order to tend it and keep the guests happy...I prefer more natural scenery, however we prune and scrape the leaves and make sure the rocks and sticks are removed. This is to protect the guests.

There is one rusty looking pipe by the bridge out by the river...it looks bad and not a pipe that makes the river water seem clean. This needs to be fixed.

I would like to see the golf course returned to the Ahwahnee and the back lawn area made beautiful again. The tennis court needs to be repaired. It is not the river however, but these are recreations that attract folks to the Park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 429      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** NPS Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,01,2010 17:31:24  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** testing testing testing

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**Correspondence ID:** 430      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,19,2010 13:55:59  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. What I love about the Merced River is that is is one of the most awesome whitewater kayak runs in the world. I have boated every inch of it, however the stretch that is in the park is supposed to be closed to kayaking. That is ridiculous. There are people up stream that litter and deficate in the water and I am not allowed to boat the merced gorge or through the park. I want to see legal access to kayak the merced gorge through the park and past the gate along highway 140.

I want to see all the hotels, and shopping and bus tours shut down. This would help protect this awesome place. We need less people in yosemite.

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**Correspondence ID:** 431      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 17:34:16  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. Everything 2. The fish. The fishing regulations in the park leave a section from Pohono Bridge to the park boundary open to all types of angling and the standard bag limit of 5 trout. This section of the river should have a zero (0) bag limit, barbless hooks, no bait allowed. Same as the regulations both just up and downstream from this section. (Happy Isles to Pohono and Park Boundary to Foresta Bridge)

3. 3A. Repair/restore/create a narrower river channel from Stoneman Bridge to Cathedral Beach. The unnaturally wide channel allows excessive solar exposure leading to increased/unnaturally high water temperatures. Perhaps an effort to narrow the river channel back to it's original/historical width would create faster flows, lower temperatures and higher oxygen concentrations for both fish and other species. 3B. Improve visitor access, this resource is a treasure to be protected, but not at the expense of access by visitors. The available overnight carrying capacity is well below the GMP and at historic lows. The loss of camping and lodging facilities in the park leads to more traffic and congestion as the visitors staying in areas outside the park now become defacto day use visitors. Upper & Lower River campgrounds should be reestablished. Yosemite Lodge should be rebuilt to the standards of the comparable properties used in establishing rates. The remodel should include amenities guests expect, including air conditioning and adequate, convenient assigned parking close to the rooms something that could be done with no change in infrastructure if the NPS would allow it. Additionally Yosemite Lodge should be restored to the capacity as approved by the GMP of 1980. Curry Village should be restored to it's approved capacity and upgraded to accomodations that visitors really want, private bathrooms, proper heat etc. Keep a small percentage of the tents and cabins for historical purposes. These tents and cabins without baths however quaint are not structures with significant architectural or cultural value. Rehab a few for posterity. The foot print could be reduced while offering upgraded accomodations that meet the needs of an aging visitor demographic. It makes no sense to spend two to three times as much money to rehab these units as it would to build new units.

3C. Be more efficient in spending. Both Curry and the Lodge could have been rebuilt and upgraded with the amount of money spent / wasted in the planning process during last decade or so. The franchise fees paid, capital investment contributions and appropriated funds- you've been planning since 1997, stop wasting time & money and start spending some of the funds set aside under the current concessions contract to improve the visitor experience. The Lodge rebuild plan to spend some \$20 million dollars to end up with the same number of rooms as currently exist was insane. For that much money the taxpayer should get additional access ie; more rooms. 3D. Concessions employee housing- Replace the hodgepodge of temporary structures erected since 1997. Build higher density (2 story?) accomodations on the same footprint. Move all non-essential associates out of the park- both NPS and concessions staff.

3E. Parking/traffic- Create a viable parking and mass transit system on the 140 corridor. Restrict private vehicle access to Yosemite valley during peak periods to visitors with campground or Lodging reservations in the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 432      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Yosemite Fund Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,10,2009 15:31:01  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I would like to see the Housekeeping camp be removed and that area be returned to its natural state. There's a lot of cooking and eating close to the river, and I think it may lead to pollution entering the water. Additionally, it is an eyesore. I would propose that building a hostel with rooms and a large kitchen would provide economy lodging for visitors, and could be placed in an area away from the river. Banff and Lake Louise N.P.s have done this and it's worked our well for them.

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**Correspondence ID:** 433      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,11,2009 09:39:31  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I just wanted to make a point that i don't want to see the number of vistors in the valley change. I find it hard enough to make it to yosemite, away from my 3 kids for a day of hiking or hard to get my kids up there to enjoy the park. I manage to make it to the park at least 4 times of the year, most on my motorcycle. I have heard talks about limiting the number of people in the valley or on the trails, ie mist trail. I enjoy that i can ride up last minute on a day, and hike the mist trail without having to do anything. I would hate to see this change. Just my two cents. Thanks for the time.

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**Correspondence ID:** 434      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 15:07:06  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I would like to see access to the climbing, camping and recreation protected as you move forward. Yosemite is more than a one stop destination for bus tour -- it's a connection point where American's can build a bond with the natural world. They do it through hiking, climbing and camping. Ultimately you will protect that parks if you protect this connection to the natural world.

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**Correspondence ID:** 435      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 15:12:12  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** There is a way to have access and also protect the walls.

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**Correspondence ID:** 436      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 17:51:13  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** A quota system for climbing at locations within one-quarter mile of the Merced River should not be considered as part of the Merced River Plan. Placing a quota on access will reduce the sense of ownership climbers have for these locations. Reducing the sense of ownership minimizes wise stewardship of resources, which results in their degradation. Further, the climbing community serves as prime examples of how unlimited access results in positive sustainable impacts to natural areas.

The Organic Act states that the mission of the Park Service is "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Climbing is a natural and historic object of Yosemite Valley. While Yosemite was established in 1890, the Organic Act, referenced above, was not adopted until 1916. Merely 18 years after Congress approved the Organic Act, the first ascent of Lower Cathedral Spire was accomplished by Richard Leonard, Jules Eichorn and Bestor Robinson. Unrestricted access to climbing has been and continues to be a fundamental fixture on the cliffs of Yosemite Valley. Changing this characteristic of Yosemite does not conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects.

