



Yosemite National Park Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan Public Comment Summary

February 2011

National Park Service



Photo By Mike Yochim

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Planning and protection for the Merced River under the Wild and Scenic River Act has been a multi-year process begun in the late 1990s. Through several iterations of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan (Merced River Plan), public scoping and outreach remains an important component of the Wild and Scenic River Act mandate and associated National Environmental Policy Act requirements. Collaboration with private citizens, park visitors and neighbors, gateway communities, culturally associated tribal groups, partners in other agencies, national and local advocacy groups, scientists and scholars, and elected officials have all been part of the ongoing outreach process. The primary purpose of public scoping in a planning effort is to compile ideas, interests and concerns from members of the public to help shape responsible plans. During the late spring and early summer of 2007, the National Park Service (NPS) conducted public scoping as part of the early development of the Merced River Plan. A second public scoping period was conducted between June 2009 and February 2010.

The purpose of this planning effort is to provide long-term, comprehensive guidance for the protection of the Merced Wild and Scenic River. This Public Scoping Report is a summary of the voices heard and ideas generated during the public scoping period. Written, oral and electronic comments were collected during both the 2007 and 2009-2010 public comment periods. These comments serve as an essential tool for park managers in shaping management directives for the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor.

In addition to presenting the concerns identified in public scoping for the Merced River Plan, this report describes the comment analysis process, including the analysis of individual comments and the development of concern statements. This report also includes a description of the next step in the comment analysis process – the concern screening process, which integrates public comments into the planning framework and begins with the publication of this Public Scoping Report.

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2.0 PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS SUMMARY

2.1 2007

The National Park Service initiated public scoping for the Merced River Plan on March 28, 2007. A Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published on April 11, 2007 in the Federal Register. The public scoping period lasted 74 days, closing on June 10, 2007. The purpose of scoping outreach was to solicit early public comments about issues and concerns that should be addressed in the plan, including a suitable range of alternatives, appropriate mitigation measures, and the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts. During public scoping, the National Park Service solicited comments from members of the public in an effort to understand the spectrum of concerns, interests and issues to address in the planning process. Members of the public were encouraged to submit comments in a variety of ways. Individuals could submit written comments at one the National Park Service's monthly open houses or at one of the following public scoping meetings:

5/16/2007	Mariposa
5/17/2007	San Francisco
5/30/2007	Yosemite Valley Visitor Center Auditorium

These events were advertised in local newspapers, on the park's website, and through the park's mailed and electronic Planning Update newsletter. NPS distributed the participant's guide to interested folks, as well as numerous handouts available at the meetings to help people understand river planning and the history of MRP planning.

Public meetings consisted of an introductory presentation on the planning process, followed by focused discussions with the NPS planning team. The meetings also served as a means to educate individuals about the Merced River planning process. Ultimately, comments were accepted via email, fax, and letter, on comment forms, and through comments captured on flip charts at public meetings.

Throughout the 2007 scoping period, the National Park Service received 110 unique public scoping responses (including letters, faxes, emails, and comment forms) and 81 form letters. Each response from the public was carefully reviewed and individual ideas were identified and assigned a code according to subject matter. These discrete individual ideas are known as public comments. A total of 528 public comments were generated from the letters, faxes, emails and meeting notes received during the scoping process.

2.2 2009-2010

A second round of public scoping was initiated by the National Park Service with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS published in the Federal Register on Tuesday, June 30, 2009. The public scoping period was reopened at this time to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the March 27,

2008 court-issued opinion to expand the scope of the MRP. The NPS had entered into settlement negotiations with plaintiffs following a lawsuit on the 2005 MRP and all parties reached agreement in September 2009. Based on the 2008 court decision, the NPS determined that the scope of the new Merced River Plan may have changed, therefore the 2009 scoping process provided the public another opportunity to help define the scope of the project, including a suitable range of alternatives, appropriate mitigation measures, and the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts. Public scoping was extended through February 4, 2010 (by Notice of Intent). Scoping comments were received until February 9, 2010 because of technical issues with the NPS website; the public scoping period was open for a total of six months.

Announcements about the scoping period dates and extensions were made in press releases and public notices in newspapers throughout northern California and the Yosemite National Park region, including the *Sierra Star* and the *Union Democrat*. An e-newsletter was sent to over 5,700 recipients and 25,000 postcards were sent to Yosemite National Park campers informing them of the planning process underway and provided directions about how to obtain more information on the park's website.

Postcards with a schedule of public scoping meetings and instructions for submitting comments were mailed to 30,416 addresses. Information regarding the public meetings was also advertised on the park's website, on fliers in gateway communities, throughout the park, on campground bulletin boards, news releases and an electronic newsletter.

Public input on the plan was gathered at 16 public workshops, where the public submitted comments regarding the Merced River Plan through a variety of methods. In addition to these meetings, public discussions regarding the Merced River Plan took place at a quarterly meeting of the Gateway Partners group, and monthly open houses in Yosemite Valley.

Below is the chronology of public meetings held in the neighboring communities of Yosemite National Park:

10/26/2009	Oakhurst, CA
10/27/2009	Lee Vining, CA
10/28/2009	Yosemite, CA
11/2/2009	Mariposa, CA
11/3/2009	Fresno, CA
11/4/2009	Groveland, CA
11/7/2009	El Portal, CA
11/9/2009	Sacramento, CA
11/9/2009	Berkeley, CA
11/16/2009	Los Angeles, CA
11/30/2009	El Portal, CA
12/2/2009	Yosemite Valley Auditorium, Yosemite National Park
12/4/2009	Wawona, CA
1/14/2010	Gateway Partners
1/28/2010	Delaware North Co.
1/28/2010	UC Merced

The public meetings consisted of an introductory presentation describing the planning process, followed by discussions with the park superintendent, the NPS planning team, and subject matter experts from Yosemite National Park. These public meetings also served to educate the public regarding development of the Merced River Plan. To stimulate thinking (in addition to seeking ideas and concern), the NPS asked a series of questions at all of the public meetings to stimulate thinking such as: “What do you love about the Merced River corridor (wilderness, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal)?” “What would you like to protect?” “What do you enjoy doing while there?” “What would you like to see removed, changed, or improved?”, however the scoping process covered a wide range of topics.

During the meetings, ideas and concerns from the public were captured on flip charts that were then posted for all in attendance to read and submitted into the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. In addition to the flip chart notes, comments were accepted throughout the public scoping period by email, fax, and letter. All these forms of input have been incorporated as comments into this scoping report.

The National Park Service received a total of 576 response letters; 464 were unique letters while 112 were form letters. Letters were determined to be forms if five or more identical letters were identified during the public comment period. Any additional identical letters were treated as forms, with only the Master Form comments analyzed. When identical form letters were received, these letters were individually counted, but only analyzed once. Three different form letters were received during the comment period. During the 2010 scoping process, 3,930 public comments were generated from the letters, faxes, emails and meeting notes, of these 758 comments were gathered from the 16 public meetings.

3.0 CONTENT ANALYSIS AND SCREENING PROCESS

The letters, emails, faxes and public meeting comments represented in this Public Scoping Report were analyzed using a database developed by the National Park Service (NPS), known as the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) database.

The content analysis comprises three main components: a coding structure, a comment database, and the summary of concern statements and comments contained in this report. As described earlier a comment is a discrete individual idea derived from a piece of public correspondence, in other words an individual letter may contain multiple comments. The coding structure is developed to sort comments into logical groups by topics (e.g., visitor facilities, park management, etc. . .). The topics in the coding structure were based on those found in relevant present and past planning documents, National Park Service legal guidance, and the letters themselves. Within the codes, sub-categories were created to further refine the topic areas. The purpose of these codes allows for quick access to comments on specific topics during the analysis. The coding structure used was inclusive rather than restrictive—an attempt was made to capture all comments, including those that may not have pertained directly to the Merced River planning process.

