



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WESTERN REGION

450 GOLDEN GATE AVENUE, BOX 36063
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7619(WR-RPE)

June 4, 1986

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon
From: Regional Director, Western Region
Subject: Approval of Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI's)
for Backcountry and Stock Use and Meadow Management
Plans

The subject FONSI's has been approved. Enclosed are copies for your use. Please make appropriate public notification of availability of these documents.

Howard H. Chapman

Enclosures

✓	SUPT		6/6
	AS		
	AD		
✓	MA		6/6
	RS		
	WS		
	CPI		
	CPW		
	CPK		
	CPW		
	PSD		
	BUDG		
	EO		
	PERS		
✓	FILES		

June 2, 1986

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BACKCOUNTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

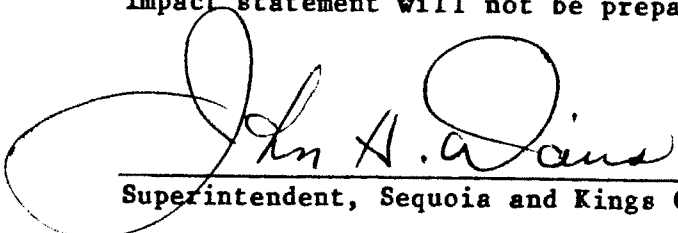
The National Park Service proposes to implement a Backcountry Management Plan which has been developed over the last few years. The Plan is actually an update of a similar plan which was approved and implemented in 1976 and has been in operation since. An environmental assessment was prepared in January 1984 analyzing four alternatives for management of the backcountry; (A) Moderate use alternative which would essentially continue the existing patterns and levels of use, (B) no action, which would continue similar use levels and patterns but with a somewhat higher overall use level and (C) unlimited use. Alternative (A), allowing continued moderate use levels was selected as the proposed action.

The environmental assessment was made available for a 30 day public review on February 27, 1984 along with a draft of the Backcountry Management Plan. Very strong initial public reaction to the length and complexity of the plan resulted in a decision to extend the comment period for about 9 months, through December 31, 1984 and postpone the implementation date to the summer of 1985; and make available for public review, shortened versions of the plans, eliminating much background, history and extraneous descriptive material. The shortened version was made available for public review on February 5, 1985 and was followed by public meetings; at Bishop, California on March 16, 1985 and at Visalia, California on March 23, 1985. Implementation of the plan was postponed again until 1986 to allow time for analysis of comments and adjustment of the plan where necessary.

There were approximately 77 letters of comment on the plan and assessment. Of those, 62 expressed support and 15 were opposed to the plan. Of those people opposed, most were concerned about the provisions for stock use and meadow management. The same people expressed the same concerns directly about the Stock Use plan. Those specific concerns were addressed in many meetings and considerable correspondence resulting in modifications to many of the specific details of the Stock Use and Meadow Management plan. The modifications resulted in general acceptance of the final versions of both of the plans. In fact only two letters of comment, both favorable, were received on the final version of the plan when it was made available for public review.

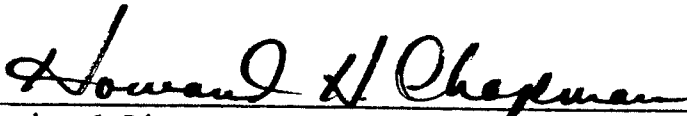
The National Park Service plans to implement the plan with revisions made on various technical points based on various comments received from the public and our own review and analysis. The basic thrust of the plan and therefore its effects as outlined in the assessment remain essentially the same as outlined in the draft documents.

Based on an analysis of the environmental assessment and public comments received and subsequent modifications made to details of the plan, it does not appear to constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the environment, therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.



Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

6/2/86
Date



Regional Director, Western Region

6/4/86
Date

June 2, 1986

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

STOCK USE AND MEADOW MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

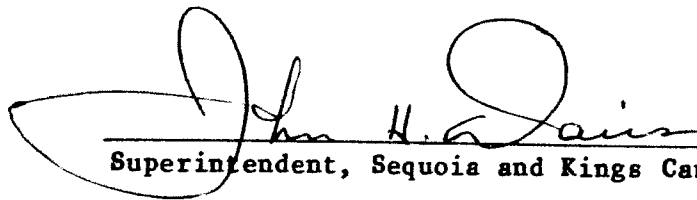
In accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy of 1969 and the regulations of the council on Environmental quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental assessment was prepared to evaluate the various methods of managing recreational stock use in these Parks. At the present time stock use is regulated through a series of add on conditions to wilderness permits that evolved over the last 15 to 20 years to address specific problems as they surfaced. These wilderness permit conditions were piecemeal and incomplete and were in some instances inconsistent.

The four alternatives considered in the environmental assessment included: (1) no action, (2) eliminating use of pack and saddle stock from these Parks, (3) require that pack and saddle stock carry necessary feed with them and (4) systematic management of stock use with emphasis on regulation of grazing use. The alternative selected is to systematically manage stock and grazing use under a Stock Use and Meadow Management Plan that provides opportunity for public review and comment.

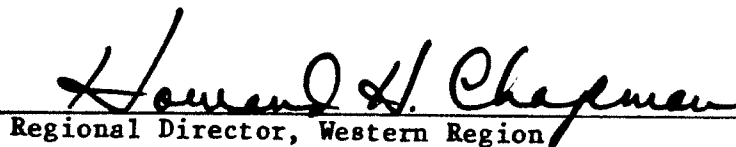
This plan was prepared as a companion plan to the Backcountry Plan for these Parks and basically allows for continuation of the existing levels and patterns of use. The Stock Plan formalizes many of the controls that had been in effect for years plus adding other controls where necessary to protect park resources. Specifically the Plan: (1) designates trails and areas open to stock use; (2) establishes opening dates for grazing use of forage areas; (3) establishes limits on the level of grazing use of certain forage areas; (4) protects a small number of meadows from grazing for scientific study, grazing use monitoring and visitor enjoyment; (5) establishes a formal monitoring system for grazing and other uses of these Parks' wilderness and backcountry; (6) establishes interim limits of acceptable change; (7) provides for a system of updating the Plans with opportunity for public input. Significantly, the Stock Use Plan contains a statement that the 1971 Master Plan will be revised to correct the present provision in it to the effect that stock use will be phased out. When a new General Management Plan (GMP) is prepared to replace the Park Master Plan it will contain a statement that will make it clear that stock use will be allowed to continue.

The preparation of the Stock Use and Meadow Management Plan and associated environmental assessment took more than four years and included opportunity for considerable public input through public meetings, meetings between Park Managers and special interest groups and individuals. Of the approximately 150 people who commented on the plan over half (56%) were opposed to the plan as it was proposed. Primary concerns were relative to details of specific opening dates, areas open to use and travel, specific meadows protected from grazing, etc. Many meetings were held with special interest groups and interested citizens resulting in many modifications of details affecting the aforementioned aspects of the plans. As a result of those modifications, those most concerned expressed acceptance of the plans in their final form.

Based on an analysis of the environmental assessment, public comments received and subsequent modifications made to details of the plan, the proposed action does not appear to constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the environment, therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.


Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park

6/2/86
Date


Regional Director, Western Region

6/4/86
Date