

Final Wilderness Stewardship Plan / Environmental Impact Statement

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Lead Agency: National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior / National Park Service

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Wilderness Stewardship Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement (WSP/FEIS) is to provide direction for the National Park Service (NPS) to make decisions regarding the future use and protection of the parks' wilderness. The WSP/FEIS analyzes the consequences of creating a plan that would provide management direction for the many outstanding resource values present in the parks' wilderness, including natural and cultural resources, as well as diverse recreational and educational opportunities for visitors.

To achieve this purpose, the WSP/FEIS establishes specific goals and objectives for the management of visitors and certain administrative activities within the parks' wilderness. A variety of controversial or long-standing issues are addressed in the plan, including visitor capacity, wilderness permitting, party (group) size limits for people and stock, campfire regulations, camping locations and regulations, food-storage requirements, human-waste management, stock access, stock grazing, maintenance of facilities and trails, and management of frontcountry facilities that support wilderness use. The WSP/FEIS also analyzes and determines the types and levels of commercial services that may be performed for activities that are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas, as required by §4(d)(5) of the Wilderness Act. This plan intends to guide the management of wilderness within Sequoia and Kings Canyon for the next 15-20 years.

The WSP/FEIS presents and analyzes one no-action alternative and four action alternatives that provide five different ways to provide appropriate types and levels of access for visitors and authorized users, preserve wilderness character, protect cultural and natural resources, and adhere to legally required management and preservation objectives. The key elements considered in each alternative include wilderness use levels, access and trails, stock use and grazing, and recreational and administrative infrastructure. The high standard for natural resource preservation required by the 1964 Wilderness Act means there is little variation across the alternatives in terms of how natural resources are addressed. The main differences between these alternatives lie in the key elements of wilderness management – use levels, access and trails, stock use and grazing, and infrastructure, both recreational and administrative. These differences are driven by the different approach to management that each alternative offers. Each alternative serves visitor and/or operational needs in different ways.

The WSP/DEIS was available to the public, federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, and organizations for a 60-day public review period from June 27 to August 25, 2014. The NPS received 251 public comment letters from individuals, interest groups, businesses, or government agencies. Substantive comments are addressed in this WSP/FEIS, and the text has been changed, clarified, or expanded where necessary.

The final WSP/FEIS is available on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild>. A limited number of printed documents are available. To request printed documents or CDs, call (559) 565-3102, or write to the below address. A 30-day “no-action” period will begin on the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability of the final plan in the Federal Register, after which the NPS will prepare a record of decision (ROD). After approval of the ROD by the Pacific West Regional Director, the selected plan will be announced through local and regional press, and on the PEPC website.

Superintendent
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