



Paul Minault  
 <pminault@earthlink.net>  
 10/14/2008 05:40 PM

To yose\_planning@nps.gov, Brady Robinson  
 <Brady@accessfund.org>, Jason Keith  
 <Jason@accessfund.org>, Armando Meneses

cc  
 bcc

Subject Access Fund comments on the 2008 Tuolumne Meadows  
 Planning Workbook

RECEIVED  
 TEN-5-18  
 OCT 15 2008  
 Pg 1 of 6  
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Dear Superintendent Tollefson and members of the Tenaya Lake  
 planning team:

Attached are the scoping comments of the Access Fund for the Tenaya  
 Lake Plan.

Regards,

Paul Minault

--

/Paul Minault/  
 /Access Fund Regional Coordinator/  
 /for// Northern California/  
 / /  
 /Law Offices of Paul Minault/  
 /120 Montgomery Street, Suite 2290/  
 /San Francisco, CA 94104/  
 / (415) 397-6152/  
 / (415) 788-5768 (fax) /  
 /pminault@earthlink.net/



Access Fund Tenaya Plan scoping comments.pdf

H	I	L	E	ORR				
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS



POWERED BY CLIMBERS

RECEIVED  
TEN-3-18  
OCT 15 2008  
Pg 2 of 5  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

**BY EMAIL**

yose\_planning@nps.gov

October 14, 2008

Superintendent Michael Tollefson  
Yosemite National Park  
Attn: Tuolumne Planning  
PO Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

**Re: Access Fund Scoping Comments on the Tenaya Lake Area Plan.**

Dear Yosemite Planning Team:

The Access Fund is pleased to continue its participation in the planning processes for Yosemite National Park with these scoping comments on the Tenaya Lake Area Plan.

**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.

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, and represents the interests of the nation's climbers, for whom Tuolumne Meadows, including the climbing areas around Tenaya Lake, is a resource of national and international significance. Climbers likely represent a significant portion of the visitors in the Tenaya Lake area on any summer weekend day.

THE ACCESS FUND | P.O. BOX 17010 | BOULDER, CO 80308 | PHONE: 303-545-6772 | WWW.ACCESSFUND.ORG

H	1	L	E	ORR					
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS	

## The Tenaya Lake Area Plan

Tenaya Lake is one of the jewels of the Tuolumne Meadows area and doubtless one of the major attractions of the Yosemite high country. It has a number of unusual features for a high altitude lake: it is very large, flanked on three sides by impressive granite features that offer a wealth of climbing possibilities, has extensive beaches and sandy shallows, has level uplands suitable for picnicking and the location of recreational support facilities, has very convenient highway access, hosts a variety of natural habitats, and serves as an access point for a number of popular hikes.

Because it offers so much to those who love the high country, it has also suffered more than its share of impacts. Camping, picnicking, beach-going, hiking, and climbing, as well as road building and infrastructure construction have all resulted in soil disturbance, soil compaction, soil denudification, and litter deposition. Lack of funds for maintenance has left infrastructure and improvements in poor condition. Tenaya may be a beauty, but she is dressed in rags, and we welcome the opportunity this plan presents to restore her natural grace.

We recognize that one of the limitations on the plan is the wilderness boundary, which we understand to be 200 feet from the center line of the highway. Inside the wilderness boundary developed facilities, including picnic tables and barbecue stands, are not permitted, and dead trees, even if hazardous, may not be cut down.

Climbing occurs at four locations in the area of Tenaya Lake: 1) most notably on Stately Pleasure Dome above the north shore, where a wealth of moderately difficult routes attract many weekend climbers, 2) on Harlequin Dome and the boulders below it, opposite the east end parking lot, 3) on Tenaya Peak, which climbers access from the east end parking lot, and 4) to a much lesser extent on cliffs down Tenaya Canyon and in Tenaya Gorge, which some climbers access from the Sunrise trailhead at the west end of the lake (though most probably start from Olmstead Point). Climbing also occurs on Pywiak Dome, east of the lake, although this may not be in the plan area. To access these areas, climbers park at the parking lot at the east end of the lake, along the highway below Stately Pleasure Dome and opposite Pywiak Dome, and at the Sunrise trailhead parking area at the west end of the lake.

The remainder of our comments review the issues we suggest the plan address.

Parking. We understand that a goal of park planning in the Highway 120 corridor generally is to eliminate or reduce the impact of roadside shoulder parking, in part because of safety concerns, in part because of the visual impact of vehicles on the natural environment, and in part because it's simply untidy. Against these values must be balanced the value of convenient access to the park's stunning resources. We would support closing the base of Stately Pleasure Dome to climber parking if this were part of an overall plan to eliminate roadside parking along the lake shore for all recreational users. Ansel Adams has a famous photo of Tenaya lake taken from the west end in which it is impossible to discern the road, and no cars are visible. We think the plan should strive for a vision of the lake in which vehicles are as invisible as possible.