Once comments were entered into the database, the National Park Service assigned one or more codes to each public comment. The PEPC database allows multiple codes to be assigned to a single comment. In the next phase, codes were determined to be substantive or non-substantive. Substantive codes were those topics that were both relevant to the MRP and planning issues (e.g., socioeconomic, transportation, Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)) and would help inform alternative development or other parts of the planning process. In order to determine whether the codes were substantive, the comments that had been assigned to them were analyzed. If a majority of the comments under a code did not meet the definition of substantive, then the entire code was determined to be non-substantive and that code was not further analyzed. The Project Code Analysis table below shows which codes were substantive and which were non-substantive.

The third phase includes the identification of public concern statements and the preparation of this narrative, the Public Scoping Report. Public concerns are identified throughout the coding process and are derived from and supported by quotes from original letters. Concern statements were developed to identify common themes expressed by individuals or groups requesting particular lines of action identified in comments within a given code. 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 a means of summarizing information contained in original letters and the coded comment database. These public concerns identify common themes expressed by individuals or groups requesting particular lines of action by the National Park Service.

Public concern statements were organized under the relevant topical codes. Each concern statement was supported by several representative quotes selected to illustrate the spectrum of perspectives.

Unlike voting, the emphasis of a comment analysis process is on the content of the comment rather than the number of people who support it. Comment analysis is not a vote-counting process and no effort was made to tabulate the number of people for or against a certain aspect of a specific planning topic. Additionally, all comments are treated equally and are not weighted by number, organizational affiliation, or other status of respondents.

In summary, comments from both the 2007 and 2009-2010 scoping periods were categorized into nine major codes and 35 subcategories. There are 210 public concern statements generated from 4,458 total public comments. The table below describes the number of comments received under each designated code. Comments ranged from detailed suggestions for the Merced River Plan, to more general accounts of appreciated park features. Recreation, transportation, and visitor facilities were the topics that received the most number of comments. Natural resource subjects received many substantive comments as well; the analysis of such comments will be included in a supplement to this report.

PROJECT CODE ANALYSIS

Code	Code Description	Substantive	Total Comment Tally
MRP1000	Purpose and Need	No	85
MRP10000	Visitor Facilities	No	2614
MRP10100	Visitor Facilities - Visitors Center	Yes	15
MRP10200	Visitor Facilities - Wayfinding/Orientation	No	42
MRP10300	Visitor Facilities - Entrance Stations	No	31
MRP10400	Visitor Facilities - Campgrounds	Yes	4598
MRP10500	Visitor Facilities - Trails	No	1323
MRP1100	Purpose and Need - Relationship to other plans	Yes	1590
MRP11000	Other Comments	No	13
MRP11100	Other Comments - Global Climate Change	No	12
MRP11200	Other Comments - Visitor Experience	No	79
MRP11210	Other Comments - Visitor Experience (Positive)	No	17
MRP11220	Other Comments - Visitor Experience (Negative)	No	6
MRP11300	Other Comments - Local Communities	No	68
MRP11310	Other Comments - Local Communities (Wawona)	No	112
MRP11320	Other Comments - Local Communities (El Portal)	No	67
MRP11400	Other Comments - Firefalls	No	7
MRP1200	Purpose and Need - WSRA Elements	Yes	3
MRP1210	Purpose and Need - WSRA Elements (Boundaries)	Yes	633
MRP1220	Purpose and Need - WSRA Elements (Classifications)	Yes	11
MRP1230	Purpose and Need - WSRA Elements (ORVs)	Yes	1591
MRP2000	Transportation	Yes	2345
MRP2100	Transportation - Shuttles	Yes	144

PROJECT CODE ANALYSIS

Code	Code Description	Substantive	Total Comment Tally
MRP8110	Resources - Natural (Wildlife)	No	59
MRP2200	Transportation - Parking	Yes	777
MRP2300	Transportation - Locations	No	11

PROJECT CODE ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

Code	Code Description	Substantive	Total Comment Tally
MRP3000	Commercial Operations	Yes	206
MRP3100	Commercial Operations - Hotels/lodging	Yes	130
MRP3200	Commercial Operations - Retail	Yes	17
MRP3300	Commercial Operations - Food Service	Yes	628
MRP3400	Commercial Operations - Horseback Rides	Yes	85
MRP3500	Commercial Operations - Bicycling	Yes	11
MRP3600	Commercial Operations - Rafting	Yes	35
MRP3700	Commercial Operations - High Sierra Camps	Yes	142
MRP4000	Park Management	Yes	237
MRP4100	Park Management - Safety	Yes	95
MRP4110	Park Management - Safety - Fire/Fire Management	Yes	15
MRP4200	Park Management - Infrastructure/Utilities	Yes	150
MRP4300	Park Management - Housing	Yes	104
MRP4400	Park Management - Administration	No	1467
MRP4500	Park Management - Restoration/Stewardship	Yes	119
MRP4510	Park Management - Restoration/Stewardship - Riparian Restoration	Yes	15
MRP4520	Park Management - Restoration/Stewardship - Meadow Restoration	Yes	12
MRP4600	Park Management - Public Involvement	No	47
MRP4610	Park Management - Public Involvement - Personal Responsibility (trash, behavior)	No	19
MRP4620	Park Management - Public Involvement - Volunteering/Programs	No	650
MRP4700	Park Management - Employees	No	83
MRP5000	User Capacity	Yes	283
MRP6000	Partnerships/Collaborations	Yes	38
MRP7000	NEPA	No	65
MRP7100	NEPA - Planning Process	Yes	169
MRP7200	NEPA - Public Involvement	Yes	180
MRP7300	NEPA - Alternatives	Yes	18

PROJECT CODE ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

Code	Code Description	Substantive	Total Comment Tally
MRP8000	Resources	Yes	93
MRP8100	Resources - Natural	Yes	820
MRP8111	Resources - Natural (Wildlife) - Bears	Yes	12
MRP8112	Resources - Natural (Wildlife) - Deer	Yes	2
MRP8113	Resources - Natural (Wildlife) - Invasive Species	Yes	5
MRP8114	Resources - Natural (Wildlife) - Special Status Species	Yes	4
MRP8120	Resources - Natural (Vegetation)	Yes	99
MRP8121	Resources - Natural (Vegetation) - Invasive Species	Yes	19
MRP8122	Resources - Natural (Vegetation) - Oaks	Yes	12
MRP8123	Resources - Natural (Vegetation) - Blackberries	Yes	5
MRP8124	Resources - Natural (Vegetation) - Special Status Species	Yes	3
MRP8130	Resources - Natural (Hydrology)	Yes	114
MRP8140	Resources - Natural (Meadow and Riparian Complexes)	Yes	114
MRP8150	Resources - Natural (Geology)	Yes	29
MRP8160	Resources - Natural (Water Quality)	Yes	90
MRP8170	Resources - Natural (Air Quality)	Yes	77
MRP8180	Resources - Natural (Soundscapes)	Yes	703
MRP8200	Resources - Cultural	Yes	31
MRP8210	Resources - Cultural (Historic Resources)	Yes	28
MRP8220	Resources - Cultural (Prehistoric Resources/Archeology)	Yes	27
MRP8230	Resources - Cultural (Tribes and Traditional Cultural Properties, Practices, and Values)	Yes	109
MRP8300	Resources - Scenic	Yes	144
MRP8400	Resources - Wilderness	Yes	28
MRP9000	Visitor Use	Yes	200
MRP9100	Visitor Use - Access	Yes	335
MRP9200	Visitor Use - Hiking	Yes	81
MRP9300	Visitor Use - Bicycling	No	79
MRP9400	Visitor Use - Rock Climbing	Yes	12449
MRP9500	Visitor Use - Floating/Rafting/Watercraft	Yes	130
MRP9600	Visitor Use - Swimming	No	24
MRP9700	Visitor Use - Camping	Yes	3380
MRP9710	Visitor Use - Camping (RV)	Yes	42
MRP9720	Visitor Use - Camping (Tent)	Yes	29
MRP9800	Visitor Use - Horseback Riding/Stock Use	Yes	181
MRP9900	Visitor Use - Fishing	Yes	12
NOTE: As comments could be assigned multiple codes, the total number of comments detailed above exceeds the 4,458 comments received during the public scoping period.			

