



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK TIOGA TRAILHEADS PROJECT

Draft Public Scoping and Concern Screening Report



January 2009

Page Intentionally Left Blank

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS SUMMARY	5
CONCERN ANALYSIS AND SCREENING PROCESS	6
USING THIS REPORT	10
SCOPING CONCERN CATEGORY	10
PLANNING PROCESS AND POLICY	11
RESOURCES	11
WETLANDS.....	12
VEGETATION.....	12
CULTURAL RESOURCES.....	13
SPECIAL LAND DESIGNATIONS, WILDERNESS.....	14
VISITOR EXPERIENCE.....	14
ACCESS	15
RECREATION	15
VISITOR SERVICES.....	17
TRANSPORTATION	17
PARK OPERATIONS	18

Page Intentionally Left Blank

Introduction

The Tioga Road is an historic travel route stretching 46 miles through the high country of Yosemite National Park. This trans-Sierra road began as a Native American footpath for trade and travel. It later became the great Sierra Wagon road and then a mining road. When the road first opened to regular park visitors in 1915 it was travelled by only 190 cars. Today Tioga Road is a seasonal highway used by over 500,000 travelers each year. The road is typically open from May to November, depending on weather conditions, and is closed each winter.

The purpose of the Tioga Trailheads Project is to establish corridor-wide trailhead design guidelines; to identify actions needed to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources; and to identify areas where visitor safety, access, and enjoyment may be improved.

The project will also consider alternative means to improve traffic and pedestrian travel patterns, wayfinding, accessibility, picnicking facilities, food storage, waste management and the location of interpretive materials at select trailheads along the Tioga Road.

This project will address eight of the twelve designated trailheads along the Tioga Road, including (from east to west): Gaylor Lakes at Tioga Pass, Mono Pass, Snow Creek, May Lake, Porcupine, Yosemite Creek/Ten Lakes, Lukens Lake, and Tamarack Flat/Aspen Valley.

During the fall of 2008, the National Park Service (NPS) conducted public scoping as part of the early development of the Tioga Trailheads Project for Yosemite National Park. During public scoping, the NPS sought comments from members of the public to better understand the spectrum of concerns, interests, and issues that may need to be addressed as part of this planning process. The NPS accepted comments submitted by email, U.S. mail, and fax. This report is a summary of the public comments received during the scoping period.

Public Scoping Process Summary

Members of the public were invited to submit comments on the Tioga Trailheads Project for a period of from November 6 to December 12, 2008. The NPS provided information about the plan and the public scoping period through the following means:

- 1) A press release describing the intent to begin the public involvement process for the proposed plan was issued on November 2, 2008. The *Mariposa Gazette* published the press release on 4, 2008.
- 2) The scoping announcement was included in the *Yosemite National Park Electronic Newsletter*, which has about 7000 subscribers
- 3) The scoping announcement was included in the park's Daily Report from November 1 through December 12, 2008
- 4) The scoping period was announced via the park's website.
- 5) The plan's fact sheet was made available at Visitor Centers within the park.

6) Information regarding the project was disseminated during the October 29 and December 3, 2008 monthly Yosemite National Park Open House held in the Yosemite Valley auditorium.

Invitations to the open house were included in the public scoping announcement and the plan's fact sheet. Public comments are included in this report which can be found along with copies of the public comment letters on the project website at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/ttp.htm>. The plan's fact sheet is also posted on the above website.

Six public scoping responses (including emails and letters) were received during the public scoping period. These responses were carefully reviewed and individual ideas were identified and assigned a code according to the subject matter addressed. These discrete individual ideas are known as public comments. The six public responses consisted of 22 public comments. The public comments were then grouped into 21 concern statements. The public concern statements were used to identify common themes expressed by individuals or groups requesting particular lines of action by the NPS.

The public concerns were then screened to determine whether a concern pertained to the purpose and need for this project and the level of action required by the park's interdisciplinary team and/or park management. The plan's interdisciplinary team is composed of park specialists from a variety of backgrounds including recreation planning, resource management and science, wilderness, public information, environmental compliance, and visitor use/social science. The plan's interdisciplinary team is reviewing the concern statements and will use these concerns to aid in the development of alternatives.

Copies of public comment letters and this report can be found on the project website at: <http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/ttp.htm>

Concern Analysis and Screening Process

Comment Analysis Process

The letters, emails and direct submission represented in this Public Scoping Report were analyzed using a process initially developed by the United States Forest Service, Washington Office Ecosystem Management Staff, Content Analysis Team. For the last seven years, this system has been refined by the NPS and used to analyze comments for nearly all planning efforts in Yosemite National Park.

The comment analysis is comprised of three main components: a coding structure, a comment database, and the narrative summary contained in this report. Initially, a coding structure is developed to sort comments into logical groups by topic. Code categories are derived from an analysis of the range of topics covered in relevant present and past planning documents, NPS legal guidance, and the letters themselves. The purpose of these codes is to allow for quick access to comments on specific topics. The coding structure used was inclusive rather than restrictive—every attempt was made to accurately code all comments, including those that may not have pertained directly to the Tioga Trailheads Project.

The second phase of the analysis process involves the assignment of codes to comments made by the public in their letters, emails and direct submissions. For each comment in a piece of

correspondence, codes are assigned by one reader, validated by a second reader, and then entered into a database as verbatim quotes from members of the public. The database, in turn, was used to help construct this Public Scoping Report.

The third phase includes the identification of public concern statements and the preparation of this narrative. Public concerns are identified throughout the coding process and are derived from and supported by quotes from original letters. These public concern statements present common themes identified in comments. Each statement is worded to give decision-makers a clear sense of what action is being requested.

Public concern statements are intended to help guide the reader to comments on the specific topics of interest. They do not replace the actual comments received from individuals. Rather, concern statements should be considered as an efficient and effective way of accessing information contained in original letters and the coded comment database. All comments are captured in public concern statements, whether they were presented by hundreds of people or a single individual.

Screening Public Scoping Concerns

The purpose of the screening process is to identify whether a concern pertains to the purpose and need for the project and the level of action required by the planning team. All concern statements and supporting quotes presented in this document have been analyzed by park staff and assigned screening codes according to the criteria described below. Screening codes indicate how concerns will be addressed by the proposed project. When screening a public scoping concern, each supporting quote must be examined for the presence of a rationale (the “why”) supporting the requested action. All identified public concerns, whether supported by the comments of one person or many, are considered. This report includes the results of the screening process.

Screen #1 identifies public concerns that do not meet the purpose and need of the subject planning process, or are non-substantive, and therefore, do not warrant further consideration. These public concerns do not require management consideration. Any concern for which an affirmative answer can be given to one of the following questions falls in this category:

- 1.1 Is the concern outside the scope of the proposed action? (i.e., out-of-scope)
- 1.2 Does law or policy already decide the concern? (i.e., out-of-scope)
- 1.3 Is this the wrong planning level for a decision on this concern? (i.e., out-of-scope)
- 1.4 Would acting on the concern place untenable restrictions on management, conflict with approved plans, or entail significant and reasonably foreseeable negative consequences? (i.e., effectively out-of-scope)
- 1.5 Is the concern a simple editorial correction? (i.e., no response needed)
- 1.6 Is the concern an unsupported personal opinion (i.e., a question, problem, suggestion, or interest, with no supporting “why”); or a simple statement of fact with no request for action, stated or implied? (A non-substantive concern)

1.9 Out-of-Scope but take to Management for consideration for any reason

Concerns that do not reasonably match the above criteria are considered within the scope of the subject plan, could be substantive, and are passed on to screen #2.

Screen #2 defines concerns and comments that fall within the reasonable scope of the project and will be addressed in its compliance document (EA or EIS):

- 2.0 Scoping concern defining an issue already to be addressed within the scope of the planning document, as initially described to the public
- 2.1 Review concern requesting a technical correction (an EA or EIS)
- 2.2 Review concern requesting an action that can be addressed in FONSI (EA), or by rewriting document text for substance or clarification (DEIS, FEIS, ROD)
- 2.3 Review concern requesting an action adequately addressed in the planning document (EA or EIS (including alternatives considered and dismissed); still may need a response in the *Response to Public Comment*)
- 2.8 Scoping concern defining an issue expanding the scope of a project, as initially defined, that now will be included in the project scope on the decision of the project manager.
- 2.9 Scoping concern defining an issue expanding the scope of a project as initially defined that will not be included in the project scope on the decision of the project manager.