Climbers are by their very nature leaders in sustainability. Climbing itself promotes leaving resources unimpaired for future generations. The clean climbing revolution of the 1960s, established in Yosemite Valley, permanently placed this ethos within our consciousness. Climbing routes and areas are no longer driven to submission by bolts and pitons, and while they are still used, it is sparingly. As a result, the crack systems we enjoy today remain largely the same as they were in the 1960's. These experiences exemplify that a quota system is not needed.

I have witnessed climbers work tirelessly to minimize their and others' footprints by picking up trash (including micro trash such as athletic tape, bag clips, and cigarette butts), using recycled and sustainable products, carpooling, and sharing resources. These actions on the cliffs, at their base, and in other areas serves as a contrast to other users of the Merced River that I have personally seen leave dirty diapers, chicken carcasses, cans, and bottles in the River as if it were an open dump. This sense of responsibility and stewardship is the result of unrestricted access. The volunteerism of climbers during the "Yosemite Facelift" exemplifies this statement.

Climbing access to the Rostrum, Cookie Cliff, El Capitan, Half Dome, Sentinel Rock, the Cathedrals, and other climbing locations within one-quarter mile of the Merced River should not be reduced or restricted based upon a quota system. I want to see climbing access at locations within one-quarter of a mile of the Merced River kept the same!

Sincerely, Adam Petersen

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**Correspondence ID:** 437      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 23:03:31

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** I visited Yosemite for the first time a couple of years ago with one of my friends who is up in Yosemite a few times every year, and it was amazing. One of the best parts was being able to stay in one of the heated tent cabins and just walk right out to start on the day's hike.

It was an amazing experience and I really hope the camping/renting situation continues to stay the same so that other people can have the same wonderful experience I had.

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**Correspondence ID:** 438      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** -

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Feb,04,2010 23:50:34

**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Correspondence:** I love visiting Yosemite Valley, I go every fall or winter and try to go once in the spring or summer if I can get in - usually for half a week.

My biggest complaint is how the Park Service is getting rid of all the people in the park! I find the elimination of so much overnight capacity in the last two decades to be very sad. Closing about half of Curry and the Lodge - with more reductions planned - I think was a bad idea. I know old units had to be condemned because of safety issues, but they should be replaced in better locations. We do need to be smarter about how we let people sleep in the Valley, but we shouldn't be preventing people from coming by reducing capacity.

Similarly, I find the closure of the Rivers campgrounds and the lower half of Lower Pines campground to be very sad. I understand the concerns with the flooding, but I think the reaction was an overreaction. I would be a strong advocate for installing seasonal (Apr-Oct) and/or lower impact (dirt roads, less amenities, stricter rules) campsites to replace the lost capacity. It would be nice if they were in the developed part of the valley, but they could also be relocated or spread out down the valley. But either way, we need more campgrounds!

After all, Yosemite was set aside as a park not to be isolated as a private retreat for the lucky few - it was set aside so that many people could enjoy it. I feel the park has lost sight of that in recent years with so many measures to kick people out at night. Without the people, Yosemite is just a set of unseen cliffs and forests.

~Rory

Answers to questions:

----- Q1) What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?

I love the beauty of it all, and sharing that beauty with others. I love the sense of community one finds in the valley - its really unique. First-timers, old-timers, frequent visitors and those lucky to even make it. Sharing the park with others on trails, in lodges, around campfires, is great. The natural beauty is just amazing - breathtaking! But I also love the community - I like seeing the crowds of happy people.

----- Q2) What do you want to see protected?

I want in particular those two things to be protected:

1 - The beauty of the place - unneeded services (gas stations, new stores, etc.) should be kept out. Protect trails, meadows, riverbanks, falls.

2 - The community - people shouldn't be kept out of the park! I really don't like how hard it is to find space to stay in the valley. We keep taking away all of these wonderful camp grounds and cabins but we're not replacing them - and we should! I feel that we are killing a magical element in the Yosemite experience by pushing people out of the park.

----- Q3) What needs to be fixed?

The lack of places to camp or stay in the valley. It's becoming a morgue.

Also, can a reliable shuttle bus be sent down to the lower valley (Bridal Veil Falls in particular)? Traffic is horrendous at the falls, all the cars idling there is just a waste of resources. Would a shuttle to El Portal be feasible - kind-of like Zion Nat'l Park for the peak season?

Also, the prices are getting a little bit too expensive across the concessions board.

----- Q4) What would you like to see kept the same?

The bus system is otherwise excellent - gets people out of their cars!

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**Correspondence ID:** 439     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,03,2010 15:28:36  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Protect: Nature in general - keep as wild as possible Peace - yosemite is not an amusement park

Promote: Education - visit the park but with respect

Restrict: Car access, number of visitors.

Yosemite is gorgeous, the valley, the mountains, the river, wild animals, trees, everything. When I go there I enjoy hiking, swimming, rafting, camping, bike riding, photographing, admiring the nature.

I think Yosemite is not as beautiful when there are too many people there, specially in the summer time. Too many cars that can be seen and heard from everywhere. Car alarms that make so much unnecessary noise.

I understand that everyone has the right to enjoy the park, but at the same time we don't enjoy as much when it's over crowded.

I would agree with ideas like limiting number of visitors in the park at a time, or restricting private vehicles. Or educating people on how to reduce their impact in the park, like noise pollution for example.

I heard that Denali National park has a lot of rules that help keep the park wild.

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**Correspondence ID:** 440     **Project:** 18982     **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,29,2010 18:35:23  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I was fortunate enough to visit Yosemite Valley for the first time in May of 2009. While long and eloquently written letters are not my strong suit, I have compiled some of my thoughts for Yosemite's future.

- I have heard of a proposal to eliminate private cars from Yosemite Valley. I think this is a fantastic idea, especially since public transportation infrastructure is already in place. Obviously, the hours and volume of shuttle buses would need to be expanded, but I support the idea of no cars in any National Parks.

- Removing cars from the park will likely reduce visitor traffic as well, and make bear management easier.

- With regards to permits: as always, it is best to maximize the use available to all. I generally do not support backcountry permit systems. By definition, any area requiring a permit system to be considered backcountry.

