



Wilderness Stewardship Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Preliminary Draft Alternatives Newsletter

Planning for the Future of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks' Wilderness

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing a Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Last spring and summer, we received more than 900 comments during the initial public scoping period for the WSP. We reviewed all of the comments and have identified topics which will be addressed in the WSP. For each of the key topics, we have developed preliminary draft alternatives.

We are asking for your input again. Please help us identify any topics that we may have missed so that we can further refine the alternatives. Take a moment to read this newsletter, which provides a summary of the alternatives, and make sure to visit our planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild> for a detailed description of each of the preliminary draft alternatives. We will be accepting your comments through November 19, 2012. Also, in late October, we will be conducting public meetings to provide additional information, and to listen to your concerns and questions. A complete meeting schedule can be found on this page.

We value your feedback during this process and look forward to reading your comments on these preliminary draft alternatives.

Sincerely,

Superintendent *Karen F. Taylor-Goodrich*

Next Steps in the Planning Process

Dates	Planning Activity
Fall 2012	Public Review of Preliminary Draft Alternatives
Winter 2012 - Fall 2013	Refine Draft Alternatives and Prepare Draft WSP/EIS
Fall 2013 - Winter 2014	Public Review of Draft WSP/EIS
Spring 2014	Analysis of Public Comment on Draft WSP/EIS
Summer 2014	Prepare Final WSP/EIS
Fall 2014	Release Final WSP/EIS
Spring 2015	Record of Decision

Public Meetings

Thursday, October 25, 2012
7:00 - 9:00 pm
Eastern Sierra Tri-county Fairgrounds
Patio Building
Sierra Street and Fair Street
Bishop, CA 93514

Friday, October 26, 2012
7:00 - 9:00 pm
Los Angeles River Center
California Building Atrium
570 West Avenue 26
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Monday, October 29, 2012
7:00 - 9:00 pm
East Bay Regional Parks
Redwood Regional Park
Richard C. Trudeau Training Center
Main Conference Room
11500 Skyline Blvd
Oakland, CA 94619

Tuesday, October 30, 2012
6:00 - 8:00 pm
Visalia Marriott Hotel
Main Ballroom
300 South Court Street
Visalia, CA 93291



Purpose and Need for the Wilderness Stewardship Plan

The California Wilderness Act of 1984 designated wilderness in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 designated the John Krebs wilderness and expanded wilderness acreage. Today, 808,079 acres of the two parks is designated as wilderness, with another 29,500 acres managed as wilderness in accordance with NPS policies. Since 1986, wilderness management in the parks has been guided by the Backcountry Management Plan and Stock Use and Meadow Management Plan. The purpose of the new Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) is to establish a framework for management of wilderness within Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in order to preserve wilderness character and provide opportunities for access and use in accordance with the Wilderness Act and other laws and policies.



What is Wilderness Character?

Section 2(a) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 states that wilderness areas “shall be administered for *the use and enjoyment* of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, *and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character...*” (emphasis added).

Federal wilderness managers have agreed on the meaning of wilderness character as defined in *Keeping It Wild* (Landres, et.al., 2008), a strategy produced by an interagency panel. The qualities of wilderness character are categorized as:

- Untrammeled - wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from the *actions* of modern human control or manipulation.
- Natural - wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the *effects* of modern civilization.
- Undeveloped - wilderness retains its primeval character and influence, and is *essentially* without permanent improvement or modern human habitation.
- Solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation - wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude *or* primitive and unconfined recreation.
- Unique - An individual wilderness may have unique qualities, such as archeological resources or historic structures whose contributions to wilderness values cannot be captured by the other four qualities.

Preserving wilderness character is our mission, by law and policy.