Screen #3 defines concerns and comments that fall within the reasonable scope of the project and will be addressed in its compliance document (EA or EIS) and are coded using the same structure as that of Screen #2. However, these concerns may warrant further consideration by the management team:

- 3.0 Scoping concern defining an issue already to be addressed within the scope of the planning document, as initially described to the public
- 3.1 Review concern requesting a technical correction (an EA or EIS)
- 3.2 Review concern requesting an action that can be addressed in FONSI (EA), or by rewriting document text for substance or clarification (DEIS, FEIS, ROD)
- 3.3 Review concern requesting an action adequately addressed in the planning document (EA or EIS (including alternatives considered and dismissed); still may need a response in the *Response to Public Comment*)
- 3.8 Scoping concern defining an issue expanding the scope of a project, as initially defined, that now will be included in the project scope on the decision of the project manager.
- 3.9 Scoping concern defining an issue expanding the scope of a project as initially defined that will not be included in the project scope on the decision of the project manager.

Screen #4 defines substantive concerns that need to be reviewed by park management. As defined in the National Park Service Director's Order #12 Handbook (*Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making*) and Council of Environmental Quality regulations, a concern is "substantive" if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- 4.0 Scoping comment that expands, with reasonable basis, the scope of the project as initially defined to the public
- 4.1 Questions, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information presented
- 4.2 Questions, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of analysis presented
- 4.3 Questions or helps clarify, improve, or evaluate, with reasonable basis, the appropriate use or span of the park's authority (this includes appropriate scale of planning, public involvement, and legal authorities)
- 4.4 Presents a reasonable new alternative (i.e., not included or considered and dismissed)
- 4.5 Calls for, with reasonable basis, or results in a modification of the proposal
- 4.6 Calls for or would require, with reasonable basis, additional analysis
- 4.9 A substantive concern on which the project manager makes a decision without management review when an issue raised has been sufficiently discussed with the management team

Using this Report

This report presents public concerns arranged by topic, along with a representative sample of supporting quotes and the concern screening code. The following list of acronyms has been developed to assist the reader in reviewing the report.

List of Acronyms

EA – Environmental Assessment
EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
FONSI – Finding of No Significant Impact
GMP – General Management Plan
NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act
NPS – National Park Service
ROD – Record of Decision

How information is organized in this document:

Scoping Concern Category

Concern Statement (expressed as a sentence).

Letter Numbers: (i.e., 1, 2, 4)

Direct quote from a representative public comment (i.e., "Better site delineation is needed at several park trailheads.")

Type of comment and comment number: (Individual, Comment #4-1)

Screen Category: (i.e., 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document)

Planning Process and Policy

The National Park Service should address why the Mono Pass trailhead is being considered as part of this plan and not the Tuolumne Wild & Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan.

Letter Numbers: 1

"Why isn't Mono Pass Trailhead being taken up in the Tuolumne W&S River CMP since it is located within about 0.3 mile of Dana Fork?"

(Individual, Comment #1-2)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Resources

Management Direction

The National Park Service should consider clean-up of the old water tank site just up the Gaylor Lakes trail as part of the project area for addressing the Gaylor Lakes trailhead at Tioga Pass.

Letter Numbers: 6

"There is an old water tank site up the trail a few minutes from the trailhead with the remains of the base of the tank and some pieces of old material scattered around. I lugged a length of pipe out of there this summer. This project presents an opportunity to clean up the rest of the site."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-8)

Screen Category: 2-8 - Scoping concern defining an issue expanding, with reasonable basis, the scope of the project as initially defined and accepted by project manager based on professional judgment

The National Park Service should consider removing the asphalt from the old campground road as part of the project for addressing the nearby Porcupine trailhead.

Letter Numbers: 6

"Porcupine. There's a lot of asphalt from the old campground road below the trailhead. This project presents a god opportunity to remove it."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-9)

Screen Category: 2-8 - Scoping concern defining an issue expanding, with reasonable basis, the scope of the project as initially defined and accepted by project manager based on professional judgment

Wetlands

Effects of Visitor Activities

The National Park Service should maintain pedestrian traffic on established trails to prevent impacts to sensitive stream banks and other natural resources.

Letter Numbers: 5

"In general, our Center supports efforts to maintain pedestrian traffic on established trails so that natural resources can be protected. This is especially important because so many trails follow streams and lead to lakes. Keeping traffic away from sensitive streambanks is extremely important."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #5-2)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Vegetation (not rare, threatened or endangered)

Effects of Visitor Activities

The National Park Service should take action to direct foot traffic on established trails through meadows to avoid the creation of social trails and the associated impacts to the surrounding meadow environment.

Letter Numbers: 5

"Additionally, when looking at a bird's eye view of Yosemite's meadow systems, you can see a matrix of user-created paths and trails that meander through these sensitive ecosystems. Our Center supports the Park's efforts to direct foot-traffic on established trails, which will help to prevent further creation of trails throughout these meadows."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #5-5)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Cultural Resources

Analysis of Existing Conditions/Need for Further Analysis

The National Park Service should provide accurate information about historic tribal use of the Tioga Pass.

Letter Numbers: 3

"The only early trade before and after the park between Natives in the area was between Paiutes living in Yosemite and their families in Mono Lake. The myth of Paiute and Miwok trade was made up and continuingly perpetrated by people who do not know the true history of the American Indians of the area. In early times Paiutes did not trade with Miwoks, but had fought many battles with the Miwoks and Yokuts who were afraid to enter Yosemite Valley. The Miwoks never ventured into the Mono Lake area until after white settlement in the area. The handful of Miwoks who entered into the Paiute territory were attacked and killed. The "friendly trade" before the whites entered into the Yosemite area was a myth and never happened. After the Park was created Paiutes used the trails and the Tioga pass to trade with whites. This can be verified by early written accounts. There are no early written accounts of Miwoks along the Tioga Pass or trailheads, only Paiutes"
(Individual, Comment #3-1)

Screen Category: 1-1 - The concern is outside the scope of the proposed action.

The Tioga Road area was a very important area for the Paiute people and they should be included in signs or written historical material of the area.

Letter Numbers: 3

"The Tioga Road area was a very important area for the Paiute people and they should be included in any signs or written historical material of the area."
(Individual, Comment #3-2)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Special Land Designations, Wilderness

The National Park Service should post information on the lack of visitor services and the need for people to be well prepared when entering designated Wilderness.

Letter Numbers: 4

"On the signs that say "You are now entering Wilderness" there should be something that says: There are no modern conveniences back here. No drinking fountains, no snack machines, no toilets, do not expect cell phone coverage, no medical, no easy rescue, you are on your own, enter sufficiently provisioned and prepared for weather and accidents."

(Individual, Comment #4-2)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Visitor Experience

Management Direction

The National Park Service should design the trailheads along the Tioga Road to support diverse visitor experiences by providing a range of development and visitor services among the trailheads.

Letter Numbers: 5

"CSERC encourages the Park to aim for diversity of experiences with the Tioga Pass trailheads. Having some areas that invite concentrated use, while keeping other parking areas small (with minimal toilet services and no water) may ensure that hikers have the ability to choose a trailhead and visitor experience that best suits their interest."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #5-4)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Access

Analysis of Existing Conditions/Need for Further Analysis

Certain trailheads along the Tioga Road provide important access for climbers, and all trailheads contribute to visitor experience in general along the Tioga Road.

Letter Numbers: 6

"Only two of these trailheads see any use by climbers: the May Lake trailhead by climbers headed up to Mount Hoffman, and the Porcupine trailhead by climbers headed down to North Dome. Nevertheless, all are doubtless enjoyed by climbers on their days off. And the proper management of these trailheads has a significant impact on the visitor experience along the Tioga road in general."
(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-1)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Recreation

Picnicking and Picnic Areas

The National Park Service should consider providing picnic facilities near trailheads in places that offer scenic views or are near water resources.

Letter Numbers: 6

"Picnic facilities at trailheads is a great idea in concept, and one we strongly support, but we're not sure how great these would be in reality. Picnic facilities would work best at places with views or water, namely Gaylor/Tioga Pass and Yosemite Creek (where one already exists but people parking at the trailhead wouldn't necessarily be aware of it.) Otherwise, picnicking in the woods near traffic noise doesn't seem very interesting or enjoyable --better to find places away from the trailheads that are really worth pulling over to enjoy"
(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-2)

Screen Category: 3-8 - Scoping concern defining an issue expanding, with reasonable basis, the scope of the project as initially defined and accepted by project manager based on professional judgment

Hiking and Hiking Trails

The National Park Service should consider development of new small, defined parking areas and trailheads between the Tamarack Flat and White Wolf turnoffs to provide additional recreation opportunities in these spectacular areas.

Letter Numbers: 5

"One point that John Buckley has raised previously with Park planning staff is the limited number of existing trails and trailheads in the 10-mile stretch of the Tioga Road between the turnoff to Tamarack Flat and the turnoff to White Wolf. With so many spectacular areas of prime forest and scenic areas along that stretch of road, it seems positive to consider creating some additional small, defined parking areas and trailheads, even if the Park cannot extend trails far out from those parking areas in the near future."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #5-3)

Screen Category: 4-0 - Scoping concern that expands the scope of the project as initially defined to the public

The National Park Service should also consider a range of design criteria to address small, low use trails along the Tioga Road in contrast to more popular, high use trailheads.

Letter Numbers: 6

"Day use trailheads. There are a lot of smaller day use trailheads along the road, most of them popular with climbers that also deserve attention. During the course of developing the design criteria for the overnight trailheads, some thought should be given to the elements of the design criteria that could be applied to these smaller trailheads, perhaps in a "lite" version in a subsequent project:

(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-3)

Screen Category: 1-1 - Clearly Out-of-Scope or unrelated to project

Camping

The National Park Service should clearly sign and delineate the trailheads to prevent the creation of user-created trails and to avoid the subsequent impacts to park resources.

Letter Numbers: 5

"Our Center supports efforts to clearly sign and delineate the trailheads. Once a visitor parks, there is often some confusion as to where trails start, which can lead to many

meandering user-created trails. This can cause additional bare soil, damage to sensitive plant species and sedimentation to wash into waterways."
(Conservation Organization, Comment #5-1)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Visitor Services

Health and Safety

The National Park Service should provide visitor information at trailheads about proper disposal of human waste in the backcountry, and disposable bags for packing out toilet paper.

Letter Numbers: 4

"There should be "doggie bags" (Ziploc baggies) with instructions on a sign for burying shit (where and how) and packing out TP (in the baggies) at all trailheads. Backpackers know about this but I don't think your regular Joe Dayhiker does and the evidence speaks for itself. There should be a blurb about this in the Yos. Newspaper that everyone receives upon entering the Park. I do a LOT of hiking and backpacking in the park and human waste a few feet off the trails on segments a few miles from the trailheads is a HUGE and unpleasant issue not to mention health hazard. I think education can go a long way."
(Individual, Comment #4-1)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Transportation

Management Direction

The National Park Service should design the trailheads to accommodate shuttle bus service between trailheads and other destinations within and outside the park.

Letter Numbers: 1

"I want to be sure that one stated study item titled "Provide needed improvements for visitor accessibility" includes shuttle bus service so one way trips (day hikes and overnight backpacking) can be served by shuttle from YV, June Lake or Lee Vining since most folks prefer to take downhill routes."
(Individual, Comment #1-1)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Roads, Trails, & Bridges

The National Park Service should consider the potential for a future redesign of the Tioga entrance station while considering the current redesign of the Gaylor Lakes trailhead at Tioga Pass.

Letter Numbers: 6

"It's only a matter of time before the park realizes it's going to have to redesign the entry, with a lane for people with passes, etc. and a lane for people with questions, etc. The redesign of the trailhead should anticipate this eventuality in its design."
(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-7)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Parking

The National Park Service should provide more parking at trailheads.

Letter Numbers: 2

"The Mono Pass trailhead clearly needs more parking as do some of the other trailheads."
(Individual, Comment #2-1)

Screen Category: 3-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

Park Operations

Roads, Trails, and Bicycle Paths

Proper site delineation is needed to reduce impacts from foot traffic, and current site delineation techniques are not fully successful.

Letter Numbers: 6

"Site delineation to reduce impacts from foot traffic. I think this is one of the greatest challenges in the park, and I don't think a successful design solution has yet been identified. Split rail and low rope fences are OK for the valley, but look out of place in Tuolumne, and they don't have a very long service life, especially anywhere that snowplows roam. Concrete half logs and boulder rows are ok for vehicles but don't

stop feet. Ditto asphalt curbs--and the snowplows eventually turn them into roadside litter. The cheapest and best looking thing is vegetation, but for this to work there needs to be some sort of barrier to let the vegetation get established and signal to people to keep away."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-4)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document

The National Park Service should experiment with the use of "vegetated islands" to delineate sites and control foot traffic.

Letter Numbers: 6

"I would like to see the park experiment with "vegetated islands" to control foot traffic. Each of these would be an elongated "traffic" islands consisting of a curb of one or two row of natural boulders (none of those drilled rocks we see on the trails, please) containing either mounded soil or a natural depression (depending on local soil and moisture conditions) in which native vegetation would be planted or allowed to establish. The key to their success would be having a high enough curb and a sufficient number and frequency of curb cuts so that wandering feet would use the curb cuts to avoid the islands."

(Conservation Organization, Comment #6-5)

Screen Category: 2-0 - Scoping concern or concern defining issue to be addressed by the planning document