- Increase primitive tent camping sites, and relax stay limits. 7 days is not enough, period, and furthermore, it is not fair, as it is well known fact that many abuse the system and stay longer anyways. This feature of Yosemite Valley is the most aggravating to me as a whole. I live across the country. When I travel more than 3,000 miles to visit one of the best places on Earth, I expect to spend more than a week there!!!!

- Although the above point is difficult because of the volume of visitors, I reiterate that banning all private cars from the Valley itself (and providing appropriate parking facilities with public transport in) will help alleviate crowding.

Thank you for your time!

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**Correspondence ID:** 441      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 10:12:45  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I love the fact that the river is open to so many people to love and enjoy. I do not feel that the government should limit access to this area.

I actually feel that there should be easier access, parking etc. to some areas. There could be more picnic areas, easier parking to enjoy this beautiful river.

I would also like to see more park benches and areas to sit and enjoy the sounds of the river, as well as improve the walking path on the far side (not road side) of the river in the canyon. What a wonderful place to put a paved rails to trails bike path. That would take the bike traffic from the road and make it safer.

It would also be great to have a paved bike path around the perimeter of Yosemite Valley and not on the road. This again could lead to better utilization of the park. All of us are not high def climbers etc. We like to get outside and enjoy the park and out of doors at a lower performance level. We also want the opportunity to escape the crowds in the vally in an easier way.

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**Correspondence ID:** 442      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 15:02:14  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** To Whom it May Concern,

Please consider climbers as you formulate your management plan. As a climber of 18 years and as a hiker and camper for years before that, I have enjoyed Yosemite and its environs in many ways. First it was as a child camping with my family and later as an adult camping in tents, backpacking, and climbing.

I believe climbing is a wonderful way to discover and appreciate new places. There are many climbs I have not done along the Merced River, in Yosemite Valley.. and indeed throughout the whole area. I would not want my access to these places blocked, it would make my life long enjoyment of the parks incomplete.

Years ago as a not-that-athletic child I would have marvelled that I might ever be able to climb how and where I do, I want to continue that journey and not have it blocked now.

Thank you for your time.

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**Correspondence ID:** 443      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 20:29:16  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Dear Park Service, I moved from Colorado 11 years ago to be closer to Yosemite National Park. I am an avid user of the park and have visited many, many times over the past 15 years. The gate keepers at the Lower Merced know me by the month my annual pass expires. Climbing is what I love most about the park and hope to remain climbing within the heart of the park for years to come.

1)Traffic is often talked about being an issue. It is, but only a very minimal few percent per year. One large pedestrian foot bridge set at a gentle grade (for handicapped access) would be a wonderful piece of architecture if done correctly (much like the Lower

Yosemite Falls face lift). If it were placed at the lodge for going to Lower Yosemite Falls, the traffic issue would be greatly decreased for leaving the Valley. I am sure there are other places that foot bridges would alleviate traffic and pedestrian flow. Has anyone thought of the Pedestrian Foot Bridge?

2)Walk in camp grounds and overflow areas for camping without a reservation seem to be limited.

3)El Cap Meadow needs toilets. The Meadow has become a hot spot for tourists of all walks of life to marvel at the tenacity of the Human Spirit. There is something extremely compelling for people mystified by climbing such a magnificent wall. It needs a little help before being too abused.

4)Keeping access for climbers to Middle Cathedral Rock on the other side of El Cap has always been threatened with parking and rerouting. It needs to be open and accessible for the Human Spirit to express it's self on these granite walls. It does not take much to keep these avenues open to climbers and need the proper respect just as other citizens have access to the majesty of the Sierra in their cars and wheel chairs. It is minimal comparatively! Other places that need to remain accessible are the Lower Merced River Canyon and The Rostrum (at proper times of year due to raptor nesting).

Just some suggestions. Simple, because Less is More! Sincerely, Rob Miller

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**Correspondence ID:** 444      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Access Fund Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 16:36:56  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I am very concerned about the cost it takes to stay in YNP. The only affordable way for many to stay in the Valley is to camp. Instead on restricting camping I encourage the NPS to remove permanent structures such as Yosemite Lodge and restrict the number of RVs in the Valley and expand tent camping options.

I strongly encourage the NPS to allow technical climbers the same access that has historically been afforded to them. Climbing has been a crucial part of the history of the park since the times of John Muir and the more time I spend in YNP the more I am impressed with the respect shown the natural resources by the climbing community. The impact the climbers have on the resources is negligible compared to that of the tourists that throng to the park.

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**Correspondence ID:** 445      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 16:58:15  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I've heard it said that more than 95% of visitors to Yosemite National Park do not go more than 100 feet from their vehicles. I feel sorry for these people because the best part of the park experience is when one is able to leave behind all the trappings of civilization and immerse oneself in nature's most profoundly beautiful settings.

Although I don't have solutions for accomplishing this, I could wish for the elimination or drastic reduction of gasoline in the park. RV generators, traffic, air pollution, are all things that do not belong in Yosemite. Preventing the park from turning into Bakersfield seems like a good goal.

The more time people spending in hiking, camping, climbing, canoeing; the more they'll be able to really appreciate what the park has to offer. These are the things I wish to see protected. These activities are what create a profound relationship between the park visitors and Yosemite. Hotels, dining, and shopping do not.

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**Correspondence ID:** 446      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 18:29:15  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** While drafting a management plan for the Merced River, please keep parking areas and access to climbing areas such as the Cookie Cliff, Arch Rock, and the Rostrum. These areas are incredibly important to the history of American climbing, and remain some of the

most beloved and spectacular crags in the country. Climbers have proven themselves in the majority of cases to be the most self-regulating and responsible park users, and have maintained these areas with a high level of care and sensitivity. Also please consider not reducing, and if possible increasing, the amount of camping in the park. Many park users have very simple needs and do not need costly, elaborate camping facilities. Those wanting to simply throw a sleeping bag on the ground or pitch a small tent have precious little room in the park, and with Camp 4 being overcrowded already, reducing camping room in the park would be highly detrimental to many of the park's lowest impact users.

I am in full support of taking measures to preserve the beauty and purity of the Merced River. I also believe this can be done while

1) maintaining access to popular but well cared for climbing areas such as the Cookie Cliff, Arch Rock, and the Rostrum

2) maintaining or even expanding camping options for users who need very little space or services to sleep a night or two on the valley floor.

Thank you.

