

# Wilderness Stewardship Plan: Trails and Stock Travel

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks  
California



The trail system of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks has a history as long as human use of the area. With more than 650 miles of maintained trails to choose from, visitors have ample opportunities to explore the parks' wilderness via trail. However, the trail system has a dual effect on opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. While trails facilitate opportunities for primitive recreation for many users by providing access to wilderness, they can also concentrate use, which reduces opportunities for solitude. Trails also have a dual effect on the natural quality of wilderness: the trail itself is an impact, but concentrating use to a single track can prevent impacts from spreading. Managing the trail system must strike a balance between providing access for recreation and protecting resources (both natural and cultural) and opportunities for solitude and self-reliance.

Visitors can choose to travel on maintained trails, unmaintained routes or the vast cross-country areas of the wilderness where no constructed trails are present.

***Desired Condition for Trails and Access*** – The trail system would facilitate access for visitor use and enjoyment of the wilderness. Trails would be well suited to the types and levels of visitor use.

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## Status Quo (Alternative 1)

The 1986 Backcountry Management Plan (BMP) recognizes two types of managed travelways: maintained trails and designated unmaintained routes. Maintained trails are those receiving periodic maintenance, while designated unmaintained routes rarely receive maintenance.

Most trails are maintained to standards that allow for stock use, with a few hiker-only trails designated for resource protection or to reduce visitor-use conflicts. Stock travel is generally allowed on designated unmaintained routes but, since these get little maintenance, many of these routes have become impassable to stock. Over time, different trails have received different levels of maintenance based on available funding and current priorities. This has resulted in different levels of trail development across the wilderness, with heavily used trails generally more developed than less-used trails.

- Maintained trails open to stock: 636.1 miles
- Maintained trails – hiker only: 10.9 miles
- Designated unmaintained routes: 96.6 miles
- Total miles of managed travelways: 743.6 miles

In addition to the trails and routes open to stock, stock parties may travel more than 0.5 mile from maintained trails in four areas: the Hockett Plateau, the Monarch Divide including Hotel Creek, the Roaring River drainage, and the western side of the Kern River watershed south from Chagoopa Plateau.

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## Alternatives – Trails and Stock Travel

All action alternatives (2 – 5) include two significant changes to current management. First, the National Park Service will partially adopt the U.S. Forest Service system of trail development class. Each trail in wilderness will be assigned a managed level of development, from Class 1 (minimally developed) to Class 3 (fully developed). Second, the category “designated unmaintained route” will be eliminated. Some of these routes will be adopted into the maintained trail system and kept open for stock use; some will be abandoned and stock use discontinued. Although all alternatives have some trails with restrictions on stock travel to reduce resource or user conflict issues, alternative 4 considers designating more hiker-only trails in order to provide more stock-free hiking experiences. Alternative 5 considers restricting all stock travel to on or near trails in order to prevent stock impacts to off-trail areas.

|  | <b>Alternative 2<br/>(NPS Preferred):<br/>Emphasize Site-Specific Actions to<br/>Protect Wilderness</b> | <b>Alternative 3:<br/>Emphasize<br/>Opportunities for<br/>Primitive Recreation</b> | <b>Alternative 4:<br/>Emphasize<br/>Undeveloped and<br/>Noncommercial<br/>Recreation</b> | <b>Alternative 5:<br/>Emphasize<br/>Opportunities for<br/>Solitude</b> |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Class 1:<br/>minimally<br/>developed</b>  | 112 miles   | 51.8 miles   | 110.5 miles  | 78.5 miles   |
| <b>Class 2:<br/>moderately<br/>developed</b> | 288.3 miles   | 142.9 miles  | 255.6 miles  | 226.1 miles  |
| <b>Class 3:<br/>developed</b>                | 294.1 miles   | 512.1 miles  | 271 miles  | 390.4 miles  |
| <b>Open to<br/>Stock:</b>                    | 652.9 miles   | 669.3 miles  | 527.4 miles  | 662.9 miles  |
| <b>Hiker Only:</b>                           | 41.5 miles  | 37.5 miles   | 109.7 miles  | 32.1 miles   |
| <b>Total:</b>                                | 694.4 miles   | 706.8 miles  | 637.1 miles  | 695 miles  |
| <b>Off-trail<br/>stock areas:</b>            | Yes   | Yes  | Yes (for<br>private parties only)  | No   |

### Why adopt a trail-classification system?

Designating different development classes for different trails will preserve a diverse range of challenges, provide for a range of recreational opportunities, ensure the appropriate (minimal) amount of development is applied to each trail to protect wilderness character, and allow trail maintenance funds to be spent efficiently. Certain trail segments are assigned different classes in different alternatives to meet the alternative's goals.

### Where can I find more information?

Trails are addressed as Element 2 in each alternative and in Appendix K in the WSP/DEIS. Table 45 and Tables 47a through 47e at the end of Chapter 2 summarize the trail alternatives. Stock travel is addressed in Element 8 in each alternative, and in Table 45 and Table 50 at the end of Chapter 2.

An interactive map showing how trails and access are addressed in each alternative is available at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild> under "Document List."

### How can I submit comments?

The National Park Service uses a web-based system, called the *Planning, Environment, and Public Comment* (PEPC) system, to give people access to current plans and related documents that are open for review and comment. Go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild> to find the WSP/DEIS and other documents and maps that will be helpful in your review. We encourage you to use this system to submit written comments on the plan. Written comments will also be accepted by mail, hand delivery, or fax to:

Superintendent  
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks  
Attn: WSP/DEIS  
47050 Generals Highway  
Three Rivers, CA 93271  
Fax: 559-565-4202