One note: tour buses now stop alongside the lake below Stately Pleasure Dome, disgorging dazed passengers who wander into traffic while the driver tries to herd them back to the sidewalk. We suggest that tour buses be required to proceed to the east end parking lot, and that a trail paralleling the road be developed to allow these and others to walk to the lake in an orderly fashion. Some thought should be given to installing sitting benches so that bus passengers and others who aren't spending a lot of time at the beaches could still enjoy the view from the edges of the lake near the road.

Facilities. The only developed facilities in the plan area are paved parking areas, toilets, picnic tables and fire pits, all of which need upgrading or replacement. The beach area fire pits should be replaced with raised barbecue grill stands to discourage wood fires, which litter the beach with ashes and pose a wildfire ignition hazard, especially in the high-wind area at the east end beach. Some thought might also be given to installing very simple changing screens near the popular east end parking lot.

Some people might propose a bridge over Tenaya Creek to serve the Sunrise Trailhead, but we believe this will just increase use impacts to the beach on the opposite shore and would prefer to see this remain a shallow ford.

Soil impacts. The three sides of the lake that are heavily used all suffer soil impacts from foot and vehicle traffic. A goal of the plan should be to reduce, control and channel vehicle and foot traffic to reduce soil impacts and to restore impacted soils so that screening and demising vegetation can return to these areas. Outside the wilderness boundary this can be accomplished by the use of boulder rows, boulder curbs, boulder-rimmed soil berms, low split-rail fences and low roped-off walkways, at least until screening and demising vegetation is re-established.

Picnicking. Picnicking is popular along the readily-accessed areas of the lake shore, and picnic areas tend to be heavily impacted. We believe that picnic areas should be retained and expanded where possible, but that vehicle access should be carefully controlled to reduce soil impacts.

Interpretation. The area is currently devoid of interpretive information. Because visitation to the Tenaya area is heavy, the area is ideally suited to interpretative signs and displays concerning the area's natural and historical resources. Topics could include the area's Indian names, the reason there are 700-year old trees standing in 30 feet of water in the lake, the history of the Great Sierra Wagon Road and its 1960's replacement, evidence of glaciation and the geology of the lake, the transition to pine forest of the meadow east of the lake, the history of recreational uses of the lake, including former camping areas at both ends, and the climbing on Stately Pleasure Dome, which attracts a fair number of observers.

Meadow Restoration. Immediately east of the lake is a meadow area that appears to be undergoing transition to lodgepole forest. The Plan should include funding for studies to determine if this transition is natural or human-induced and funding for any appropriate restoration work.

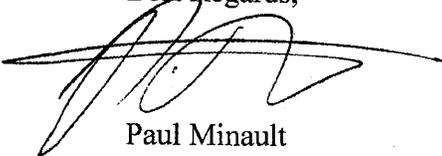
Natural Quiet. The highway can be a source of unwanted vehicle noise for those enjoying the lake, beaches and surrounding cliffs. One way to reduce the noise level is to reduce the speed level, particularly in the case of motorcycles with altered mufflers, which are inexplicably allowed free rein in the park. Another is to provide raised road-side berms to deflect tire and engine noise.

Maintenance. Plans typically don't consider how the facilities they propose to build will be managed and maintained, and in national parks management and maintenance is often problematic, to say the least. This leads to an excessive emphasis on plans as a means to solve park problems that might not exist if well-funded, intelligent and adaptive management and maintenance was continuously carried out in the first place. Tenaya Lake is an excellent example of an area that doesn't need new facilities so much as it needs intelligent and adaptive management and maintenance, including scheduled updating and periodic replacement of worn-out facilities.

Because the Tenaya Lake area is popular, and fund-raising for the plan is not likely to be too difficult, the Plan presents an ideal opportunity to break the typical pattern of park development, with its reliance on special funding provided by plans and programs to construct facilities for which there is inadequate funding for maintenance, causing the facilities to become rundown, which necessitates another surge of planning and fund-raising for new facilities, and so on ad infinitum. The Plan should, instead, include an appendix with a schedule and budget for in-perpetuity maintenance and scheduled replacement of the facilities to be constructed and propose an endowment fund to be formed as part of the fund-raising for the plan, with sufficient funds to generate an income adequate to fund the maintenance and scheduled replacement of the proposed facilities. Because the facilities likely to be built under the plan will certainly be modest, the Plan presents the opportunity to approach facilities planning in the park from an entirely new and sustainable perspective.

We heartily support the initiative to improve the visitor experience in the Tenaya Lake area, and we look forward to further opportunities to participate in the development of the Tenaya Lake Plan.

Best Regards,



Paul Minault  
Northern California  
Regional Coordinator  
Law Offices of Paul Minault  
120 Montgomery St., Suite 2290  
San Francisco, Ca 94104  
415-397-6152  
pminault@earthlink.net

Cc: Brady Robinson, Access Fund Executive Director  
Jason Keith, Access Fund Policy Director  
Armando Menocal, Access Fund Yosemite Task Force  
Brian Poulsen, The Access Fund  
Phil Powers, American Alpine Club Executive Director  
Linda McMillan, American Alpine Club  
Mark Fincher, Yosemite National Park Climbing Program Manager  
Jesse McGahey, Yosemite National Park Climbing Ranger  
Chris McNamara, Supertopo  
Bob Hansen, President, The Yosemite Fund