Actions Common to All Alternatives

Commenters brought forward a number of important issues. However, many are topics related to existing laws, regulations, and policies, or are actions that will be common across all alternatives. The following are examples of these topics:

- Education will be a component of all the alternatives. A separate wilderness education and interpretation plan will be developed.
- Cultural resources, including archeological sites, historic structures, and ethnographic resources, will continue to be managed in accordance with law, including the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Cooperative management with the adjoining U.S. Forest Service wilderness areas, and Yosemite National Park, will continue to occur.
- Existing regulations will remain in place (e.g. the prohibition of: hunting, pets, pack goats, bicycles, paragliding, hang gliding, base jumping, marijuana cultivation, etc.).
- The protection of threatened, endangered, or sensitive species, and critical habitat, will be addressed under each alternative.
- The NPS is developing a separate and complementary Resource Stewardship Strategy for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks that will recommend science- and scholarship-based approaches to achieve and maintain the desired conditions of the parks' natural and cultural resources.
- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are recognized for being at the forefront of advancing scientific research and the integration of knowledge gained from scientific inquiry into the management of wilderness resources. The WSP will support the continuation of scientific research in wilderness, using methods that preserve the qualities of wilderness character.
- The WSP will be linked to other ongoing or future planning efforts, such as the Cave Management Plan, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Plan, Climbing Management Plan, and the Resource Stewardship Strategy.

Zoning

The Wilderness Act and NPS policies provide the foundation for the management of wilderness. Zoning is a management tool that can be used to make distinctions in desired conditions and management actions in wilderness, while upholding the mandates of law and policy. The following four zones would be considered for the WSP.

Zone	Description
Zone A	Areas and trail corridors proximate to non-wilderness areas (within 1 mile of roads, and trail corridors within approximately 6 miles of the trailheads). Examples include the Mist Falls, Little Baldy, Watchtower/Heather Lake, and Ladybug trail corridors.
Zone B	Includes high use major trail corridors and administrative and visitor developments, such as ranger stations, bridges, and food storage lockers. Trails are highly developed and regularly maintained. Examples include the John Muir, High Sierra, and Pacific Crest trail corridors.
Zone C	Includes lower use trail corridors that are generally less developed. There are fewer administrative and visitor developments. Examples include Taboose Pass to Bench Lake, Kennedy Canyon, and Upper Ranger Meadow to Elizabeth Pass trail corridors.
Zone D	Cross country areas that generally do not include administrative or visitor facilities. Examples include Miter Basin, Lamarck Col/Darwin Canyon, Baxter Pass, and New Army Pass to Mount Langley summit.

Commercial Services

Through the WSP, a specialized finding of the extent of commercial services necessary (Extent Necessary Determination) to meet the purposes of wilderness will be completed. If commercial services are shown to be necessary, alternatives could include allowing existing commercial uses, reducing commercial uses, authorizing new types of commercial services, and restricting commercial services in certain zones or areas.