4.0 USING THIS REPORT

This report presents public concerns arranged by topic, along with a sample of representative supporting quotes. The following text presents a formal list of public concerns identified during the content analysis process, organized topically into nine sections: Purpose and Need, Transportation, Commercial Operations, Park Management, User Capacity, Partnerships/Collaborations, NEPA, Visitor Use, and Visitor Facilities. Resource management subjects are being considered separately and will be included as a supplement to this report.

Each formal statement of public concern is accompanied by one or more sample comments (i.e., sample statements) that provide respondents' specific perspectives and rationales regarding that concern. For each sample statement a comment number is provided that consists of the year of the scoping period and the letter number (e.g., 2010-70 denotes letter 70 from the 2010 public scoping period), enabling the reader to track and review the original response, if necessary. This formal list is intended to capture the full range of concerns regarding this project; however, it is not intended to obviate the need for the National Park Service to review the database report and original responses separately. Its primary purpose is to provide an organized review of a large number of comments in a format that aids careful consideration and agency response.

The following list of acronyms has been developed to maintain brevity and should assist the reader in reviewing the report.

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5.0 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBA – Choosing by Advantages

CSERC - Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center

CMP – (Merced River) Comprehensive Management Plan

CSP – Concession Services Plan

CUA - Commercial Use Authorization

DBNF - Daniel Boone National Forest

DNC – Delaware North Company

GMP – General Management Plan

HSCs – High Sierra Camps

MRP – Merced River Plan

NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act

NPS – National Park Service

NSD – Northside Drive

ORV – Outstandingly Remarkable Value

SNEP - Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project

TRP – Tuolumne River Plan

USFS – United States Forest Service

VERP – Visitor Experience and Resource Protection

WSRA – Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

YARTS – Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System

YNP - Yosemite or park – Yosemite National Park

YVCC -Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition

YVP – Yosemite Valley Plan

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6.0 CONCERN STATEMENTS

6.1 PURPOSE AND NEED

Relationship to Other Plans

The National Park Service should include public comments from previous Merced River Plans and the Yosemite Valley Plan

How will you take into account the 10,000s of comments submitted for YVP and MRP I (Letter 2010-70)

In YVP there was a tremendous amount of input. Suggest considering these comments as valid for this new process (Letter 2010-110)

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. (Letter 2010-127)

The National Park Service should clarify the relationship between the current Merced River Plan and other park studies

Will transportation plan be part of this process or is it a separate plan? Explain relationship between transportation issues and river plan (Letter 2010-108)

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 (Letter 2010-110)

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 GMP as amended by the CSP. The CSP modified the GMP 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 [sic]. (Letter 2010-404)

The National Park Service should recognize the goals and intent of previous park planning documents while remaining a stand alone document

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. (Letter 2010-127)

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. (Letter 2010-263)

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. (Letter 2010-313)

The National Park Service should clarify how they will plan for forest succession

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. (Letter 2010-383)

Concerns about Scenic Vista Management Plan? How far will it go? Will consideration be given to biology, forest succession, etc? (Letter 2010-108)

WSRA Elements (Boundaries)

The National Park Service should delete Section 35 from the Merced River Plan

It was good that the earlier MRP designated the Wawona area as Recreational and not Scenic as had been proposed. Because of the Court's view of user capacity, however, I feel it is all the more important that Section 35 in Wawona be excluded from the MRP river corridor altogether. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not apply to private land and much of the area within the river corridor in Section 35 is private. Development issues within the corridor such as conflicts between County and NPS zoning were addressed in the Record of Decision for the earlier plan. These should be included in any new MRP. Fixed user limits in this area as mandated by the Court, however, would be impossible to enforce. It would be best to follow the direction of former superintendent Mihalic and delete Section 35 from the MRP. (Letter 2007-106)

The National Park Service should consider smaller boundaries to the project area

[f]rom a common sense point of view, the area around Bryceburg is far from wild and scenic. . . . Someone mentioned to me that the wild an 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. (Letter 2010-104)

If parameters for the river are as broad as presented, concerned it may mean the elimination of camping in Yosemite Valley (Letter 2010-76)

The National Park Service 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

Yosemite planners should take into account the unique characteristics of climbing and not unnecessarily affect Yosemite's climbing access in the MRP. . . . 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. (Letter 2010-260)

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. (Letter 2010-374)

The National Park Service should expand the boundaries of the Merced Wild and Scenic River

[t]he CMP should expand river management boundaries to the maximum extent allowed by the WSRA to best assure protection of ORVs. . . 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. (Letter 2010-263)

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." (Letter 2010-151)

WSRA Elements (ORVs)

The National Park Service should consider its employees as ORVs

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. (Letter 2010-74)

The National Park Service should establish Wawona as an ORV

The South Fork of the Merced River flows through the residential community of Wawona. Wawona is primarily single family residences with a year round population of under 160 adults and children. Wawona has an elementary school, athletic field, post office, 2 grocery stores, county library, gas station, and community building. Wawona also has many amenities shared by visitors and residents alike, including a Victorian hotel complex with golf course and restaurant, hiking trails, and swimming in the river. Yosemite visitors stay in Wawona at the hotel or at one of the many residential homes available for short-term rent. Visitors can also camp year round adjacent the river at the nearby Wawona campground. Because Wawona is relatively small, somewhat isolated and less visited by park visitors, the community provides visitors and residents an increased sense of privacy, peace, and scenic beauty. There is little congestion, noise or pollution. Wawona itself is an "Outstandingly Remarkable Value" in the river corridor. Any addition of campgrounds or employee housing to Wawona will be very detrimental to the character of the area, and will detrimentally impact the visitor experience there. (Letter 2007-97)

The National Park Service should clearly define its ORVs in the Merced River Plan

The ORVs are poorly defined. They are supposed to be rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context and must be river-related. The previous plans use the buzz words scenic, geologic, biological,

cultural, recreation, scientific, and hydrologic processes. What do these words actually mean on the ground, what protection needs to occur, and how will that happen? (Letter 2007-44)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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? (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should describe and compare potential impacts to and plans for protection of the ORVs in the Merced River Plan

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. (Letter 2010-314)

[the Merced River Plan EIS should:] 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. (Letter 2010-79)

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." (Letter 2010-127)

The National Park Service should provide specific information identifying the location and baseline condition of the ORVs

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. (Letter 2010-127)

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. (Letter 2010-238)

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. (Letter 2010-346)

The National Park Service should consider the entire Yosemite Valley as an ORV

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 and excuse for carving out the ground for development. (Letter 2010-346)

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. (Letter 2010-313)

The National Park Service should reevaluate management zones in order to optimize protection of ORVs

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. (Letter 2010-263)

The National Park Service should recognize camping as an ORV

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. (Letter 2010-154)

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. (Letter 2010-372)

The National Park Service should recognize historic mining structures along the Merced River as a cultural ORV

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. (Letter 2010-335)

The National Park Service should recognize El Portal as an ORV

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. (Letter 2010-166)

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. (Letter 2010-179)

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. (Letter 2010-351)

The National Park Service should expand the recreational ORV to include additional activities

11. Rafting should be an ORV in Yosemite Valley and El Portal segments of the river. 12. Swimming/water play 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. Picnicking/water play/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. (Letter 2010-253)

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. (Letter 2010-372)

The National Park Service should establish Mirror Lake as an ORV

[What do you want to see protected?] Mirror Lake should be an ORV. (Letter 2010-82)

The National Park Service should analyze and resolve the Paiute and Miwok lineal descendent concerns before defining the Cultural ORV

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 IAIMC (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. (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should establish climbing as an ORV

