



Wilderness and Backcountry Planning History

- Pre-1960s** Changes and impacts to wilderness conditions from high use levels were noted and some area specific restrictions were enacted.
- April 1961** The parks developed a ***Backcountry Management Plan*** – based on parks-wide findings, and guidance of the 1957 NPS publication *The National Park Wilderness*.
- 1963** The parks updated the ***Backcountry Management Plan*** with minor changes from 1961.
- 1964** The ***Wilderness Act*** is passed by Congress and signed by President Johnson establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System (no-NPS managed lands were designated in this Act).
- 1968** A ***Backcountry Management Evaluation*** is completed by park employee Lowell Sumner. This looked at impacts on meadows and places of high use.
- 1971** Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks develop and release a Master Plan to guide overall park management, both frontcountry and backcountry. This plan indicated high use in some areas and proposed some management changes, including phasing out, as conditions permit, livestock use in higher elevations, and development of additional High Sierra Camps. In discussing backcountry issues, the plan stated “Basically the problem is visitor use, principally by stock parties in the past but presently by the backpacker.”
- 1973** The parks developed and implemented a ***Plan For Management of Backcountry Use*** which was a culmination of efforts with US Forest Service (USFS) and Yosemite NP (YOSE). This led to the zone system still in use today, and established a wilderness permit system and trailhead entry quotas. The plan also dealt with grazing concerns and approaches to lowering impacts.
- 1976** A minor update of the ***Plan For Management of Backcountry Use*** was completed.
- Early 1980s to 1986** The parks were involved in the development and public involvement actions that lead to the completion and implementation of the ***Backcountry Management Plan (BMP)*** and ***Stock Use and Meadow Management Plan (SUMMP)***. These were the parks’ first backcountry/wilderness planning actions conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – this effort had two Environmental Assessments (EA) and subsequent Findings of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) completed to describe justifications for decisions.
- 1984** The ***California Wilderness Act*** passed – designating the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness.
- Early 1990s** Attempts by management to internally rewrite 1986 ***BMP*** and ***SUMMP*** were suspended due to presence of contentious issues and to ensure adequate public involvement to comply with NEPA.
- 1993 to 1996** Development of Party-Size increase EA. To achieve consistency with neighboring land management agencies (USFS & YOSE), management prepared an EA to increase stock party size in the parks from 20 to 25. This led to a lawsuit and subsequent settlement that kept in-park maximum party size at 15 people and 20 head of stock.

- Late 1990s** Park took actions to develop a *Wilderness Management Plan*; A Notice Of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register; many internal and public meetings were held; and a Wilderness Workbook was developed to obtain public input on specific issues. This process was suspended in 1999 to allow for the parks' General Management Plan (GMP) to be developed.
- 2006 to 2007** The parks' **Final GMP and Environmental Impact Statement** were released and the **Record of Decision** signed by the Regional Director. The GMP calls for the development of a Wilderness Stewardship Plan to guide the management of approximately ninety-seven percent of the lands of these parks over the next twenty to twenty-five years.
- 2009** *Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009* passed designating the John Krebs Wilderness and expanding the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness.
- 2010** The parks are awarded funding from the NPS' Natural Resource Program Center's Environmental Quality Division to assist in the development of a Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Several research projects are developed and begun to better inform the plan and parks formally resume the process to develop a Wilderness Stewardship Plan.