Preliminary Draft Alternatives

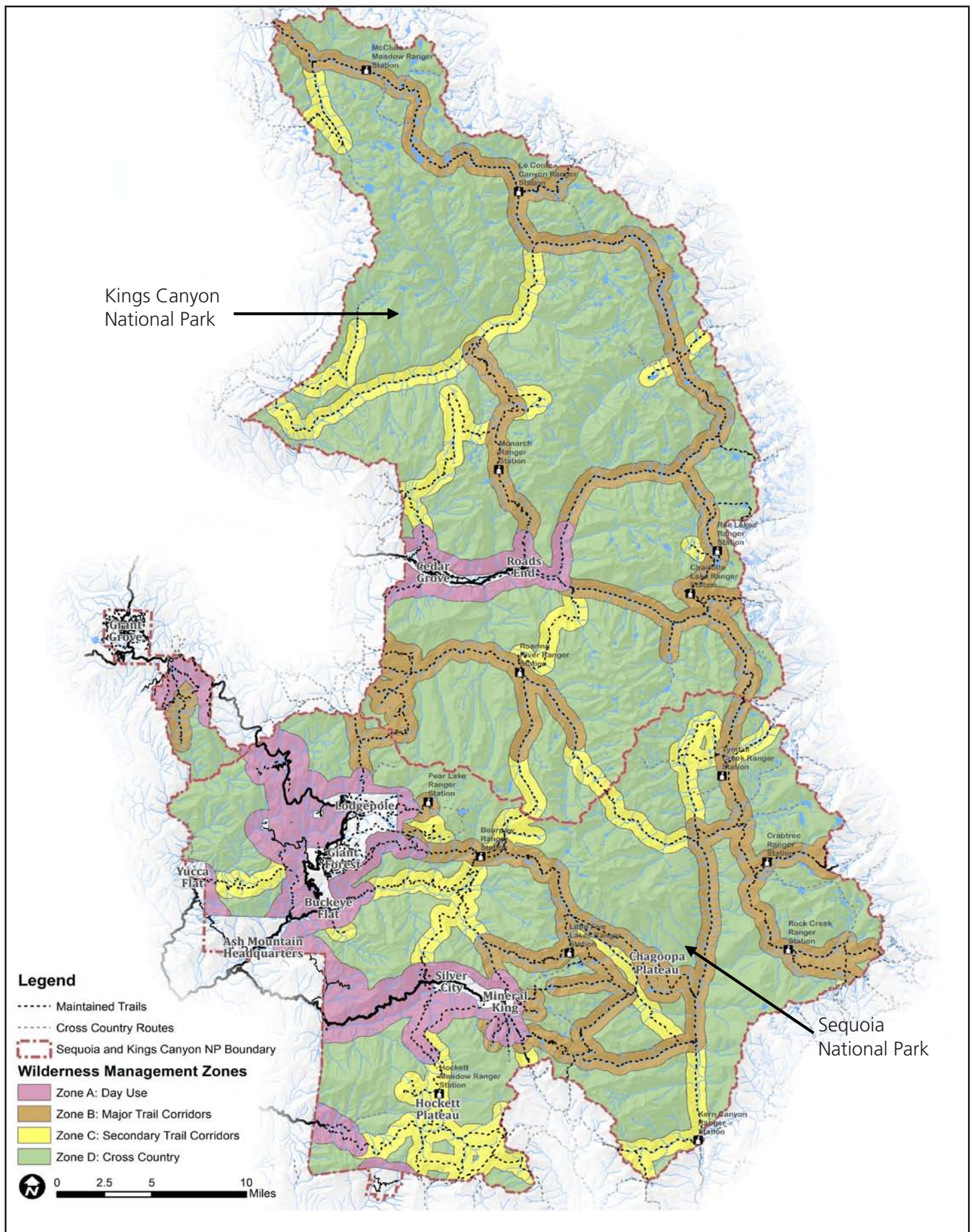
The preliminary draft alternatives are based on wilderness planning guidelines and public input during the scoping process. These preliminary draft alternatives were developed with a goal of maintaining or improving wilderness character while providing for a diversity of appropriate uses.

We encourage you to review the full description of the preliminary draft alternatives located on the web at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild>. If you are unable to access these materials electronically, a CD or printed version of the information is available by calling (559) 565-3102.

Alternatives will be fully developed following analysis of public input received during the comment period, which ends on November 19, 2012. The alternatives and their descriptions are likely to change as public input is incorporated.

The refined draft alternatives will be presented for public comment as part of the draft WSP/EIS which is scheduled for release in early 2014. A preferred alternative for the WSP will be presented at that time.

Wilderness Management Zones



Kings Canyon National Park →

→ Sequoia National Park

Legend

- Maintained Trails
 - Cross Country Routes
 - - - - - Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP Boundary
- Wilderness Management Zones**
- Zone A: Day Use
 - Zone B: Major Trail Corridors
 - Zone C: Secondary Trail Corridors
 - Zone D: Cross Country

Key Topics Addressed in the Preliminary Draft Alternatives

Permitting/Quotas

The NPS would develop specific entrance/ trailhead quotas. Destination quotas-- where the total number of visitors allowed at a particular location is limited-- would be considered for selected areas.

Trails/Bridges and Related Trail Structures, including Signs

A Trail Management Plan will be a component of the WSP. A trails classification system is being developed to guide the level of trail development, maintenance, and signing.