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. (Letter 2010-112)

Comment Text: 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 they human capacity to scale and bivouac on the cliffs. (Letter 2010-195)

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. (Letter 2010-203)

The National Park Service should clearly explain the methodology for determining what is considered an ORV and why the designations have changed over time

CSERC asks that in any EIS or response to comments that the Park clarifies 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. (Letter 2010-463)

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 eliminate) S. Fork Wilderness Above Wawona segment (Geo, Hydro, Bio, Cult eliminate) Wawona segment (Scenic, Rec, Bio eliminated) S. Fork Merced Below Wawona segment (Geo, Bio, Cult, Hydro eliminated) (Letter 2010-463)

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. (Letter 2010-463)

The National Park Service should include the ORVs identified in 2004 in the current list

CSERC strongly urges that all of those ORVs established/identified in 2004 be replaced and retained as ORVs in the 2010 final report. (Letter 2010-463)

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. (Letter 2010-463)

The National Park Service should establish valley oaks as Biological 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. (Letter 110-463)

6.2 TRANSPORTATION

General Transportation

The National Park Service should reduce the amount of vehicles in the valley

Reduce # of vehicles in Valley, especially day trippers. Limit vehicles rather than people, especially on summer weekends. (Letter 2010-90)

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. (Letter 2010-60)

Unless it is the day of arrival/departure, an emergency or handicap, you can ticket vehicles that 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. (Letter 2010-219)

The National Park Service should provide transportation for employees located outside the park

Provide transportation for employees if they are relocated out of the park (Letter 2010-101)

Provide friendly, fast, free transportation for employees outside of park - and coordinate work schedules with transportation schedules (Letter 2010-82)

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. (Letter 2010-145)

The National Park Service should not widen or pave more roads as they will encourage larger vehicles and more traffic

don't expand road width to accommodate bigger buses, bigger RVs or semis (Letter 2010-109)

Widening Valley roads only encourages higher speeds and larger vehicles, RV's and tour busses. (Letter 2010-124)

The National Park Service should provide more upfront information about road/site closures and full lots

Dissemination of info so that people understand which roads are open. Inform people ahead of time, en route to park (Letter 2010-102)

Improve communication between parking areas and entrance station to better direct visitors and reduce congestion (Letter 2010-109)

The National Park Service should construct more turnouts that are paved for stopping/passing

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 ¼ mile (Letter 2010-102)

Give people a chance to stop and look at things. (Letter 2010-111)

The National Park Service should maintain if not increase handicapped access within the park

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. (Letter 2010-125)

The National Park Service should implement a system to allow pedestrians to cross the road safely that will not hold up traffic

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! (Letter 2010-125)

a pedestrian-activated signal light, with a delay to avoid an excessive accumulation of waiting vehicles, should suffice (Letter 2010-313)

The National Park Service should enforce speed limits more aggressively

Aggressive enforcement of speed limit! (Letter 2010-111)

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. (Letter 2010-183)

The National Park Service should provide more up-front information regarding options once visitors inside the park

CSERC urges the Park planning staff to help the public to understand what options may be available to better manage traffic and parking. (Letter 2010-238)

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. (Letter 2010-287)

The National Park Service should encourage means of alternative transportation

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. (Letter 2010-300)

it would be amazing to reinstate rail travel to El Portal and the park. (Letter 2010-300)

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. (Letter 2010-327)

The National Park Service should reduce the number of busses in the valley

You want to put visitors on buses as a way of ensuring open-ended visitation. But the "effect" of that decision means over-engineering the roads with increased asphalt, widening/realigning the roads to accommodate oversized vehicles, and the creation of centralized and expanded infrastructure; how many more natural and cultural resources will be destroyed. Does a 22-bay transit depot belong in the heart of Yosemite Valley?? You are changing the visitor experience from one of individualized exploration to assembly-line tourism as individuals are hurried from profit center to profit center. (Letter 2007- 44)

Fewer buses should be allowed in the valley. They bring in too many passengers. (Letter 2010-142)

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. . . (Letter 2010-372)

The National Park Service should analyze the impacts resulting from tour buses

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. (Letter 2010-124)

The National Park Service should close Northside Drive

Northside Drive closed, except to emergency use and/or Shuttle Bus access. (Letter 2010-107)

The National Park Service should not close Northside Drive

Do not close Northside Drive. Not safe for emergency access and exit, especially during a flood (Letter 2010-76)

It would be absolutely catastrophic to close off Northside Drive (as was proposed in the YVP) (Letter 2010-76)

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. (Letter 2010-301)

Shuttles

The National Park Service needs to provide additional shuttle service for transportation within the park

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 t leave their vehicles parked until such time as they are ready to leave the Valley. (Letter 2010-402)

To alleviate traffic congestion in Yosemite Valley, the current shuttle system needs to be expanded, especially during the busy season. (Letter 2010-301)

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. (Letter 2010-187)

The National Park Service should encourage park employees to use the shuttle service to lessen traffic impacts

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. (Letter 2010-145)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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 (Letter 2010-314)

The National Park Service should not switch to a shuttle only transportation system

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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 all 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. (Letter 2010-1)

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. (Letter 2010-5)

The National Park Service should eliminate the majority of personal vehicles from the park in favor of a shuttle system

I think all vehicles should be banned from the valley. Especially ginormous diesel 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... (Letter 2010-282)

Only allow vehicles who have reservations or is handicap to the valley floor. Bus the Day Use people in. (Letter 2010-219)

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. (Letter 2010-387)

Parking

The National Park Service needs to provide more parking

[What needs to be fixed?] More parking everywhere (Letter 2010-82)

[What should stay the same?] Review the number of parking places removed. Keep pullouts. Look at bringing back more parking (Letter 2010-111)

[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. (Letter 2010-236)

The National Park Service should consider a parking reservation system

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. (Letter 2010-408)

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 overnighiter won't take away limited parking available to day visitors. The same kind of tag system should be used for campers. (Letter 2010-342)

The National Park Service should provide parking at traditional climbing access trailhead locations

To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:] Parking spaces at traditional climbing access trailhead locations. (Letter 2010-112)

[To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:] 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. (Letter 2010-328)

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. (Letter 2010-393)

The National Park Service should provide additional clarity for any planned out of park parking facilities

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? (Letter 2010-1)

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. (Letter 2010-205)

Consider adding some parking near the entrance station to handle Mariposa Grove overflow, shuttle bus could pick up there. (Letter 2010-109)

The National Park Service should establish limitations for parking

[What needs to be fixed?] Prohibit parking in and on Wawona cemetery (Letter 2010-82)

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. (Letter 2010-12)

Roadside parking at El Cap meadow must be eliminated. 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 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. (Letter 2010-44)

The National Park Service should prioritize visitor parking over employee parking

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. (Letter 2010-314)

The National Park Service should consider multiple, smaller parking lots over larger satellite parking lots

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. (Letter 2010-313)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

Comment Text: 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. (Letter 2010-345)

6.3 COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS

General Commercial Operations

The National Park Service should encourage more natural and low impact recreational activities over commercial operations

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. (Letter 2010-342)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-343)

The National Park Service should restrict or reduce the amount of concession-related development and amenities, existing and future, within the valley

The corporate headquarters of the concessionaire needs to be moved out of the valley and the buildings removed. (Letter 2010-1)

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. (Letter 2010-44)

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 (Letter 2010-187)

The National Park Service should restrict or limit tour bus operations within the park

[What do you want to see protected?] - Would like limits on tour buses (#per day) (Letter 2010-102)

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? (Letter 2010-372)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

The National Park Service should review the concession contract and determine whether or not it is appropriate to renew it before the completion of the planning process

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-313)

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. (Letter 2010-346)

The National Park Service should determine the number of employees necessary to support commercial development within the park

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 "train wreck", 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. (Letter 2010-314)

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 (Letter 2010-179)

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 "train wreck" and housing behind the Post Office-yet nothing has been removed; only more has been added with concern that still more will be needed. (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should analyze the appropriate distribution of CUAs

[What needs to be fixed?] NPS should look at the number of CUAs [Commercial Use Authorizations] and who gets them, especially for guided climbing (Letter 2010-82)

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. (Letter 2010-272)

The National Park Service should consider the removal of the golf course within the park

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. (Letter 2010-313)

[What needs to be fixed?] The use of Park resources for un-associated, elite purposes, like Golf. (Letter 2010-107)

[Some actions to consider in developing a new MRP.] 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. (Letter 2010-124)

The National Park Service should maintain traditional park recreational facilities, such as the golf course and ice rink

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. (Letter 2010-428)

[What do you want to see protected?] Tradition includes things like golf course at Wawona - don't change them (Letter 2010-82)

Hotels/lodging

The National Park Service should ensure hotels are maintained for use

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. (Letter 2010-19)

[What do you love about the Merced River, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, El Portal, and/or Merced Lake High Sierra Camp?] The Wawona Hotel is a historical hotel which should be preserved for use by all. (Letter 2010-63)

The National Park Service should include plans to upgrade Yosemite Lodge

More needs to be done with Yosemite Lodge and the older buildings that are not up to modern standards without putting the price of accommodations beyond the regular traveler. There have been some complaints 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. (Letter 2010-1)

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. (Letter 2010-431)

The National Park Service should remove Yosemite Lodge and replace with camping facilities

Reduce and/or remove Yosemite Lodge development and replace with camping opportunities (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-184)

The National Park Service should not plan facilities in known rock fall zones

We think NPS should consider other options including removal of overnight facilities located in the rock fall zone. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-345)

Employee housing was built in a known rock fall zone and the new Indian cultural center is also being constructed in a rock fall area. Recently the Ahwahnee 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 and 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. (Letter 2010-60)

The National Park Service should not increase the number of lodging locations

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. (Letter 2010-14)

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. (Letter 2010-37)

A huge hotel is not required, like Chukchansi. (Letter 2010-27)

The National Park Service should plan for additional lodging

Valley is the primary destination. Do more to develop options to stay and enjoy other parts of the park. Hotel at Crane Flat (Letter 2010-83)

Make Camp Curry more family friendly and return some of the Cabins. (Letter 2010-19)

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. (Letter 2010-28)

The National Park Service should make lodging options more affordable

Include enough inexpensive lodging to accommodate people who aren't wealthy. (Letter 2010-215)

The availability of affordable lodging either in the park or nearby is important. (Letter 2010-301)

The National Park Service should not put a limit on pools associated with lodging facilities

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. (Letter 2010-253)

The National Park Service should prohibit corporate retreats

As an individual user, object to corporations or conferences taking up blocks of rooms (Letter 2010-172)

The National Park Service should mandate no televisions in hotel rooms

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. (Letter 2010-343)

Retail

The National Park Service should not consider new retail development

[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. (Letter 2010-27)

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. (Letter 2010-217)

The National Park Service should eliminate current retail operations

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. (Letter 2010-44)

The National Park Service should reduce current retail operations

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. (Letter 2010-53)

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. (Letter 2010-346)

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. (Letter 2010-313)

The National Park Service should consider the development of additional amenities for the campgrounds.

Finally, I'd like to see more free or inexpensive coin-pay showers made available and more easily accessible grocery stores near the campgrounds. (Letter 2010-380)

Food Service

The National Park Service should allow an array of affordable food service options with a wide range of operating hours that are closer to or even perhaps in the park

Allow a local community café 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. (Letter 2010-264)

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. (Letter 2010-253)

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. (Letter 2010-19)

The National Park Service should reduce or eliminate food service facilities

Reduce or eliminate existing concessions and non essential services (Letter 2010-204)

- Mt Room Bar: Sports bar atmosphere has no place in national park. Want to have it more like it was with fireplace for families (Letter 2010-172)

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 a 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. (Letter 2010-348)

The National Park Service should provide ice dispensaries in the park

Numerous car trips are made by campers going to the Village for ice and back. Provide concession services in campgrounds, as mobile vehicles (Letter 2010-76)

Making ice available locally at the campground; may seem like a small detail, but it makes a difference (Letter 2010-76)

The National Park Service should reconsider current food services as they are inadequate and should be changed

Next time concession contract comes up there should be public input to prices and providing opportunities for enjoyment (Letter 2010-70)

The food, prices and hours for the cafeteria at Camp Curry are terrible. Fix it up or shut it down! (Letter 2010-19)

[To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:] - 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. (Letter 2010-328)

Horseback Rides

The National Park Service should end use of commercial stock within Yosemite Valley and close the commercial stables

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. (Letter 2010-227)

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. (Letter 2010-269)

The National Park Service should prohibit or restrict the use of pack animals on hiking trails

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, archeological, 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. (Letter 2010-314)

What would I like to keep 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. (Letter 2010-156)

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. (Letter 2010-58)

The National Park Service should address concerns that stock animal use has negative impacts on natural resources

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. (Letter 2010-48)

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. (Letter 2010-49)

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. (Letter 2010-57)

The National Park Service should consider additional mitigation measures for continued use of stock animals

...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); ... all stock animals should be strictly required to wear manure catchers to prevent pollution of trails, campsites and water from animal manure... (Letter 2010-49)

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. (Letter 2010-57)

The use of stock animals can be legitimate, appropriate, and even necessary for certain recreational and/or administrative purposes. We want to make clear at the beginning that we do not advocate or suggest the complete elimination of recreational or administrative stock use from the Merced River basin. Our primary concern is that the NPS must acknowledge and substantially reduce the many adverse impacts that are occurring due to the currently excessive and poorly controlled activities of commercial stock enterprises. We are aware that commercial packstock activities and impacts have increased substantially in recent years throughout Yosemite National Park. Your planning process should begin by producing a complete disclosure of the increases in stock use, facilities, and impacts that have occurred over the past few decades. Then, your plans should significantly reduce/control commercial stock use to avoid the identified impacts, and incorporate definitive limits to prevent future harmful increases in commercial stock enterprises. (Letter 2007-104)

The National Park Service should consider moving commercial horseback operations outside of the park and into neighboring 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. (Letter 2010-179)

Bicycling

The National Park Service needs to analyze the impacts of commercial bike rentals.

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 \$\$\$\$). (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should establish a limit for the amount of bikes rented out to help curb the negative impacts on user experience and environment as well as reduce the need for paved trails

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. . . 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." (Letter 2010-314)

Rafting

The National Park Service needs to analyze the impacts of commercial raft rentals

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-29)

The National Park Service should allow personal water craft

The Park Service should be able to develop guidelines that accommodate visitors who bring their own bikes or their own rafts/tubes. (Letter 2010-402)

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). (Letter 2010-349)

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. (Letter 2010-449)

The National Park Service should establish a limit for or reduce the amount of rafts on the river

Valley rafting in the Merced River impacts resource and aesthetic values. Consider reducing or eliminating this activity. (Letter 2010-342)

The National Park Service should remove commercial rafting

I propose that the National Park Service rescind the Raft Rental concession. (Letter 2010-103)

People should have free access to the river to play and enjoy, but commercial recreational activities should not be allowed. (Letter 2010-369)

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. (Letter 2010-372)

High Sierra Camps

The National Park Service should remove the High Sierra Camps and restore the site

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-49)

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. (Letter 2010-53)

The National Park Service should keep the High Sierra Camps

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. (Letter 2010-16)

Increased number of high sierra camps or greater capacity at existing camps. (Letter 2010-132)

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. (Letter 2010-312)

6.4 PARK MANAGEMENT

General Park Management

The National Park Service should enforce existing rules before introducing additional policies

Protection of resources cannot occur without a sound scientific base of information with respect to resource conditions and monitoring. The Park cannot achieve the non-degradation 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. (Letter 2010-402)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