Dan

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**Correspondence ID:** 447      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 21:28:44  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** 1) Climbing. Yosemite Valley is a great treasure for climbers from around the world. I had the opportunity to make 10 assents of El Captain as well as many assents of many other formations in my youth. My time in Yosemite is one of the highlights of my life, it shaped who I am today in many ways. 2) Access to climbing must be protected. My son and his sons and daughters should have the same opportunity to fall in love with Wilderness in the same way that I was able to climbing on Yosemite's wild walls. 3)Smoke from campfires and the number of motor homes. 4)Camp four and climbing access

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**Correspondence ID:** 448      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,25,2010 09:39:04  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I love the natural beauty of Yosemite. I loathe the excessive development in Yosemite Valley and other areas of the park. I also loathe the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp. This anachronism has no place in a modern national park or in wilderness. The Park Service should not be catering to wealthy visitors while damaging the resource. Soft beds and fancy meals have no place in wilderness. Wilderness is protected precisely because soft beds and fancy meals can be had everywhere else. The park service should not be sacrificing the environmental integrity and solitude of the backcountry and wilderness, nor giving preferential treatment to the wealthy at the expense of denying access to those that can't pay to enjoy the backcountry.

In sum, (1) the natural features, natural processes, and natural beauty of the park, (2) see 1, (3) the man-made developments and activities that diminish 1, and (4) see 1.

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**Correspondence ID:** 449      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 23:18:33  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I have canoed the Merced in the valley and kayaked it from below the park boundary. I have also paddled the S. Fk.

Please retain existing canoeing and kayaking in the valley subject to reasonable use and traffic limitations. When it becomes necessary to limit river traffic, a system must be implemented to ensure non-commercial individuals have equitable access.



Properly equipped paddlers should be able to paddle anywhere in the park including the Merced below Yosemite Valley.

SR

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**Correspondence ID:** 450    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 23:29:43  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Quite frankly I love all aspects, features and locations of Yosemite including those mentioned above. Having visited all of the High Sierra Camps I can say without a doubt that those are precious and need to be protected and used with care.

I would love to see the Valley Floor go to a more mass transit system and or single family car quota so as to reduce the smog and increase the peacefulness that abounds there.

The less "civilization" the better meaning few amenities, etc. etc. After all, this is what everyone is trying to get away from for a few days, or should be at least.

Protect the river the animals and let nature take its course.

Yosemite is a magical place that is truly a gift to all mankind and should be protected as such.

Thanks for giving us the chance to voice our opinions and share our ideas.

Sincerely, Bryan Ward

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**Correspondence ID:** 451    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jan,31,2010 19:06:26  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** 1. I enjoy the nature and trails of Yosemite Valley.

2. I would like to see that the best interests for sustaining the park whole are met while still allowing the economy to thrive for the nearby towns that depend so much on the tourism of the national park.

3. There is a demand for more campground space and the following solution came to mind. Raising prices for bring cars into the park while providing a reduced price for those who choose to ride busses from a designated area outside of the park. This possible solution could create more campground space. Another bonus to this suggestion is that if the towns that depend on the tourism of the national park receive additional income for running the bus lines and parking in the designated areas outside the park then both the park can have more campground space and towns can continue to receive income. Also since the amount of tourists allowed in the park has a cap then there should be a way to inform people via an electronic road sign such as those amber alert signs or possibly via a am radio station specifically for this task.

4. Keep the river intact.

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**Correspondence ID:** 452    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,01,2010 17:46:06  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** I first came to Yosemite in 1947 when I was 11 years old. I have visited about 50 times over the years, so I am quite familiar with the Park and obviously love it. In recent years I have been coming with friends and family to the Valley on the 3-day Columbus Day weekend in Oct. and staying at Lower Pines.

What I love about the Merced River and Yosemite Valley: The main thing I love is the natural world of Yos., including the granite walls, the falls and trails (particularly the Mist trail to Vernal and Nevada Falls, and the 4-mile trail to Glacier Pt.) I love personal tent camping in Lower Pines with the incredible views of Half Dome and Washington Column. I'm concerned that the Merced River Plan with its effort to protect the area within 1/4-mile of the River might lead to a further decrease in camping sites; particularly in Lower Pines. There are far fewer sites in the Valley now than before the 1997 flood, so no further sites should be closed.

What do you want to see protected?: Primarily I want to see Yos. Valley camping protected from loss of sites. Protect accessibility by car to the campgrounds. Protect the Mist Trail. I don't want to see a "user capacity program" that's more stringent than the present one. I used to rock climb and I would like to see access to all present climbs protected for the current climber generation.

What needs to be fixed?: Some of the parking areas could use a little improvement. Shower availability for campers. (Curry Village showers are probably adequate).

What should stay the same?: Yos. Valley (and particularly, Lower Pines) campsite numbers. Road access by car. Valley Shuttle bus service is good. Curry Village facilities.

-----Dennis Burge

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**Correspondence ID:** 453    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 21:54:50  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** Yosemite is a natural treasure, to be protected for all generations. A rich history of human interaction in the park started with Native Americans, includes iconic figures of historic significance such as John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, and millions of visitors who enjoy the surroundings.

As a rock climber, I have spent years in the Valley, enjoying the world's best rock climbing location. Preserving access to all natural formations, where climbers from around the world challenge themselves physically and mentally, is mandatory in my opinion. The physical impact of climbers is small, and virtually all climbers have a strong ethic of environmental preservation.

Please include the rights of climbers, amongst all park visitors, to climb on Valley rock faces along the entire Merced River in your Plan. Thank you.

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**Correspondence ID:** 454    **Project:** 18982    **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 21:56:42  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** What I love about Merced Lake High Sierra Camp is its isolation, history, beauty, access to higher country, and culture of people (workers, visitors and rangers). The Merced River is dynamic and clearly free. Around every corner there is majesty and mystery. Being able to spend time with the river is a blessing and honor. From Briceburg to the headwaters up Triple Peak Divide, the Merced holds the stories of place. The extremes of the river are one thing I love. From Washburn Lake to the cascades below Merced Lake to Nevada Falls, to the drop out of Yosemite Valley to rafting below El Portal.