Campfires

The NPS currently restricts campfires for protection of down wood resources and for other ecological purposes. Elevational fire limits would be considered for resource protection.

Food Storage

Food storage requirements provide resource protection by preventing wildlife from obtaining human food. A range of alternatives is included to address food storage in wilderness.

Human Waste Management

Management goals related to human waste include protecting natural and cultural resources, reducing litter and health hazards created by improperly disposed of toilet paper, and increasing visitor knowledge of appropriate sanitation and toilet paper disposal in wilderness. Alternatives related to facilities and disposal methods are considered.



Party Size - People

The size of groups traveling and/or camping together would be managed to preserve opportunities for solitude and to reduce adverse impacts on the natural character of wilderness. A variety of options are explored.

Party Size - Stock Groups

The size of stock groups would be managed to preserve opportunities for solitude and to manage the impacts on wilderness character created by the number of stock and people traveling and camping together. The number of people, the number of stock, and the combined group size would be limited to manage impacts.

Campsites - Backpacker

Our goal is to provide opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and to preserve the natural quality of wilderness character, while limiting development. Alternatives include removing, maintaining, and designating campsites.

Campsites - Stock Camps

The NPS will consider alternatives to address the issue of hiker and stock user conflict and to minimize impacts from stock camps to protect opportunities for solitude and the natural quality of wilderness. Options considered include establishing stock camps and requiring their use, recommending the use of previously used and established camps, and the removal and restoration of some stock camps.



Night Limits for All Campers (Stock and Backpackers)

Short-term night limits in high use areas would be considered in order to protect opportunities for solitude. Short-term night limits could be applied in areas close to trail heads, busy trail junctions, or at popular destinations. Long-term night limits would be established to ensure that individuals / groups do not establish semi-permanent camps thereby limiting opportunities for others.

Stock (horses, mules, burros, and llamas)

Alternatives consider constraints on stock travel for resource protection and to minimize conflicts between users.

Recreational and Administrative Grazing

Options for recreational and administrative grazing are considered, including expanding the existing meadow management program, setting elevational limits on grazing, and prohibiting grazing overall.

Administrative Support Facilities - Ranger Stations, Staging Areas, and Administrative Pastures

Ranger stations may include a tent platform or building and associated administrative facilities. Ranger stations may be used by other administrative functions, such as for resource stewardship, maintenance, and other purposes. Alternatives include keeping existing ranger stations, adding stations, or removing stations.

Administrative Support Facilities - Crew Camps

Crew camps are used by park maintenance, resource managers, and rangers to administer the wilderness. Camps may include core camping areas, fire pits, and food storage lockers. Options for managing crew camps are considered in the alternatives.

Other Facilities

Redwood Canyon cabin and cache: The Redwood Canyon cabin and cache is a structure in wilderness. It is currently used by a non-governmental organization to facilitate research in a nearby cave. Future options for this cabin are explored through the WSP.

Pear Lake Ski Hut (Ranger Station): The California Wilderness Act of 1984 and its accompanying House of Representatives Committee Report 98-40 (1983) provides for the continued winter operation of the Pear Lake Ski Hut, unless this non-conforming use is deemed to have unacceptable wilderness impacts. The area is categorized as a Designated Potential Wilderness Addition (DPWA) based on the non-conforming use of a commercial enterprise (winter ski hut operation). Options for the continuation or cessation of the ski hut operation are explored in the WSP.

Bearpaw Meadow High Sierra Camp: The Bearpaw Meadow High Sierra Camp is operated as a commercial enterprise in a DPWA per the California Wilderness Act (1984) and its accompanying House of Representatives Committee Report 98-40 (1983). The WSP will look at options for the continuation or cessation of the non-conforming commercial enterprise of the Bearpaw Meadow High Sierra Camp.

Hockett Plateau High Sierra Camp: The 2007 GMP called for the consideration of a new commercial high sierra camp on the Hockett Plateau. However, this option has been ruled out as a result of the 2009 Omnibus Act which requires the area to be managed as wilderness (Public Law 111-11, March 30, 2009, 123 STAT. 991).