The National Park Service should be cautious in introducing change and provide clarity within the planning process

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-402)

Provide a rationale for every action item e.g. what was the rationale for closing the Upper and Lower River Campgrounds? (Letter 2010-76)

The National Park Service should disallow or restrict any new development of commercial or visitor facilities within the park

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. (Letter 2010-313)

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. Development 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 it's an alternative to driving-rather than just another activity to distract visitors. (Letter 2010-421)

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. (Letter 2010-53)

The National Park Service should reduce the amount of livestock used for park management

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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 (Letter 2010-342)

Safety

The National Park Service should be aware of and plan accordingly for geologic hazards

Detailed, updated rock fall 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 rock fall event which provides no notice at all. (Letter 2010-314)

Clearly map all potential rock fall/landslide zones, and describe proposed placement of facilities in relation to those zones in each plan alternative. Include updated rock fall studies. (Letter 2010-79)

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 rock fall 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 rock fall 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. (Letter 2010-166)

The National Park Service should provide risk management strategies for multiple scenarios

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. (Letter 2010-402)

Public safety in a box canyon? evacuation; how do you get folks out, flooding, wildfires? (Letter 2010-109)

Fire/Fire Management

The current prescribed burn management is not sufficient and should be reviewed by the National Park Service

Control burns are too infrequent and often too late. Medium-large trees are being killed off. Remainder trees need to be removed (Letter 2010-84)

Controlled burns should be monitored so high value or rare species are not wiped out (Letter 2010-109)

Increased implementation of controlled burns to enhance biodiversity, embrace cultural heritage, and protecting Yosemite's world-class views. (Letter 2010-383)

The National Park Service should consider improving fire emergency plans

Improving the Studhorse access to an all-weather road would: Provide greatly improved YNP fire-crew access to that area. (Letter 2010-163)

Provide fire sanctuary areas where visitors would be safe during a major fire. Have an emergency evacuation plan in the event of a fire. (Letter 2010-251)

Infrastructure/Utilities

The National Park Service should do a better job of hiding construction materials and constructions sites

The storage of old materials, lumber, piping, and wrecked vehicles needs to be removed, and the old corral needs to be removed. (Letter 2010-1)

Park is never ending construction field. Hide construction until we leave (Letter 2010-84)

Take down the horrible green web fencing in front of the historic Camp 4. (Letter 2010-348)

The National Park Service should remove/relocate obsolete or unnecessary infrastructure

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. (Letter 2010-313)

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. (Letter 2010-301)

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. (Letter 2010-187)

The National Park Service should maintain or restore paths to dirt

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. (Letter 2010-281)

Keep the trail system the same - no more asphalt. Keep education going about impacts of social trails. (Letter 2010-70)

Hiking dirt paths - No wood platforms. (Letter 2010-27)

The National Park Service should provide more utilities and amenities for visitors

First, there are no restrooms at Camp Six Day Use Parking. (Letter 2010-5)

Convenient pay showers (Letter 2010-319)

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! (Letter 2010-350)

The National Park Service should put the electrical lines underground with the rest of the utilities

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. (Letter 2010-163)

Sewer, water, most phone service is all provided in road corridor. Power should go under road vs. installing new power poles (Letter 2010-109)

The National Park Service should remove infrastructure that inhibits the aesthetics of the park

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 luminaries (Letter 2010-251)

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. Let's consider doing all our wood cutting in El Portal. Can we have a special place - El Capitan - where this noise does not have to be tolerated day after day after day? (Letter 2010-318)

Roadside parking at El Cap meadow must be eliminated. 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 observe 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. (Letter 2010-44)

Housing

The National Park Service should remove employee housing from Yosemite Valley

Employee housing needs to be removed from Yosemite Valley (Letter 2010-54)

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. (Letter 2010-127)

Consider placing Park administrative, staff housing, concessionaire ancillary buildings and expanded lodging in the surrounding gateway communities. (Letter 2010-188)

The National Park Service should provide more employee housing in the park to reduce commute travel for employees

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. (Letter 2010-162)

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. (Letter 2010-38)

Acknowledge that staffing is continuously increasing along with housing needs (Letter 2010-72)

The National Park Service should provide housing in El Portal and other gateway communities to accommodate park employees

Please put more housing in El Portal (versus Mariposa or Midpines) while keeping the intimate community feeling of the place. (Letter 2010-74)

Provide outside the park entrances (close by), suitable housing for park employees with subsidized transportation and housing, and use the one's in the park for rentals to generate income. (Letter 2010-14)

House employees outside park in gateway communities supported by good transportation (Letter 2010-83)

Restoration/Stewardship

The National Park Service should allow natural processes to occur

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. (Letter 2010-14)

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." (Letter 2010-37)

The National Park Service should remove unnecessary or inappropriate facilities and staging areas, such as the Greenemeyer Sand Pit, and allow site restoration

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. (Letter 2010-187)

The Greenemeyer 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. (Letter 2010-115)

The National Park Service should consider the closure of the road between Stoneman Bridge and Yosemite Village to allow for restoration

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. (Letter 2010-124)

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. (Letter 2010-44)

Riparian Restoration

The National Park Service should revive the river cleanout policy

[What needs to be fixed?] River cleanup regularly (Letter 2010-82)

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 fire 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. (Letter 2010-175)

The National Park Service should restore natural riverine processes

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. (Letter 2010-406)

Explore alternatives to restore overbank flooding adjacent to the river, such as the placement of woody debris islands in the main river channel (Letter 2010-406)

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. (Letter 2010-119)

The National Park Service should implement and promote restoration actions among the community

Promote restoration actions to restore degraded riparian habitat such as the restoration of the former Group Camp (where the bathrooms and asphalt were removed). (Letter 2010-406)

More enforcement of restoration areas in riparian zone (Letter 2010-171)

6.5 USER CAPACITY

The National Park Service should not establish more restrictive user capacity limits within the park

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. (Letter 2010-290)

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. (Letter 2010-366)

I just wanted to make a point that I don't want to see the number of visitors 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, i.e. 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 (Letter 2010-433)

The National Park Service should enforce a lower user capacity in order to enhance visitor experience and effectively protect resources.

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. (Letter 2010-383)

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. (Letter 2010-263)

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. (Letter 2010-251)

The National Park Service should increase user capacity

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. (Letter 2010-384)

The National Park Service should clearly define how user capacity will be determined, and provide this information to the public in a timely manner

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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? (Letter 2010-101)

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. (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should consider the impact of seasonal and location differences in capacity when evaluating user capacity

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 (Letter 2010-301)

The analysis should be specific to the different areas of the Park thereby appreciating that different areas of the Park have unique capacity characteristics. (Letter 2010-188)

The National Park Service should establish user capacity limitations for day use visitors in order to improve visitor experience

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. (Letter 2010-418)

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. (Letter 2010-345)

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. (Letter 2010-325)

The National Park Service should establish user capacity based on vehicles rather than individual park visitors

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. (Letter 2010-382)

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. (Letter 2010-187)

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. (Letter 2010-390)

The National Park Service should consider the socioeconomic impact of user capacity on 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"!)). (Letter 2010-314)

The National Park Service should establish a monitoring plan to ensure effectiveness of use limits

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. (Letter 2010-285)

6.6 PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATIONS

The National Park Service should coordinate with other fed, state and local agencies and organizations as well as surrounding local communities during the planning process

[c]ollaboration 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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-83)

The National Park Service should not allow park partners to influence judgment of what is best for the park

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. . . 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. (Letter 2010-402)

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. . . 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. (Letter 2010-181)

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. . . 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. (Letter 2010-301)

The National Park Service should involve more regional, local partnerships

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 MRP should recognize the potential and detrimental impacts possible, and look at effective mitigations. Regional partnerships are a excellent vehicle for such mitigations. . . For the most part, the only welcomed partner is one, like the

Yosemite Fund and the Yosemite Association that either brings 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. (Letter 2010-275)

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. (Letter 2010-179)

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. (Letter 2010-281)

6.7 NEPA

Planning Process

The National Park Service needs to provide more facts for its assumptions and alternatives and present the information in a way that readers will comprehend

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. (Letter 2010-127)

Even the VERP framework warns against relying too heavily on existing conditions. For instance, when delineating management zones, the VERP Handbook states that "[unless 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). (Letter 2010-263)

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 WSR. 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. (Letter 2010-263)

The National Park Service should consider planning with flexibility

Plan needs to have the flexibility to adjust to future technologies, etc. for the benefit of future generations (Letter 2010-102)

The National Park Service should keep the planning process open and accessible

Keep the planning process open and accessible? An educational, explanatory approach will be appreciated (Letter 2010-72)

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. (Letter 2010-152)

The National Park Service needs to include expert observations, input and evaluations

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. . .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 (Letter 2010-127)

Ensure objectivity of scientists and consultants throughout the planning process (Letter 2010-76)

The National Park Service should develop a plan that is straightforward, transparent and understandable

In the new CMP, Yosemite's NPS must refrain from using contradictory, misleading text and manipulating information. (Letter 2010-127)

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. (Letter 2010-253)

Identify interested parties and organizations by name for disclosure purposes and transparency (Letter 2010-76)

The National Park Service's new plan should fix weaknesses and oversights in old plan, superseding all previous decisions

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 real-time capacity management challenges at the same time it addresses the long and short-term impacts on ORVs and other natural social and financial assets. (Letter 2010-275)

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 (Letter 2010-284)

Public Involvement

The National Park Service should have better communication methods and efforts in order to involve more community organizations and individuals

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. (Letter 2010-402)

NPS should communicate respectfully and productively with interested stakeholders in all park planning efforts rather than viewing informed critics as the enemy (this includes local grassroots and national environmental groups, all concerned Native American groups, even those not previously consulted in park planning efforts, and well-informed recreation groups). (Letter 2007-64)

The National Park Service needs to focus on helping the public understand the intent and goals of this project

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 de-coupled 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). (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

The scoping questionnaires and other documentation provided by the National Park Service regarding this process were not developed correctly making the project construed and misunderstood

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-284)

The National Park Service should include campers in the consultation process

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? (Letter 2010-154)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

Comment Text: 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? (Letter 2010-61)

The National Park Service should make pointed efforts to contact tribes for consultation

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. (Correspondence ID: 268)) (Letter 2010-420)

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 in greatly improving communication with members of the El Portal community. (Letter 2010-53)

The National Park Service should involve more people in the public meeting process through diversifying outreach technology

Glad to see the NPS is considering webinars and other means of connecting/conducting outreach (Letter 2010-110)

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. (Letter 2010-9)

The National Park Service should include comments received from previous MRP efforts in the analysis of the current project

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. (Letter 2010-127)

Alternatives

The National Park Service should establish a broad range of 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 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. (Letter 2010-402)

Need a true range of alternatives, broad and includes the spectrum of opportunities. That was part of the success of the GMP (Letter 2010-109)

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. (Letter 2010-253)

The National Park Service should evaluate and provide detailed impact analyses of each alternative to the public

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"? (Letter 2010-127)

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. (Letter 2010-253)

6.8 VISITOR USE

General Visitor Use

The National Park Service needs to clearly define and clarify “experience” and then prioritize uses

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. (Letter 2010-314)

The Park Service needs to clearly define the recreation experience before it will be able to objectively evaluate the quality of that experience. (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should address concerns regarding the wilderness

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-173)

The National Park Service should make decisions based on demographics

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. (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should place limitations if not restrictions on campfire use

Consider "no burn" i.e. no campfire days in Valley (Letter 2010-108)

The National Park Service should preserve and protect the park for future enjoyment

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. (Letter 2010-212)

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. (Letter 2010-301)

The National Park Service should establish natural use of the park as more important than non-natural use of the park

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. (Letter 2010-342)

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. (Letter 2010-145)

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. (Letter 2010-187)

The National Park Service should install a visitor tracking system

In order to manage visitor use and capacity, it is critical that the Park develop a comprehensive and innovative visitor-tracking system. A detailed program for exactly how visitor use will be monitored is necessary (Letter 2010-238)

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. (Letter 2010-285)

The National Park Service should balance visitor use and preservation efforts

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 no one can enjoy it. (Letter 2010-152)

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. (Letter 2010-239)

There has to be a balance between protecting the ecosystem and people recreating/enjoying the beauty Yosemite has to offer. (Letter 2010-143)

The National Park Service should continue to provide a park that is accessible to all users and activities

Hope the plan will enhance the experience of visitors and not make the park more inaccessible than it is becoming. (Letter 2010-347)

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. (Letter 2010-371)

The National Park Service should allow more BASE jumping and hang gliding

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. (Letter 2010-247)

The National Park Service should prohibit BASE jumping or hang gliding

Nowhere in nature does hang gliding and parachuting occur. 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. (Letter 2010-175)

The National Park Service should allow more winter activities

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 (Letter 2010-175)

The National Park Service should reduce restrictions overall

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. . . 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. (Letter 2010-340)

Access

The National Park Service should not limit access to the park

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. (Letter 2010-290)

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). (Letter 2010-314)

[What should stay the same?] No reduction in access (Letter 2010-111)

The National Park Service should not limit access to areas within the park

[What do you want to see fixed? changed? improved?] 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 (Letter 2010-76)

Visitors should not be denied the High Sierra experience (Letter 2010-101)

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. (Letter 2010-447)

The National Park Service should regulate access to sensitive areas within the park

Regulation of visitor travel in meadows and along the stream bank through better education, regulation of social trails, and the development of more boardwalks. (Letter 2010-383)

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. (Letter 2010-281)

The National Park Service should improve access for Non-Anglo demographics

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. (Letter 2010-402)

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. (Letter 2010-351)

The National Park Service should improve access for specific demographics (elderly, pets)

[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. (Letter 2010-125)

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. (Letter 2010-295)

The National Park Service should improve access for the disabled

[What needs to be fixed?] Better disabled access - parking restrooms, proximity to facilities, etc. (Letter 2010-82)

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. (Letter 2010-13)

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. (Letter 2010-15)

The National Park Service should not provide additional access for disabled or physically impaired visitors

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 TOO FAR! This is where I think the government becomes stupid. (Letter 2010-14)

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. (Letter 2010-424)

The National Park Service should find ways to reduce visitor costs (concessionaire, fees)

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. (Letter 2010-296)

[What needs to be Fixed?] Operations excludes lots of people (pricing) (Letter 2010-70)

[What needs to be Fixed?] Emphasize making park available to all economic classes (Letter 2010-108)

Hiking

The National Park Service should provide more interpretive activities led by rangers

Walks with Rangers to learn to see more of the life and beauty that was there all along. (Letter 2010-369)

Ranger-led hikes in park, originating in gateway communities (Letter 2010-83)

Ranger talks (Letter 2010-84)

The National Park Service should continue to provide numerous hiking opportunities for visitors

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. (Letter 2010-369)

People should be able to access all of the traditional climbing and hiking areas. (Letter 2010-390)

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. (Letter 2010-418)

The National Park Service should preserve access trails that lead to recreational opportunities

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. (Letter 2010-434)

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. (Letter 2010-296)

People should be able to access all of the traditional climbing and hiking areas. (Letter 2010-390)

Rock Climbing

The National Park Service should consider climbing as a part of the Recreation ORV

Climbing should be identified as one of the Merced 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 develop 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. (Letter 2010-374)

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. (Letter 2010-328)

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). (Letter 2010-393)

The National Park Service should increase camping opportunities for climbers within the park

[To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:] 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. (Letter 2010-260)

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. (Letter 2010-195)

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. (Letter 2010-244)

The National Parks Service should consider the needs of climbers in the development of transportation plans

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. (Letter 2010-239)
Correspondence Id: 158516

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. (Letter 2010-244)

[To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:] - 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. (Letter 2010-328)

The National Park Service should preserve access to rock climbing areas in the park

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 (Letter 2010-80)

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. (Letter 2010-117)

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. (Letter 2010-120)

The National Park Service should maintain access for climbers

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. (Letter 2010-444)

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. (Letter 2010-459)

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. (Letter 2010-434)

The National Park Service should prohibit or restrict climbing in the park

[What needs to be fixed?] - Do away with mountain climbers (Letter 2010-102¹)

[What do you want to see protected?] - Consider banning rock climbing, at least ban any permanent bolts, defacements, etc on cliff faces (Letter 2010-102)

[What needs to be Fixed?] Restrict rock access in same manner (spirit) that backcountry is (Letter 2010-70)

The National Park Service should develop management policies in the MRP to enhance climbing opportunities within the park

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. (Letter 2010-112)

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. (Letter 2010-446)

Floating/Rafting/Watercraft

The National Park Service should only allow swimming in the river; do not allow rafting.

Limit or eliminate rafting or boating in the river above El Portal. (Letter 2010-28)

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. (Letter 2010-119)

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. (Letter 2010-236)

The National Park Service should continue to allow kayaking and watercraft on the river

Private boating allowed on river (Letter 2010-102)

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. (Letter 2010-114)

¹ Letter 2010-102 consists of notes from the Fresno Public Scoping Meeting Comment Board. Individual commenters were not identified.

Yosemite, provides us with some of the best rivers in California and being able to kayak in the park is awesome..... (Letter 2010-207)

The National Park Service should allow watercraft in more areas throughout the park

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. (Letter 2010-365)

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) 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. (Letter 2010-365)

I would greatly appropriate 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. (Letter 2010-363)

What I love about the Merced River is that 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 defecate 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. (Letter 2010-430)

The National Park Service should provide more access points along the river for watercraft and recreation

Establish raft launch sites near parking areas/campgrounds (Letter 2010-462)

[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. (Letter 2010-132)

Camping

The National Park Service should maintain or increase opportunities and access for camping

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. (Letter 2010-76)

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 (Letter 2010-76)

The National Park Service should create and enforce restrictions on activities in campgrounds that result in noise and air pollution

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... (Letter 2010-342)

Disallow generators in campgrounds, period. It pollutes the air but most of all destroys the camping experience. (Letter 2010-294)

[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. (Letter 2010-67)

The National Park Service should consult with the camping community when determining the development of the MRP

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. (Letter 2010-402)

The National Park Service should analyze ways to improve the campground reservation system

[What do you want to see fixed? changed? improved?] 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 (Letter 2010-110)

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. (Letter 2010-205)

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. (Letter 2010-154)

RV Camping and Tent Camping

The National Park Service needs to restrict the size of RVs and number of RV hook ups allowed in the park

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. (Letter 2010-342)

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-44)

The National Park Service should separate camping areas for different camping types

Would like to see more separation of camping types ... RV, tent only, etc. (Letter 2010-101)

A section for RVs should be provided with electricity if the occasional use of a generator bothers campers. (Letter 2010-311)

Tent camping opportunities should be increased and should be available separately from vehicle camper camping so that people can experience semi-quiet. (Letter 2010-390)

Walk-in campsites should be reserved for people utilizing public transportation or methods other than personal vehicles

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. (Letter 2010-313)

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? (Letter 2010-313)

Currently there aren't any walk-in camp sites except for the Backpackers Campground across Tenaya Creek from the North Pines campground . (Letter 2010-313)

The National Park Service should expand stay limits for camping within the park

Increase primitive tent camping sites, and relax stay limits. 7 days is not enough. . . 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!!!! (Letter 2010-440)

For climbers staying in excess of 10 days maybe a longer term fee that is cheaper. (Letter 2010-69)

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. (Letter 2010-244)

The National Park Service should provide more ADA accessibility and regulation in RV sites

When north pines and lower pines aren't open the handicap spot in Upper Pines is too short, too unlevel and awkward. We have also witnessed 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 motor home has a built in lift and can only open out in wide spots. Imagine our disappointment to see able, 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? (Letter 2010-231)

The National Park Service should reduce the need for generator use in the park by adding RV hook ups

Disallow generators in campgrounds, 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 (Letter 2010-294)

We would also suggest RV hookups in a campground to reduce the noise of generators and their associated fumes. (Letter 2010-379)

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. (Letter 2010-445)

Horseback Riding/Stock Use

The National Park Service should limit stock animal and horse use

The Wild and Scenic River corridor should be free from any horse traffic. (Letter 2010-100)

The erosion and pollution I have witnessed from excessive pack usage 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. (Letter 2010-100)

The National Park Service should continue stock animal and horse use

Equestrian groups are forgotten in planning process. Experience in the saddle is different than on 2 feet. It's an historic activity (Letter 2010-111)

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. (Letter 2010-189)

Visitor Use: Fishing

The National Park Service should protect access and opportunities for fishing in the park

[What do you want to see protected?] Protect fishing access (Letter 2010-111)

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. (Letter 2010-26)

Fishing in the Sierra is very special. Please leave the fish alone. (Letter 2010-59)

6.9 VISITOR CENTERS

The National Park Service should have additional visitor centers (possibly Gateway communities) to help orient visitors and to disperse traffic

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. (Letter 2010-314)

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. (Letter 2010-188)

The National Park Service should emphasize educating users on the importance of the park and its resources

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 a part of. RFID, GPS, GIS, Web technologies present opportunities to do so. I have specific ideas if you are interested in discussing further. (Letter 2010-329)

[What is important to me as a Park user and taxpayer? A place that:] Educates visitors to take care of the resource. (Letter 2010-319)

[To protect and enhance Yosemite climbing, the MRP should address:] Interpretive and educational facilities for and about climbing, including a climbing museum. (Letter 2010-260)

Visitor Facilities - Campgrounds

The National Park Service should not reduce the number of camping opportunities within the park

DO NOT reduce the number of accommodations. There must be places to stay while experiencing Yosemite. This will help with congestion and pollution. (Letter 2010-75)

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. (Letter 2010-32)

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. (Letter 2010-96)

The National Park Service should increase camping opportunities within the park

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? (Letter 2010-76)

[What needs to be fixed?] Expansion of campsites (Letter 2010-298)

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 or with grandparents, for whom drive-in camping is the most common mode. (Letter 2010-314)

The National Park Service should replace campsites lost during the 1997 flood

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. (Letter 2010-39)

[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 (Letter 2010-102)

Additionally the areas of Housekeeping Camp inundated in the 1997 flood should be removed and the site restored. (Letter 2010-115)

The National Park Service should establish visitor amenities, such as grocery stores or additional showers and restrooms, within 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 (Letter 2010-76)

[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). (Letter 2010-23)

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. If the above does not work how about having a family/campground shower pass you can purchase for \$20 per site. (Letter 2010-219)

The National Park Service should reduce the number of campsites within the park and not rebuild campsites lost in the 1997 flood

[4. What would you like to see kept the same?] No more campsites - too many folks in Valley as is (Letter 2010-3)

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. (Letter 2010-432)

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. (Letter 2010-44)

The National Park Service should limit the introduction of visitor amenities into campgrounds

[3. What needs to be fixed?] 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. (Letter 2010-16)

An increase in drive-in and walk-in primitive campgrounds requiring extremely low maintenance. (Letter 2010-203)

Enhance the pristine nature of the Park by making camping and lodging facilities more primitive (Letter 2010-195)

The National Park Service should establish and maintain affordable camping opportunities within the park

Keep campground prices reasonable so that the average family can still afford to visit. (Letter 2010-145)

[What needs to be Fixed?] Tent cabin rates are too expensive (Letter 2010-172)

The National Park Service should simplify the campground reservation system

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. (Letter 2010-350)

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. (Letter 2010-347)