I want to see the river and its entire neighborhood continue to be protected. First of all I have spent more time in Yosemite's high country than I have in Yosemite Valley. I do feel that any human activity allowed in the valley at levels near enough the river to alter, erode, change, impact the river system in significantly measurable ways needs to be curbed. I would like to see North Pines Campground stay closed and be restored to natural conditions. I'd like to see the roads be brought back away from the river wherever possible and accessibility be for people. I'd like to see all nonnative species, such as bullfrogs and blackberry, be eradicated.

The traffic from Happy Isles up to LYV leads to trash and erosion desecrating the river and the experience of us more "leave no trace" minded folks. I have hiked all over the park, mostly on trails closer to day trip access points and this trail is the only trail I remember seeing trash like I was on a city street. This NEEDS to be fixed. Perhaps the new Half Dome permitting plan will help that.

I believe that regular and consistent backcountry rangers need to be stationed at Merced Lake all summer season by a ranger who can balance their number one goal of protecting the resource with education and interpretation within the almost 100-year-old culture of the HSC.

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**Correspondence ID:** 455      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Dec.31,2009 14:08:58  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** This plan provides yet another opportunity to carry out park management's long-term vision to reduce the number of vehicles entering Yosemite Valley every day. The air pollution and water pollution from these vehicles has significant negative impact on this wonderful river.

The park's public transportation system is well-run and effective, and should be extended to a satellite parking facility in El Portal. Public transportation to Glacier Point, Tenaya, and Wawona would encourage people to construct many enjoyable one-way hikes and would also reduce vehicle impact on the river and its valley.

Forcing tour bus passengers to change to a park shuttle would also help the cause of park interpretation, giving park staff an opportunity to reach these very short-term visitors.

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**Correspondence ID:** 456      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Nov,30,2009 14:07:20  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** 1) What do I love about the Merced River, Valley, Wawona, El Portal, Merced HSC?

The sounds of the water, scenery, opportunities to see wildlife, appropriate recreational activities, i.e. hiking, swimming, photography, opportunities for fishing, an occasional individual raft.

2) What do I want to see protected?

shorelines, vegetation, places where one can have solitude, sounds should be mostly natural

3) What needs to be fixed?

One should have the experience of being in a semi-wild place along the river, which means moving stuff, like campgrounds, Housekeeping Camp, horse stables, etc. away from the river. Less development is preferable to more - move facilities out of flood plains (don't plan on rebuilding every 20 years or so).

Do we really need to have a high Sierra Camp at Merced Lake? The amount of horse/mule waste along the trail must have an impact on the water quality, and makes hiking unpleasant on those hot summer days.

Remove distracting activities from the river, i.e. mass commercial raft rentals. It's OK for folks to bring their own, with specific put in and take out areas designated.

Extend transportation system to west valley - this could be used by folks wanting to hike, etc. along river.

4) What would I like to see kept the same?

Feeling of being in an older, historic park, i.e. the beautiful bridgework of the CCC, picnic areas (upgrade).

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**Correspondence ID:** 457      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 20:55:18  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** Hello, I've lived in El Dorado county 50 years. In my younger days my brother and I hiked extensively in Yosemite, especially those regions distant from Yosemite Valley. We shared our trips with horse packers on occasion, had wonderful experiences with memories that have lasted for decades.

In the more recent past I have been white water kayaking the Merced, and have been eager to boat the entire river and some of its tributaries. Kayaking is an extremely low-impact sport. Some of the other currently allowed activities in the park are MUCH more damaging; I know, I used to participate in them.

I would strongly encourage you to extend those areas where white water kayaking is allowed into currently unapproved areas. As I said, kayaking is an extremely low-impact sport.

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**Correspondence ID:** 458      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,02,2010 15:45:00  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** If it was not for John Muir then Yosemite National Park would probably not exist (and perhaps the Merced river would not of been designated a "Wild and Scenic River"). So I feel in making any decisions about the future of the River and of the Park a strong emphasis should be put upon John Muir's values and teachings.

Muir was a strong believer in Conservation, and Sharing your Wilderness experiences so for example if the number of visitors to the Park is to be limited then perhaps Muir would of condoned a system where you earn your right to visit the park through conservation work (any where in the world), and sharing the importance of nature and wilderness with others? Or perhaps as he was keen for everyone to experience nature he would of felt preference should be given to First timers who have never visited the Park before?

I certainly feel that John Muir's values: Discover, Explore, Preserve (Conserve), and Share should be the corner stone of the management plan.

I find it hard to believe that John Muir would of condoned traffic in the Park. To truly experience Nature and be effected by it in the way John Muir would of hoped then surely all technology must be left behind.

These are just my opinions, but I hope they may help you to construct a positive management plan for the Merced River, that can continue John Muir's Legacy.

Yours in Thanks. Good Luck.

Chris Waters

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**Correspondence ID:** 459      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Name:** -  
**Outside Organization:** Access Fund Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Feb,04,2010 20:01:38  
**Correspondence Type:** Web Form  
**Correspondence:** 1) I love that Yosemite National Park is available to all Americans. I appreciate the delicate balance between recreation and preservation, and I believe that Yosemite occupies a unique position in America pantheon of parks. I believe every effort should be made to keep this park open and available for Americans to visit and recreate.  
  
2) I would like to see climbing access protected. Climbers are a user group who has a very low impact on the natural environment. They do not change the environment in the pursuit of their sport. The climbing areas in Yosemite etc should be kept open to rock climbers.  
  
3) I believe there should be more walk-up camping available in the style of camp-4. Folks who are camping for a for a minimum number of nights and in the low-impact style should have access to camping without a three-month plus reservation debacle.  
  
4) I have no comment.

thank you very much,

Sincerely, Chris Irwin

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**Correspondence ID:** 460      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Richard, Scott  
Unaffiliated Individual  
**Received:** Jun,28,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** I am unable to attend your workshop in San Ramon, Ca on 6/28 but would like make some comments. While I support most environmental concerns I feel the last few years that Yosemite Park has become a place for MAINLY those with money can come. You have eliminated much of the camping areas (due to the 100 year flood a few years ago)where those with lower income could camp or bring trailers etc. Also eliminated the cabins in the Lodge area due to the unusual high water. Other accomodations have skyrocketed in cost under the new management team! I do not want to see bridges demolished in support of wild/scenic status and want to restore some of the camping areas - which after all only had bumpers,firepits and tables to be dealt with in case of high water. My family has enjoyed Yosemite since the early 1900's and regrets the loss of "simpler" life style before the push to make it "more luxurious" and costly. I continue to financially support the Yosemite fund as Yosemite is such a place of spiritual and physical renewal. I will be interested in the plans being suggested . Thank you, Janice Scott

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**Correspondence ID:** 461      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119  
**Project Name:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan  
**Outside Organization:** Hand, David  
David Hand Productions Business  
**Received:** Jun,29,2010 00:00:00  
**Correspondence Type:** E-mail  
**Correspondence:** Mr. Don Carlson, our associate is presenting to you, a possible plan in which we are interested. We feel that this is a worthwhile project which will benefit the National Parks System and the State of California. As we learn more about the need and potential, it is our intent to present our findings and a plan for approvals to the appropriate offices.

Our company and associates are interested in applying for private and government funding to create a transportation system from Fresno, California, to the Yosemite Village Center. We would suggest that the long term economic value to these entities would show significant value. The distance is approximately 96 miles. By virtue of the transportation systems available, it is suggested that the route might move North through the valley, in some locations, parallel with the State Highway 41. Survey of the mountains would find the route with the least climb and descent for ease of installation and operation of the system.

There is a long list of potential reasons why such a transportation system would benefit the area. To name a few for consideration:

? Low environment impact ? Clean air ? Low noise ? People control; As a dual track system, the number of cars required will be dictated by the number of visitors that Parks Management will allow in the Park at any time. ? Environmental safety ? Minimizes Ozone Concerns ? Potential control of vehicles to Yosemite, less bus and auto traffic ? Vehicle safety is increased. Less vehicles, less crime, less accidents ? Better Park Transportation control ? Less commercial truck traffic by products being transported by train. ? Good access from and to Fresno Yosemite International Airport ? Does not impose on the Merced River corridor ? Relieves traffic along the 140 Highway ? Makes the route to the Park from Fresno, the preferred route. ? Provides considerable job labor for construction, operations, maintenance and service. ? If it was felt to be in the best interests of Park Management, because of the ability to control and reduce bus traffic, that more visitors might be allowed to enjoy the Park, thus helping to pay for its facilities. ? Would also provide more tourist dollars for the Fresno Area, as well as income from Local, State and Federal tax dollars.

ARTICLE FROM THE INTERNET "The stretch of Highway 41 from the Fresno County line north to Yosemite National Park is a notoriously perilous route shared by tourists, foothill residents and casinogoers. The two-lane road is full of curves and hills and shoulders that are abruptly cut off by walls of rock or precipitous ledges. But worst of all is the traffic. According to Caltrans, the number of vehicles northbound on Highway 41 at Road 200, about seven miles south of the Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino, has increased 70% from 2001 to 2008 -- to nearly 20,000 a day. The growth has been spurred by several factors, including development in the foothill communities of Coarsegold and Oakhurst, and the opening of the casino in 2003. The presence of all those cars and trucks crammed onto a road with only a handful of passing lanes has led to serious consequences. Since 2003, 47 people have died in crashes -- many of them head-on collisions -- and there have been 635 accidents with injuries, according to the California Highway Patrol." David Hand Productions ("DHP") has communicated with a number of mono-rail companies that have the capacity of providing the equipment and expertise to design, manufacture and install such a system. Of all those in consideration, our short list recommendation is lead by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and their HSST Maglev System, which is not a mono-rail system. At such time as funding is found for the project, more analysis will take place to make sure of the best system for the Yosemite experience. No design or detailed research has taken case to this point. However, at this time we are presenting this system as we feel it would offer the greatest advantage to solve some of the Yosemite transportation needs.

http://wwwmitsubishi.com

? The system technology uses the Electro-magnetic Suspension approach to levitation. ? Because of the positioning, the magnets also provide lateral guidance of the vehicle. ? Vehicles can remain in the levitated position even at station stops. ? Operating speed is 62.1mph, though top speed is 80mph ? Maximum gradient is 11.3% which we feel can be accommodated through the mountains. ? Traction power supply DC1500V, third rail type (Positive and Negative rail) ? System provides full control safety and operations systems ? System can and will comply with ADA and Seismic codes as well as fire protection and safety evacuation regulations (including NFPA130) ? In addition to the light weight of the HSST vehicles, the load conditions on the civil structure are evenly distributed instead of concentrated wheel loads. These load conditions allow the size of the guide-way superstructure to be reduced compared to other technologies, resulting in lower costs and reduced aesthetic impacts on the surrounding environment. ? Tracking system can accommodate 150'-0" spans. ? High level of engineering compliance and testing has taken place by Mitsubishi and is available for review. A significant number of systems are in operation, again providing successful data for the system. ? System will meet all Buy/America Requirements ? System is cost-effective to operate and maintain. ? Technology was developed over the past thirty years with numerous systems being manufactured and installed since 1985. ? Though the technology is not an "off the shelf" product, many other manufacturers have the ability to provide parts and service to the systems, making maintenance and service more attractive. ? Longevity of the system is at least 20 ? 25 years from commencement of operation. ? The system can be added to on a "needs" basis ? Power sub stations, 4MW every 5.6miles (for dual track) ? The noise level IS LESS THAN the FTA Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Guidance Manual which has a goal of 75dBA at stations. Typically reports show 69dBA at stations. Cruising noise levels are reported between 59dBA and 61dBA, significantly lower than any other available technologies.

The following map is concept only. The track layout (in blue) is by visual inspection on the map and has no authority or support of survey or legal discussion. Based upon a general take off from Google map, the elevations seem possible. It is only a possible concept by this presenter. There have been no discussions with the City of Fresno, the National Parks Service or with any other possible landowners along this route.

The idea is to place the track in a manner to provide the least grade possible, and to keep the track support columns as minimal as possible.

This schematic layout of the track suggests two stations. One at the Fresno Airport and the other at the entrance of Yosemite Village Center. The Maintenance facility would be located at the Airport Station. A service road would follow the entire length of the track.

It has been suggested by Mitsubishi and others that the budget for the project would be in the range of \$6,000,000,000. Length of time to construct the project would need to be determined.

As this is a letter of introduction, we would greatly appreciate learning all we can about the rules and requirements from the Parks Department on the best way to proceed. We will appreciate learning of any prospective agencies or private sources that can help to move the funding and the development of this worth while project, forward.

We thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to working with you and bringing this project into development and completion.

We appreciate your time, consideration and interest.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	462	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Sumner, Joe and Nancy				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Jul,13,2010 00:00:00				
<b>Correspondence Type:</b>	E-mail				
<b>Correspondence:</b>	Having worked at Yosemite NP and later camped there as a visitor, please consider; 1. Reducing the number of campsites in existing campgrounds (the Pines) - especially right along the Merced River 2. Landscaping for controlled human access to the beaches of the Merced 3. Reopening the Rivers campgrounds only smaller to accommodate the campsites removed in the Pines campgrounds but bigger sites and fewer sites per campground. 4. Establish raft launch sites near parking areas/campgrounds 5. Remove Housekeeping Camp - or greatly reduce its size, redo the "cabins" into tent cabins or like the little log cabins in KOA campgrounds across the country - more aesthetically pleaseing. use fire/bug killed logs to construct.				

All of the above will help restore the banks of the Merced in the developed areas and increase the aesthetics of camping in the valley.

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<b>Correspondence ID:</b>	463	<b>Project:</b>	18982	<b>Document:</b>	30119
<b>Project:</b>	Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan				
<b>Name:</b>	Organization, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center				
<b>Outside Organization:</b>	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center Unaffiliated Individual				
<b>Received:</b>	Aug,03,2010 00:00:00				

**Correspondence** Letter

**Type:**

**Correspondence:** Dear Park planning staff/core team/subject matter experts:

The following comments on behalf of our Center respond to the Draft 2010 ORV Report for the Merced Wild and Scenic River. As I shared with a couple of planning staff at the recent Yosemite Gateway Partners meeting, it was frustrating for our staff to be so overlooked with conflicting commitments that we were unable to attend either the Valley session or the Groveland session where the Report was unveiled and discussed.

Accordingly, because we were unable to orally communicate with planning staff at those meetings, we are hoping that the enclosed comments will nevertheless convey the strong concern that we have about the new direction of the ORV approach now being taken.

We recognize that a great deal of planning team discussion and effort has gone into the draft ORV report and the adjustment of segments. It is not a matter of concern to our CSERC staff that there has been a revision of the original 8 river segments and that now there are 7 river segments. We accept those changes.

What is of grave concern to our Center, however, is that major changes in the Outstandingly Remarkable Values have been made so that for all but one river segment (Yosemite Valley), key ORVs have been eliminated so that the Park would no longer have legal responsibility to protect those values.

#### PIVOTALLY IMPORTANT ORVS FROM 2004 HAVE NOW BEEN ELIMINATED COMPLETELY

The removal of featured ORVs from 2004 appears to mean that the Park has backed away from legally committing to fully protect or enhance key outstandingly remarkable values that primarily tie to the ecological health of the river corridor and its ecosystem. For example, as you are aware, for what was previously the South Fork Wilderness river segment, which is now identified as the South Fork Wilderness Above Wawona segment, the 2004 ORV list included Scenic, Geologic, Recreation, Biological, Cultural, and Hydrology as ORV values that deserved protection because they were unique and highly important. Yet in this latest 2010 ORV Report, that same river segment only shows Recreation and Scenic. Geologic, Biological, Cultural, Hydrology ORVs have literally been wiped away.

This is a significant weakening of the Merced River Plan and appears to be so consistent and pervasive throughout the various river segments that the entire Merced River Plan appears headed for yet another legal challenge. How can the Park Service in 2004 identify Geology and Cultural as critical ORVs, for instance, in that river segment, and now completely remove them from protection?

- 1) CSERC asks that in any EIS or response to comments that the Park clarify why Park-identified ORVs (that Park staff communicated to the public as important for protection in 2004) should now be completely removed as ORVs needing protection in 2010.
- 2) As a connected comment, CSERC asks that the Park planning staff provide the scientific basis as to why the following ORVs identified in 2004 have now been eliminated: Merced River Wilderness segment (Cultural eliminated) The Merced Gorge segment (Geo, Cult, Hydro, and Bio eliminated) El Portal segment (Geo, Bio, Hydro eliminated) S. Fork Wilderness Above Wawona segment (Geo, Hydro, Bio, Cult eliminated) Wawona segment (Scenic, Rec, Bio eliminated) S. Fork Merced Below Wawona segment (Geo, Bio, Cult, Hydro eliminated)
- 3) CSERC strongly urges that all of those ORVs established/identified in 2004 be replaced and retained as ORVs in the 2010 final report.

#### KEY BIOLOGICAL VALUES NO LONGER WILL RECEIVE SPECIFIC, DIRECT PROTECTION

Perhaps the single strongest comment of opposition to the new strategic revision of the ORVs now presented by Park planning staff is the elimination of Biological and the substitution of Meadow/Riparian complexes. Year after year CSERC staff scientists and directors have pushed the Park to base any Wild and Scenic River Management Plan on a science-based assessment. The very core question tied to preserving or enhancing outstandingly remarkable values in the river corridor has to be: "What ecological/biological species or resources are now at risk or may be at risk soon so that they will diminish the environmental web of life that directly affects almost all ORVs?"

Yet instead of answering that question at any point with a clear assessment identifying specific plant or wildlife species that are at risk, in decline, at the brink, or otherwise threatened within the river corridor, the Park no longer even lists Biological as an ORV. Now the 2010 draft report inserts "meadow and riparian complexes" as the new ORV.

BUT PROTECTING HABITAT IS NOT THE SAME AS PROTECTING AN AT-RISK OR THREATENED SPECIES. HABITAT IS ONE ESSENTIAL RESOURCE, BUT SO IS MINIMIZING DISTURBANCE FROM HUMANS, OR REMOVING COMPETING INVASIVES, OR OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF OVERALL BIOLOGICAL PROTECTION.

- 4) CSERC strongly opposes the removal of "Biological" as an ORV and the substitution of "Meadow/Riparian Complexes" as the

new ORV. Protection of habitat will not necessarily protect or enhance threatened wildlife or threatened plant species that are also connected to scenic, recreational, and even cultural values. CSERC urges the Park to not only replace "Biological" as specific ORV for all the river segments where it was listed as an ORV in 2004, but we urge that the Park spell out exactly what Biological values are most critical as an ORV in that segment.

For instance, if in the Main Stem - Merced Gorge river segment, if foothill yellow-legged frog has been historically known to be a native species of that river segment, then "Biological - Wildlife" should be the ORV listed since the foothill yellow-legged frog is now so rare and facing threats of extinction in the region. If in that same river segment, a particular rare wildflower or riparian plant is in significant decline, then the ORV listing for that segment should list "Biological - Plant" as one ORV for that segment. If both wildlife and plants within a river segment are at risk and need protection, then "Biological - Wildlife/Plant" would be the appropriate ORV designation for that river segment.

We note that the new draft ORV report acknowledges that one species of plant (Sierra sweet bay) and 9 special status animal species are dependent upon the meadow and riparian complexes along the river corridor. Protecting those habitats, however, as emphasized previously, does not assure that those species will receive the full protection that the Park Service should legally apply to do the utmost to protect and enhance the river ecosystem and the species pivotal to sustaining all the puzzle pieces.

5) Thus, CSERC believes it is legally essential for the Park planning staff to spell out which at-risk plant and animal species are at risk or potentially extirpated currently within each river segment. The ORV should be identified as "Biological," but under the Biological - Wildlife or Biological - Plant, the Merced River Plan should spell out in detail which exact species need protection or enhancement of values to give the greatest likelihood of preserving them as part of that segment's ecosystem and web of life.

#### A FAILURE TO PROVIDE A CLEAR TRACKING OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES BETWEEN 2004-2010

Park planning evolves in response to administrative and legal decisions, public comments, internal planning discussions, the movement of planners from one position to another within the Park system, and a variety of other factors. Nevertheless, the Park planning staff lives with a plan and generally follows the changes that unfold during the process.

Interested members of the public, however, depend upon the clarity of planning documents and summaries provided in reports or online to understand changes in the plan.

In the case of the Merced River Plan and ORVs there have been many, major significant changes made by Park planners over the evolution of the planning effort. Yet in the draft 2010 ORV Report, it is almost as if planning staff has intentionally hidden the significant changes between past ORVs that were highly publicized by the Park and the current, revised ORV list that has been significantly scaled down. CSERC provides a strong concern that the draft ORV report does not show any comparison with previous ORVs of each river segment, nor does it show that instead of a total of 41 ORVs identified in 2004, now in 2010 only 19 ORVs are being identified as legally essential for protection or enhancement. CSERC quickly acknowledges that two ORVs (Geologic/Hydrologic) have been combined in two river segments, but even breaking them out, nearly half of all previously identified Outstandingly Remarkable Values have now been eliminated in the latest revision of the ORV list crafted by Park planners.

This is a sad reflection on Park planning. Instead of expanding protection and increasing ORVs that deserve protection in the face of climate change and a host of other threats, the Park has eliminated half of the previously identified ORVs so that protection of those values in those river segments is no longer required.

6) CSERC expresses disappointment with this significant reduction in protection due to the reduction in the number and breadth of ORVs. Our staff asks that unless there is new scientific evidence justifying the elimination of a previously-identified ORV, that all ORVs from 2004 be carried forward in a revised draft 2010 ORV Report and given the full level of protection deemed necessary to assure long term viability along the Merced River Corridor.

#### UNIQUE RESOURCES WITHIN THE RIVER CORRIDOR ENHANCE OR CREATE ORVS

As our Center has interacted with Park planning staff and with various residents in El Portal and others who have high levels of knowledge about the River corridor, we have come to recognize that despite general vegetative and zonal characteristics that can be expected within the corridor, there are also unique or high value resources that contribute to unusual scenic, wildlife, cultural, or other values, but are not easily lumped into broad ORVs. One example is the mature Valley Oaks located at El Portal. The fact that large, old Valley Oaks are so limited at the relatively high elevation of El Portal is just one reason why these oaks (and Biological Resources) deserve ORV designation. These large Valley Oaks are especially important due to the fact that they have persisted for at least 100 years throughout changing climatic conditions, periods of development associated with impacts, and during periods of increased air pollution and other stresses. The genetics and site uniqueness of the Valley Oaks at El Portal have even greater value because our staff believes that there are NOT similar Valley Oak groves along the Tuolumne River or Stanislaus River at elevations as high as El Portal. We encourage the Park to give careful attention to the Biological Resource values of the Valley Oaks and to include appropriate protective measures to sustain Valley Oak habitat at the present location on into the future.

Thank you for considering these comments tied to strong concerns. We have hopes that our comments and comments from other interested members of the public will help to influence planning direction.

John Buckley, executive director Lindsey Myers, staff biologist Rebecca Cremeen, planning specialist



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**Correspondence ID:** 464      **Project:** 18982      **Document:** 30119

**Project:** Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

**Name:** Roerig, Philip W

**Outside Organization:** Unaffiliated Individual

**Received:** Aug,02,2010 00:00:00

**Correspondence Type:** Letter

**Correspondence:** Dear Mr. Neubacher, I am an 87 year old man and like you have been awed by the Yosemite Naational Park since I first saw it in 1963. Since then I have spent many visits there usually in the campgrounds, a few times in the cabins at Curry Village and once at Yosemite Lodge when my wife and I attended the Christmas Eve Dinner at the Awahnee Hotel. I am a supporter of the Yosemite Fund and have a car license plate of Yosemite which also helps the park. On July 13, 2010 I made what will probably be my last visit to the park. It was a wonderful thing to see it once again, but two things distrubed me on this visit. We had been unable to get a campground site so we stayed at an RV camp outside the park and drove in for daily visits. The road on Highway 41 inside the park was undergoing a massive repavement project. For at least 10 miles we traveled on rock and stone and then there were numerous shourt periods of the same all the way to the valley floor. I think the engineer that designed this project should be fired or severely reprimanded for doing this project in this way and at the peak of the tourist season. The second thing that upests me was the tremendous number of visitors in the valley. No parking spots were available at any of the trails to lower Yosemite Falls. Camp Curry or Bridal Veil Falls. There were so many people there it was not like the Yosemite I have known and loved. I admit I never went there in July in my past visits, but some limitation system must be made to enhance the experience of those lucky enough to get in. I wish you good luck in your new position and hope you accept my concerns and can find some method of limiting daily attendance to the park.

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