Frontcountry Facilities to Support Wilderness Use

The development or modification of any frontcountry facilities that may support the use, enjoyment, and stewardship of wilderness would be evaluated in the WSP. Commercial services in the frontcountry that support wilderness use would be addressed after the Extent Necessary Determination is completed.



Preliminary Draft Alternatives Overview

The following summary table is representative of what is included in the full matrix of alternatives found at:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild>

Topic	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	Alternative 6
	No Action - Current management practices continue.	Protect wilderness character while accommodating increased visitor use and allowing for expanded facilities for visitor and administrative support.	Protect wilderness character by balancing visitor access, development, and restrictions.	Protect wilderness character and reduce need for development by decreasing visitor access and increasing restrictions.	Substantially reduce development and protect wilderness character by reducing visitor use and increasing restrictions.	Provide for the most unconstrained wilderness experience and protect wilderness character by significantly reducing visitor access.
Permits	Permits required for overnight use only	Permits required for overnight use only	Permits required for overnight use only	Permits required for day and overnight use	Permits required for day and overnight use	Permits required for day and overnight use
Quotas: Entry	No change to existing trailhead quotas	Quotas would increase for some trailheads	Quotas would remain mostly unchanged except in high use areas	Quotas decreased at some higher use trailheads	Quotas decreased at most trailheads	Quotas decreased at all trailheads
Quotas: Destination	Some destination quotas exist in popular areas	More destination quotas could be added	More destination quotas could be added	More destination quotas could be added	More destination quotas could be added	No destination quotas
Campfires	Campfires prohibited above 10,000' in KICA and 10,400' in SEQU (and lower in specific locations)	Campfires prohibited above 10,400' (and lower in specific locations)	Campfires prohibited above 10,000' in KICA and above 8,500' in SEQU	Campfires prohibited above 8,500' wilderness-wide	Campfires prohibited wilderness-wide	Campfires allowed in all areas except Zone A
Food Storage: Requirements	Containers required in some areas	Containers required in some areas	Containers required in some areas	Containers required for all overnight users	Containers required for most overnight users	Self-determined, appropriate food storage required
Food Storage: Lockers	Food storage lockers are present in many locations	Some food storage lockers would be added	Existing food storage lockers would be maintained or some removed	All food storage lockers would be removed	All food storage lockers would be removed	All food storage lockers would be removed
Party Size	Day use limit is 25, overnight limit is 15, stock limit of 20	Party sizes increased	Party sizes mostly unchanged	Party sizes decreased from current limit	Party sizes decreased from current limit	Party sizes decreased from current limit
Stock Use: Access	Stock allowed on most trails	Stock allowed on most trails	Some areas closed to stock	Some areas closed to stock	No stock access in Zone D	Most areas open to stock
Stock Use: Grazing	Grazing is allowed in selected meadows while other meadows are closed to grazing	Some additional meadows may be opened to grazing by small stock parties	Grazing prohibited above a specific elevation limit with some grazing allowed below	Grazing prohibited above a specific elevation limit with some grazing allowed below	No grazing allowed	Few grazing restrictions



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Three Rivers, California 93271-9700
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild>

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How to Comment

There are several ways to provide comments:

- Access additional information and provide comments online at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild>;
- Attend the public meetings; or
- Mail or fax comments to:

Karen F. Taylor-Goodrich, Superintendent
ATTN: Wilderness Stewardship Plan Preliminary Draft Alternatives
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
47050 Generals Highway, Three Rivers, CA 93271-9700
Fax: (559) 565-4202

The comment period for the preliminary draft alternatives ends on November 19, 2012. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be publicly available at any time. Comments made by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations will not be accepted.

Questions to Consider

Is this a sufficient range of alternatives?

Have we missed any key topics?

What do you like about the alternatives?

Are there specific elements that should be changed? If yes, how would you change them?



For complete information visit <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild>