

# SEEKING PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE FUTURE OF SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

General Management Plan • Newsletter 5 – Preliminary Alternatives • January 2000

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all of your help as we develop a general management plan (GMP) for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Your ideas and comments on the planning workbook have been used to develop a range of reasonable alternatives for managing the parks. *These alternatives are presented in this newsletter for your information, and they will be the basis for the alternatives analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement.* This winter we will start analyzing the impacts of the alternatives and preparing the impact statement. The environmental impact statement will include a preferred alternative or proposed action, which will most likely contain elements of all the alternatives presented in this newsletter. The preferred alternative will be developed as we weigh the advantages and impacts of alternative actions. Our goal is to release a draft general management plan and environmental impact statement next year. Even though the next period for comments will be when the draft environmental impact statement is published, you are always welcome to contact us at the addresses listed at the end of this newsletter.

## What You Told Us

We received about 750 responses to the planning workbook — a phenomenal response rate — and we've read them carefully. A large number of people also came to the April work\_shops that were held around California. We've attempted to reflect your comments in the alternative visions presented in this newsletter. Some frequently repeated comments led us to add new elements to some visions; for example, many of your comments emphasized the importance of education in all aspects of park enjoyment and management. Consequently, we've added more educational elements in the alternatives.

In addition to the ideas that were used to develop alternatives, you also provided some surprises. The biggest was that quite a few people wanted to expand the parks' boundaries. The suggested additions would add sequoia groves or cultural resources, protect habitat for endangered species, create additional buffer space around the parks, or unify the management approach of federal agencies. The criteria against which these adjustments would be evaluated are listed on page .

## Connecting the General Management Plan and the Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan

When the general management plan started, a wilderness management plan was already underway for Sequoia and Kings Canyon. Because we had thought that the wilderness plan would be finished first, we assumed its recommendations would be folded into the general management plan. But as work on both planning efforts has moved forward, we are finding that many of the issues that need to be resolved for the wilderness management plan must be decided first in the general management plan. Examples are

- appropriate management prescriptions for backcountry and wilderness
- wilderness additions or study areas
- stock use and types of stock use
- backcountry concessions
- new backcountry activities

How these broad issues are resolved will affect future resource conditions and visitor experiences, and we have decided it is most appropriate to deal with them in the general management plan. Work on what will now be called the **backcountry and wilderness management plan** will continue to look at what the GMP alternative visions would mean for backcountry areas. That plan will also deal with many issues that are far too detailed for the general management plan. The backcountry and wilderness management plan will be completed as an implementation plan at about the same time as the general management plan.

If you are on the mailing list for the wilderness planning effort, you will continue to receive newsletters and information about the progress being made on that plan, and you will be placed on the mailing list for the general management plan.

## Management Prescriptions and the Draft Alternatives

The National Park Service uses **management prescriptions** to describe how different areas in the parks are managed. These prescriptions are guide\_lines for achieving desired future conditions for natural and cultural resources as well as for visitor experiences. Your comments have been used to define the different types of conditions that would be appropriate or desirable for different prescriptions. We have developed six different management prescriptions for the frontcountry, and another four are being considered for the backcountry.

**Alternatives** are the different ways prescriptions could be applied to the geography of the parks. The number of potential alternatives is infinite, but for the sake of practicality and clarity we have defined four. Each of these alternatives is based on a different overall vision of what the parks should be. One alternative is based on what the parks are at present; the other three seek to provide distinctly different points of view of the parks' future direction. Ultimately, the National Park Service will select one of these visions, or a synthesis of more than one, as the basis for its preferred alternative.

Most lands in Sequoia and Kings Canyon are backcountry, and these areas will be managed in accordance with the backcountry prescriptions described in this newsletter. The **backcountry and wilderness management plan** will show where these prescriptions could be applied and will provide more detailed information.

These alternative approaches should have captured most of the range of your visions about how the parks could be managed. We have tried to make sure that these draft alternatives address the things that you have said are important, and the brief alternative titles are based on your comments on the workbook. *Remember, there is no preferred alternative at this point; that decision will be made once we've had a chance to analyze the impacts of the alternatives during the development of the draft environmental impact statement.*

## What Happens Next?

Once we have verified that we have a reasonable range of GMP alternatives, we will begin analyzing the impacts of implementing them. This analysis will include determining what is needed to fulfill the parks' *missions, purposes, and significance*, as well as the costs and benefits of the alternatives. We will then identify the elements of a preferred alternative or proposed action. A full description of the alternatives and the impacts will be included in the draft environmental impact statement. Your input to this point has been critical, and we will later seek for your help and comments on the draft environmental impact statement and implementation strategies by holding public meetings and asking for written comments.

We hope the prescriptions and alternatives below include your vision. We are not seeking your responses at this time unless you think we have missed something.

***Planning is a means for exploring how different points of view fit with the parks' legal mandates (as well as their missions, purposes, and significance), and how they correspond with desired resource conditions and visitor experiences. However, the final determination of what alternative is selected as the plan is the responsibility of the National Park Service. We take this responsibility seriously, and your input is important to this process. Our charge is to preserve and protect resources while providing for public enjoyment in a manner that will leave the parks unimpaired for future generations.***

Thank you for participating in this important planning effort. These are national parks — places special to our nation and to you for a multitude of reasons — and our joint task is to ensure thoughtful planning and management for the future.

Michael Tollefson, Superintendent

## Prescribing Desired Future Conditions for Resources and Experiences

Management prescriptions are guidelines for achieving desired future conditions for both resources and visitor experiences. Based on your comments about visions and acceptable tradeoffs, a number of management prescriptions for the **frontcountry** (areas reached by road or a short walk) have been developed. Based on the information collected during the backcountry / wilderness management planning process and park information, a number of management prescriptions for the **backcountry** (areas that are a substantial walk from the road) have also been developed. General descriptions are given on the next page.

**The alternative parkwide visions apply these prescriptions to all areas in the parks, but the locations and amounts for each prescription change by alternative.** For example, one vision could emphasize wildness, resulting in backcountry prescriptions being applied to more of the parks. Other visions could emphasize different levels of use for frontcountry visitors. The alternative visions that are being considered are described beginning [here](#). Visions and actions for specific park areas are also described; these actions are based on experiences and conditions that would be appropriate for a certain management prescription.

A separate foldout map shows how frontcountry management prescriptions would be applied to the parks for each alternative, allowing you to compare the alternatives. Because of the small amount of park development and the scale of the maps, all development is shown on the maps as a single color. The draft environmental impact statement will show where prescriptions for specific park development areas will be applied. The backcountry and wilderness management plan will show where specific prescriptions will be applied to backcountry areas. The management prescriptions are described in more detail beginning [here](#). You will find additional information about:

- Desired resource conditions
- Desired visitor experiences
- Appropriate activities
- Appropriate facilities

## What about Special Designations or Uses?

Certain areas in the parks are currently designated by Congress as *wilderness*, or as *wild and scenic rivers*, and they are managed in accordance with the appropriate legislative mandates. Other sites are managed as *cultural landscapes*, *historic sites*, *historic districts*, or *research natural areas*. There are also private inholdings, permitted special uses, and utility rights-of-way. These designations and uses are **not separate prescriptions**; rather these designations or locations would be overlaid by one or more management prescriptions. However, the appropriate legislative mandates will still apply (for example, a wild and scenic river could flow through several areas with different management prescriptions and yet still be a "wild" or "scenic" river).

## What about Park Roads?

Park roads would generally be managed consistently with the prescriptions for the surrounding areas. However, your comments indicate that driving on the Generals Highway is an important part of a visit to Sequoia and Kings Canyon, and that type of experience should be preserved. You also indicated that driving on backroads, like the Mineral King Road, offers a different type of experience that you value. Therefore, management prescriptions have been developed for high-use scenic driving and backroad driving to ensure that these experiences are maintained.

## FRONTCOUNTRY PRESCRIPTIONS

**Low-Use Frontcountry** – Natural areas that attract day use visitation because of the quality of the features and lower use levels. These areas may include trails, roads, and recreation facilities. [Examples:](#)\* South Fork, Buckeye Flat, Redwood Saddle.

**High-Use Frontcountry** – Natural areas that attract heavier day use visitation. The high-use frontcountry may include trails, roads, and diverse recreational opportunities. Examples: the Giant Forest trail system, the Big Stump self-guided trail, the Tokopah Falls trail.

**Features** – Day use destinations and highlights for which the parks are known; they attract a great number of day visitors and can be reached by roads. Examples: General Grant Tree, Moro Rock, Crystal Cave.

**Park Development** – Six distinct and separate types of development, which include **large villages** that offer a full range of visitor services, smaller scale visitor service locations or **small villages, primitive campgrounds, campgrounds with amenities, park operations areas, and residential areas**. Ideally, these different types of development do not overlap.

**High-Use Scenic Driving** – Driving corridors that offer sightseeing opportunities, scenic views, vistas, and panoramas and that connect major park features. The roads provide overlooks and limited facilities such as picnic areas. Example: Generals Highway.

**Backroad Driving** – Low-speed, low-use, narrow paved or unpaved roads that follow the terrain and provide challenging driving opportunities. Examples: Mineral King Road, Redwood Canyon road.

## BACKCOUNTRY PRESCRIPTIONS

Backcountry areas (including wilderness) are relatively remote, roadless portions of the parks, where permits are required for overnight use to maintain the desired resource conditions and experiences described in the various prescriptions. Backcountry use levels are intended to be much lower than in the frontcountry. Stock use (i.e., pack and riding animals) is described for each prescription, but each alternative defines the amount of use (for example, alternative A has no stock use, alternative C broadens stock use). Like the development area, backcountry is shown as a single color on the maps of alternatives; the prescriptions below will be applied in the backcountry/wilderness management plan.

**Backcountry Threshold** – Areas that are relatively close to trailheads and are heavily used; they are accessible by high-quality, regularly maintained trails that are heavily used by both overnight and day users. Examples: Mist Falls/Paradise Valley; Mineral King lake basins, Lakes Trail (Emerald Lake, Pear Lake).

**Major Trail Corridors** – Areas beyond the backcountry threshold that are accessible by regularly maintained trails and that are suitable for sustained heavy use by large parties and stock. Examples: Pacific Crest Trail, John Muir Trail, High Sierra Trail, Rae Lakes Loop.

**Secondary Trail Corridors** – Areas accessible by occasionally maintained trails that cannot sustain heavy use because of the standard of construction or inherent fragility of the resource through which these trails pass. Examples: Colby Pass—Kern Kaweah, Tehipite to the Pacific Crest Trail, Martha Lake north to the Pacific Crest Trail.

**Cross-Country Areas** – Remote, low-use cross-country areas that have no maintained trails but that may contain some evidence of past visitor trails; otherwise they exhibit relatively little impact or intervention by humans. These areas are more difficult to travel in than areas with maintained trails. Examples: Rock Creek—Miter Basin, Dusy Basin.

## Common to All Prescriptions

**Architecture:** Facilities in all zones will comply with the local expression of the parks' architectural guidelines; facilities in the backcountry will reflect a primitive character.

**Accessibility for All Visitors:** New and remodeled buildings, outdoor developed areas, and features will be made accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities, in compliance with federal standards. However, it may not be possible to make all sites or historic buildings accessible because the required changes would affect the integrity of the feature or the historic structure. In these cases interpretive brochures or programs could help convey an experience to visitors.

**Energy Efficiency / Sustainability:** New and remodeled buildings and facilities will reflect the National Park Service's commitment to energy and resource conservation, as well as durability.

**Park Regulations:** All parks have regulations to ensure the safety of visitors and their property while protecting park resources. These regulations are based on laws and national policy. Some additional regulations have been written by the superintendent in response to local conditions, such as closing a sensitive resource to visitation.

\* Examples are places in the parks that currently fit a particular prescription; they are used for illustration purposes only. However, under different alternative visions, these places could be assigned to another management prescription.

## PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

For each alternative described below there is a parkwide thematic vision, followed by thematic visions for certain areas – the backcountry, Cedar Grove, Grant Grove, Lodgepole-Wuksachi and vicinity, Giant Forest, the foothills, and the Mineral King area. The visions are stated in the present tense as a means of asking you to step into the future and see what the parks or certain areas have become. After the vision statements are the management prescriptions for each vision (as shown on the maps), with comparisons to existing conditions (alternative B). Finally, examples of actions (identified by bullets) are given; these actions are compatible with the visions and related management prescriptions. (A blank indicates no corresponding action would be taken under that alternative.)

A preferred alternative (or proposed action) has not been selected at this point. The National Park Service will develop a preferred alternative that fulfills the parks' purpose and significance during the upcoming environmental impact assessment phase. You will be asked to comment on the preferred alternative when the draft environmental impact statement is released. We expect the preferred alternative will ultimately represent a synthesis of the best ideas from the choices described below. The draft environmental impact statement will contain more detail (i.e., acres or percentage of the parks proposed for any change).

## Possible Approaches for Managing Permit Cabins

Handling special use permits for private recreational cabins on public lands is an implementation strategy that will be addressed once the range of visions and a preferred alternative have been identified. There are often many ways to accomplish a vision, and implementation strategies could combine several different approaches. Implementation strategies for Mineral King will be assessed in the draft environmental impact statement for the general management plan.

Cabin Cove, West Mineral King, and East Mineral King are tracts of about 60 special use permit cabins located on public land. They are not (with one exception) inholdings on private land. Public Law 95-625, section 314, which transferred the Mineral King area to the National Park Service, provided for permits to be extended to permittees of record in 1978 until their deaths. The permits are not transferable. The cabins are to be removed in accordance

with the law at the expiration of the permits. NPS policy (Special Directive 88-5) states "that there is no such thing as an extension of a reservation." This was reiterated in a June 21, 1996, report entitled *Residential Occupancy under Special Use Permits*, which examined 1,400+ life estates and reservations of occupancy and 224 special use permits nationwide.

In 1999 the entire Mineral King Road corridor was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as a cultural landscape, with the cabins being contributing elements.

Examples of various implementation approaches that could be allowed under current law include:

- Allow permits to expire and remove cabins (document historic structures).
- Allow permits to expire; acquire, retain, and use some or all permit cabins (to retain historic appearance, or for interpretive / educational purposes or public lodging).
- Until permits expire work in partnership with the Mineral King District Association to provide for the use of cabins as commercial lodging when not occupied by permittees.

Possible congressional legislative changes include:

- Allow permits to be transferred to heirs or others.
- Allow all permits to expire at a single time (either at the death of the last permittee of record or at a specified date such as on January 1, 2009), then implement an appropriate implementation strategy for the vision.

Examples of implementation approaches that would be possible with congressional legislative changes include:

- As suggested by the Mineral King Preservation Society, provide for a private recreational community seeking NPS recognition for what the society calls a "living historic community" in order to perpetuate the community and its values and to provide for continuity of residents.
- Develop partnerships with those having long histories in the area to provide maintenance, convey the community's cultural and family history, and provide stewardship.
- Establish a nonprofit educational institute, with a center for alpine studies, teaching traditional park values, local history, or developing backcountry skills. Educational programs could include overnight use of facilities by schools, families, groups such as Elderhostel or youth groups, and individuals.
- Work in partnership with the Mineral King District Association to provide for use of the cabins as commercial lodging when not occupied by permittees.

This section provides additional detail about management prescriptions. As previously described, management prescriptions are guidelines for achieving desired future conditions for both resources and visitor experiences. You will find more specific information about desired resource conditions, visitor experiences, appropriate activities, and appropriate facilities.

## **FRONTCOUNTRY PRESCRIPTIONS**

### **Low-Use Frontcountry**

*Description:* Low-use frontcountry areas include natural areas that are accessed by a system of trails and roads, or recreation facilities that attract some day use visitation because of high-quality features.

Examples: South Fork, Buckeye Flat, Redwood Saddle.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources may be minimally manipulated to accommodate trails, roads, or facilities. Resource impacts are confined within these areas; unplanned impacts (such as trails created by visitors) are restored or left to regenerate. The impacts may take years to recover on their own, but are not irreversible. Archeological resources may be studied and archived or left undisturbed. Historic buildings and sites are preserved and protected, and they may be adaptively reused; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors can have relatively uncrowded experiences compared to what they might find in the high-use frontcountry zone. By taking trails that lead away from roads and visitor use areas, visitors can experience more solitude and take more responsibility for what they do. They are

encouraged to stay on designated trails, which may be steep or rocky. Visitors can find written information about trail character, conditions, and educational opportunities. Map reading is a useful skill.

*Appropriate Activities:* Recreational activities include hiking, sightseeing, caving, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and picnicking. Fishing, bicycling, and stock use may be allowed in designated areas.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities for hiking include narrow unpaved trails, trailheads, footbridges, and small directional signs at trail intersections. Roads are narrow, one- or two-way, and paved or unpaved, along with primitive parking areas. Circulation patterns are defined, and distinct edges in parking areas may be created with rocks and logs to confine impacts. Facilities are provided for visitors with disabilities, including trails offering diverse experiences. Park operational facilities, such as fire lookouts and utility systems, are allowed.

## High-Use Frontcountry

*Description:* High-use frontcountry areas include natural areas with trails, roads, or recreational opportunities that attract many day visitors because of the quality of features and easy access. Areas are usually within 1 mile of a road corridor. Park information systems encourage the use of various areas in this zone to disperse visitor use and to provide more developed experiences. Examples: Giant Forest trail system, Tokopah Falls trail, Big Stump.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources appear as undisturbed as possible, but the landscape is managed for safety and appearance, and to accommodate trails, roads, or facilities. Resource impacts are confined within these areas; areas with unplanned impacts are restored or left to regenerate on their own. Such impacted areas may take years to recover on their own, but the impacts are not irreversible. High-use areas may be protected through methods such as fencing or paved walks. Highly visible and popular areas of sequoia groves may be further identified as special management areas (SMAs). The appearance of these areas is important. A variety of techniques is employed to reduce the likelihood of massive scorching or the death of large sequoias by fire (for example, the hand or mechanical removal of fuel buildup and small trees near the base of sequoias). Archeological resources may be studied and archived or left undisturbed. Historic buildings and sites may be preserved and protected, and they may be used for interpretive purposes or adaptively reused; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* While many visitors may be present, once people move about a half mile away from trailheads on well-defined trails they can experience some solitude, with decreasing sights and sounds of roads and other visitors. Trails can be easily followed or are self-guiding. Visitors can readily find information about trail conditions, experiences, and educational opportunities at trailheads and wayside exhibits, and through written materials.

*Appropriate Activities:* Recreational activities include onsite interpretation, hiking, water play, fishing, caving, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and picnicking. Stock use and bicycling may be allowed in designated areas.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Recreation facilities include some highly maintained (paved and unpaved) trails, trailheads, parking areas, shuttle stops, picnic areas, viewpoints, benches, and informal trailside seating (using natural materials such as logs and boulders). Access is by way of one- or two-way roads. Roads and parking lots are paved to reduce dust and withstand higher use levels; circulation patterns are defined; distinct edges in parking areas are created by using rocks, logs, or perhaps curbs and gutters. Interpretive facilities include waysides and small directional signs at trail intersections. Facilities for visitors with disabilities are provided, including trails offering diverse experiences.

## Features

*Description:* Features are day use destinations and highlights in the parks that are reached by road and that attract large numbers of visitors. Use levels may be managed at specific sites during the peak season to ensure quality experiences. Seasonal shuttle services may be provided to and within feature areas, with small parking areas at edges of the zone for off-season or disabled visitor needs. Examples: General Grant Tree, Moro Rock, Crystal Cave.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources are extensively managed, and areas are designed to highlight certain features and views. Resource impacts are contained, and features are protected from visitors by methods such as fencing and paved walks. The impacts of such methods may be long term due to the need to protect features, but they are not irreversible. Areas with unplanned impacts (for example, trails created by visitors) are actively restored to prevent further damage. Highly visible and popular areas of sequoia groves may be further identified as special management areas (SMAs). The appearance of these areas is important. A variety of techniques is employed to reduce the likelihood of massive scorching or the death of large sequoias by fire (for example, the hand or mechanical removal of fuel buildup and small trees near the base of sequoias). Archeological and historic sites may be stabilized or preserved to meet interpretive purposes, with surrounding natural resources managed to complement the cultural story (e.g., removing vegetation near the Gambell cabin site).

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors can expect more social interaction, with crowding common during the summer season. Opportunities for solitude are rare but may be found at low-use times (e.g., early morning or evening). Information is available through interpretive waysides and brochures; scheduled naturalist activities are offered. Photo opportunities are marked to both guide visitors and prevent resource damage from trampling. Easy access to most park features is facilitated for all users, including visitors with disabilities. When a feature such as Moro Rock cannot be made accessible to all, other methods will be used to help disabled park visitors understand the experience.

*Appropriate Activities:* Recreational activities include sightseeing, interpretive programs, photography, taking self-guided trails, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, guided cave tours, and seasonal shuttles; bicycling may be allowed in designated areas.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities for hiking may include wide paved walks that guide and direct visitors to features, with fencing or vegetation along paths to confine impacts. Historic or interpretive structures (e.g., the Giant Forest museum) may be present. Facilities are accessible for visitors with disabilities (e.g., restrooms, seating, wayside exhibits, telephones, drinking fountains, informational and directional signs, shuttle stops, related roads, and small parking areas). Roads are paved (one-way or two-lane roads), with parking areas and shuttle stops; curbs, gutters, and traffic islands are used to direct visitor circulation, to withstand heavy use impacts, and to reduce dust.

## **Park Development**

Park development includes four separate types of areas – **large villages** that offer a full range of visitor services, smaller scale service locations or **small villages**, **primitive campgrounds**, **campgrounds with amenities**, **park operation** areas, and **residential** areas. Because each of these areas is relatively small, for the purposes of this newsletter they are all shown as "park development" on the maps of alternatives.

### **Large Villages**

*Description:* Large villages are highly developed areas that provide concentrated visitor services (e.g., visitor centers, lodging, and food service). These villages are larger than small villages, and they may contain internal road systems as well as provide a variety of lodging choices. Examples: Large villages at Wuksachi and Grant Grove.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural and cultural resources are manipulated to accommodate visitor development. Impacts of development may be widespread and long term, but they are reversible with major restoration efforts. Adjacent resources are protected by methods such as fencing, and most walks are paved to define circulation patterns, limit dust, and reduce resource damage. Native plants are used in naturalistic landscape plantings. Areas with unplanned impacts (for example, trails created by visitors) are actively restored to prevent further damage. Archeological and historic sites may be used to meet interpretive needs. Historic structures may be preserved and protected, and they may be adaptively reused to enhance development and interpretive needs; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* A large village offers services and activities in a traditional park setting; large numbers of people can be accommodated. Visitors are likely to experience crowding at peak times.



Educational, recreational, and other services are provided, but services are limited to those determined to be necessary and appropriate for each site.

*Appropriate Activities:* Activities are related to meeting visitor needs (food, information, lodging, restrooms) and providing services and educational opportunities supporting the park purposes.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Large villages may offer a visitor or nature center, a ranger station, amphitheaters, overnight accommodations (lodges, modern, rustic, or tent-top cabins), stores, restaurants, a gas station, stables, public showers and laundry facilities, a post office, and a variety of site furnishings (waysides, benches, signs, fencing, etc.). Roads in large villages are paved, one- or two-way, generally with curbs and gutters to define circulation, concentrate impacts, withstand heavier use, and lessen dust. Some roads may be designated for service vehicles, pedestrians, or bicycling. Roadside parking spaces may be provided; shuttle stops and related parking areas are paved.

### **Small Villages**

*Description:* Small villages are small, often seasonal, areas that provide basic services to visitors and minimal development (e.g., simple rustic lodging, ranger/information stations, and stores). Examples: Wolverton and Mineral King.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural and cultural resources are managed on a limited scale to accommodate visitor developments. Resource impacts from development may be widespread but are not irreversible, although it could take years for areas to recover on their own. Areas with unplanned impacts (for example, trails created by visitors) are contained and may be restored to prevent further damage. Native plants are used in naturalistic landscape plantings. Adjacent resources are protected by methods such as fencing; some walks are paved to define circulation patterns, limit dust, and reduce resource damage. Archeological and historic sites may be used to meet interpretive needs. Historic buildings are preserved and protected, and they may be adaptively used to enhance development and interpretive needs; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors find a limited number of services in a rustic, natural park setting. Crowding rarely occurs.

*Appropriate Activities:* Activities are related to accommodating limited visitor needs (food, information, lodging, restrooms).

*Appropriate Facilities:* Smaller, more rustic park and concession facilities may be provided – ranger stations, cabin or lodging areas, showers and restrooms, supply stores, stables, site furnishings (e.g., interpretive waysides, benches, signs, fencing). Roads are narrow and two-lane or one-way. Roads and parking areas may be paved or unpaved.

### **Primitive Campgrounds**

*Description:* Frontcountry areas with minimally developed campgrounds; walk-in campsites; more remote hike-in, bike-in, or stock use campsites; or trailhead campsites. Some foothills area primitive campgrounds may be open in the winter. Examples: South Fork, Buckeye Flat.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources may be minimally manipulated to accommodate camping facilities and related roads; only native plants are used. Resource impacts are confined within these areas; unplanned impacts (such as trails created by visitors) are restored or left to regenerate. The impacts may take years to recover on their own, but are not irreversible. Archeological resources are left undisturbed. Historic buildings and sites are preserved and protected, and they may be adaptively reused; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors experience more primitive overnight camping in small campgrounds or areas that are quiet and unlit so they can enjoy the night sky. Sites are well-spaced and of various sizes to

accommodate differing group sizes, but no generators or loud machines are allowed. Visitors can experience more solitude and take more responsibility for what they do. Terrain may be steeper or rocky. The camping area may be self-serve or have a campground host.

*Appropriate Activities:* Car camping, trailhead camping, walk-in camping, camping in frontcountry areas by bicycle or stock use.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Overnight facilities include campgrounds of less than 50 sites; walk-in campsites that are less than 0.25 mile from parking; more remote bike-in, hike-in, or pack-in campsites; and minimal trailhead campsites for backpackers. Bear-proof food storage lockers are provided. Picnic tables may be provided at car and close walk-in campsites. Primitive campgrounds may have restrooms (flush, pit, or vault toilets) and no lighting; there may be cold water or no water. A fire circle may be provided for evening programs. Related roads are narrow, one- or two-way, and paved or unpaved, along with primitive parking areas. Circulation patterns are defined, and distinct edges in parking areas may be created with rocks and logs to confine impacts. Trails may go to some local point of interest or connect to the backcountry trail system. Facilities are provided for visitors with disabilities.

### **Campgrounds with Amenities**

*Description:* Campgrounds with amenities are larger frontcountry campgrounds that are designed for car or RV camping and that provide a variety of amenities. Some reservations and winter campsites are available.

Examples: Campgrounds at Dorst, Grant Grove, and Lodgepole.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources appear as undisturbed as possible, but the landscape is managed for safety and appearance, and to accommodate campsites, roads, trails, or facilities. Only native plants are used in landscaping. Resource impacts are confined within these areas; areas with unplanned impacts are restored. Such impacted areas may take years to recover on their own, but the impacts are not irreversible. In campgrounds impacts may be limited through methods such as fencing or paved walks. Archeological resources are left undisturbed. Historic buildings and sites are preserved and protected, and they may be used for interpretive purposes or adaptively reused; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors camp close to their vehicles; differing camping preferences may be accommodated (tent, group, family, early quiet time, RV; generators may or may not be allowed) but these campgrounds are larger and may be noisier than primitive campgrounds. Some walk-in sites may be provided at the edge of the campground for those seeking a different experience. Evening programs are generally provided, and some day programs may occur. Shuttle service may reduce the need to drive to park features or trailheads. These campgrounds charge a higher fee than primitive campgrounds; they have a check-in area and a campground host.

*Appropriate Activities:* Car, RV, bus, or bicycle camping.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Overnight camping facilities include campgrounds (up to 200 sites), some with separate RV areas, tent and group campsites, and an amphitheater. Public showers, laundry facilities, and RV dump stations may be nearby. Some areas will have pull-through sites. Cold water, flush toilets, and bear-proof trash bins are provided at central locations; each site has picnic tables and bear-proof food storage lockers. Some buildings and facilities may have exterior lighting to guide users, but the lighting source is not visible. Circulation trails within the campground may connect to villages or to local features; they may be highly maintained, paved or unpaved, and with small directional information signs and waysides. Access is by way of one- or two-way roads. Roads and parking lots are paved to reduce dust and withstand higher use levels; circulation patterns are defined; distinct edges in parking areas are created by using rocks, logs, or perhaps curbs and gutters. Campgrounds may be on shuttle routes and have shuttle stops. Diverse opportunities for camping are offered for visitors with disabilities.

### **Park Operations**

*Description:* Park operations areas generally have concentrated facilities for administration, maintenance, and utilities, and for occasional visitor use. Examples: Ash Mountain headquarters area, Red Fir maintenance area, Wolverton water treatment plant.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resource conditions are manipulated to accommodate operational facilities. Depending on the nature of the facility, the impacts may be widespread and long term, but they are reversible with major restoration efforts. Areas with unplanned impacts (for example, expanded storage areas) are identified and contained. Natural resources and other methods such as fencing are used to screen these areas from public view, and native plants are used. If discovered, archeological sites are excavated and archived. Historic buildings may be adaptively reused for offices or storage.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* This area is not intended for visitor use, but visitors who need to visit park administrative areas can easily find the facilities.

*Appropriate Activities:* Public business and operational activities necessary to support park functions.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities include park operations buildings (e.g., administration, research, museum collections, maintenance, and storage), utilities (including water, sewer, and electric systems), firing ranges, emergency and helicopter areas, administrative corrals, and storage areas. Access is by one- or two-lane roads that are generally narrower than highways, but that are designed to accommodate large trucks and equipment. Roads and parking areas are paved to withstand heavier use, facilitate maintenance, and contain impacts; some areas have curbs and gutters to contain and concentrate use.

## **Residential Areas**

*Description:* Residential areas include seasonal or year-round housing for government, contractor, and concession staff, as well as privately owned or permitted recreational housing or inholdings. Private dwellings are occupied subject to scenic easements, historic maintenance agreements, or special use permits. Examples: Wilsonia, Silver City, and staff housing areas.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources are managed and manipulated to provide a pleasant residential environment, with native plants used in landscaping. Resource impacts may be widespread but are reversible, although it could take years for areas to recover on their own. Unplanned impacts (for example, trails created by random use) are identified and contained. Natural resources are used to screen these areas from public view. If discovered, archeological sites are excavated and archived. Historic buildings are adaptively reused as much as possible.

*Desired Visitor and Residential Experience:* Residential and employee recreation areas are separated from park operations to ensure safety, and they are separated from public use areas to preserve privacy. Permit and private residential areas are managed among private landholders, permit users, and NPS managers.

*Appropriate Activities:* Residential, maintenance, and recreational activities.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities include private or permitted seasonal or year-round residences, accessed by paved or unpaved roads, with parking areas and utilities. Staff residential areas include housing, yards, garages, playgrounds, community buildings, and school bus stops. Access is by two-lane or one-way roads that are narrower than highways and generally without curbs and gutters.

## **High-Use Scenic Driving**

*Description:* High-use scenic driving corridors provide sightseeing opportunities in areas of natural beauty, offer scenic views as well as vistas or panoramas, and connect heavily visited park features and visitor service areas. Roads are paved; they may be subject to occasional winter closures. Example: the Generals Highway.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources in the road corridor are managed to appear natural, with vista clearing to perpetuate desired views. Construction-related impacts are largely confined within the corridor; such impacts may be long term and could take many years to recover with active restoration. Areas with unplanned impacts (for example, unwanted parking) are actively restored to prevent further damage. Cultural resources may be maintained and protected to contribute to this appearance.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* A safe and pleasant driving environment is provided on well-maintained highways, with moderate speed limits (up to 45 mph) and many opportunities to enjoy diverse scenery. Advance notice is given about upcoming features, views, or services. Traffic is generally free flowing, with slowing as a result of heavier traffic during peak midday times and for wildlife sightings. Vehicle sizes may be limited for safety, to facilitate traffic flow, or to improve the driving experience for other visitors. *Appropriate Activities:* Recreational activities include pleasure driving, sightseeing (with opportunities to stop at viewpoints and features), picnicking, and photography. Activities related to using transit shuttles, such as parking and queuing, could occur. Bicycling is only allowed on roads or designated bike routes.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Highways are paved, with two lanes, shoulders, and guard rails/walls as necessary. Visitor facilities include entrance stations, viewpoints, interpretive waysides, roadside pullouts for passing, picnic areas, trailheads, spur roads, parking areas, shuttle stops and related facilities, and site furnishings (e.g., seating and signs). Different paving materials and treatments may be used to identify circulation patterns (such as crosswalks). Curbs and gutters are used along high-use road segments, at parking areas and shuttle stops in developed areas, at viewpoints, and at heavily used trailheads to guide use and contain impacts.

## **Backroad Driving**

*Description:* Backroad driving corridors are low-speed, low-use, narrow roads that follow the natural terrain and that provide more challenging driving opportunities. Roads may be paved or unpaved and may have restrictions or designated uses, such as bicycles or shuttles only. Vehicle sizes are limited for safety reasons. Roads are closed during the winter or may be impassable during bad weather. Examples: Mineral King Road, Crescent Meadow Road, Redwood Mountain Road.

*Desired Resource Condition:* Natural resources are minimally altered for road safety and to provide passable driving conditions for most vehicles. Construction-related impacts are limited to the corridor and are reversible, but the areas may take years to recover on their own. Areas with unplanned impacts (for example, unwanted roadside parking) are restored to prevent further damage. Historic structures may be retained along roads to complement the setting and the visual appearance. Adjacent historic buildings may continue to be preserved and used or adaptively reused; or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Motorists, bicyclists, or others can traverse lower speed, less crowded primitive mountain or foothill roads. Constant alertness is required since roads may be narrow, have many curves, steep grades, rough or rutted surfaces, and steep dropoffs. Some primitive roads may be designated for nonmotorized use.

*Appropriate Activities:* Recreational activities may include driving, sightseeing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and stock use. Bicycling, snowmobile use, and special tours may occur along designated road sections.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Roads are narrow (generally less than two lanes), with paved or unpaved sections, but there are no shoulders or guard rails/walls and few passing pullouts. Visitor facilities include trailheads, entrance stations, small parking areas, signs, historic roadside structures, and other elements. Parking areas are generally unpaved.

## **BACKCOUNTRY PRESCRIPTIONS**

Backcountry areas (including wilderness) are relatively remote, roadless portions of the parks, where permits are required for overnight use to maintain the desired resource conditions and experiences described in the various prescriptions below. Levels of backcountry use are intended to be much lower than in the frontcountry. Stock use is described for each prescription, but each alternative defines the amount of use (for example, alternative A has no stock use, alternative C broadens stock use). For the purposes of this newsletter, no specific backcountry prescriptions are shown on the maps of alternatives. The backcountry and wilderness management plan will show where specific prescriptions will be applied.

## **Backcountry Threshold**

*Description:* Backcountry threshold areas are relatively close to trailheads and are heavily used; they are accessible by high-quality, regularly maintained trails that are heavily used by both day and overnight users. Examples: Mist Falls/Paradise Valley, Mineral King lake basins, Lakes Trail (Emerald Lake, Pear Lake).

*Desired Resource Conditions:* Natural conditions are mostly undisturbed, but there is a great deal of evidence of visitor use. Resource impacts are restricted to trails, facilities, and associated features. Impacts are reversible, although areas may take many years to recover on their own. Previously disturbed areas are restored. Resource conditions may be modified for essential visitor and operational needs, but only in a way that harmonizes with the setting and retains natural biodiversity. Archeological resources, if discovered, are generally left in place. Historic buildings and sites may be preserved and stabilized, or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Most visitors are either day users or those passing through the area. There is a very high probability of frequently encountering others, particularly along trails and at popular features. Party size may be large. Travel is along high-standard trails, requiring only minimal outdoor skills and self-reliance. These areas provide some opportunities for experiencing solitude and isolation from the sights, sounds, or evidence of other users while traveling. Camping is prohibited. Stock may be permitted in some areas, where related impacts may be seen.

*Appropriate Activities:* Recreational activities include hiking, backpacking, and winter use. Stock use may be appropriate.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities include maintained trails, bridges, directional / informational signs, toilets, and unmaintained spur trails to adjacent attractions such as lakes and peaks. Trail corridors generally extend 50¢ on each side of the trail or spur centerline and around the edge of all related facilities. If stock use is permitted, trails and bridges are designed and maintained to accommodate that use, and appropriate facilities (such as hitch rails) may be provided.

## **Major Trail Corridors**

*Description:* Major trail corridors are beyond the backcountry threshold and are accessible by regularly maintained trails that are suitable for sustained heavy use by large parties and stock. Examples: Pacific Crest Trail, John Muir Trail, High Sierra Trail, Rae Lakes Loop.

*Desired Resource Conditions:* Natural conditions are mostly undisturbed but contain much evidence of visitor use. Resource impacts are restricted to trails, campsites, and nearby features. Impacts are reversible, although areas may take many years to recover. Previously disturbed areas may be restored. Resource conditions may be modified for essential visitor and operational needs, but only in a way that harmonizes with the setting and retains natural biodiversity. Archeological resources, if discovered, are generally left in place. Historic buildings and sites may be preserved and stabilized, or they may be recorded and removed.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Most visitors are overnight users. On the more popular trails, there is a moderate to high probability of encountering others, particularly at campsites and features. Visitors have opportunities for a wide range of experiences, with some opportunities for solitude and isolation from the sights, sounds, or evidence of other users. Travel is along remote, but well-maintained, trails that require a moderate degree of outdoor skills and self-reliance. Use levels may vary from low to moderate. Party sizes may be large. Camping is allowed, and established campsites are common and may be designated. Stock may be permitted in some areas, where related impacts may be seen.

*Appropriate Activities:* Activities include hiking, backpacking, and winter uses. Stock use may be permitted.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities could include maintained trails, bridges, directional signs, rustic High Sierra camp facilities, and backcountry ranger stations. If campsites are designated, they may contain facilities such as toilets, food storage lockers, and fire rings. Trail corridors generally extend 50¢ on each side of the trail centerline and around the edge of all related facilities. If stock use is permitted, trails, bridges, and campsites are designed and maintained to accommodate that use, and appropriate facilities (such as hitch rails) may be provided.

## Secondary Trail Corridors

*Description:* Secondary trail corridors are accessible by occasionally maintained trails that cannot sustain heavy use because of the standard of construction or inherent fragility of the resource through which these trails pass.

*Examples:* Colby Pass—Kern Kaweah, Tehipite to the Pacific Crest Trail, Martha Lake north to the Pacific Crest Trail.

*Desired Resource Conditions:* Natural conditions are largely undisturbed, but evidence of visitor use may be apparent, such as minimally maintained trails and campsites. These areas may receive occasional maintenance to minimize resource damage. Previously disturbed areas may be restored. Trails and campsites created by visitors may be eliminated. Resource conditions may be modified for essential visitor and operational needs, but only in a way that harmonizes with the setting and retains natural biodiversity. Archeological resources, if discovered, are generally left in place. Historic buildings and sites may be preserved and stabilized, or they may be recorded and removed or left to deteriorate.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors are overnight users. Visitation is low, with a low probability of encountering others while traveling and camping. Party sizes may be smaller than along major trail corridors. Stock may be permitted in some areas, where related impacts may be seen.

*Appropriate Activities:* Activities include hiking, backpacking, and winter uses. Stock use may be permitted.

*Appropriate Facilities:* Facilities include minimally maintained trails. Bridges, directional signs, campsites, and related facilities (toilets, fire rings, or food storage lockers) are prohibited. If stock use is permitted, trails will be maintained to accommodate that use.

## Cross-Country Areas

*Description:* Cross-country areas are remote, low-use areas that have no maintained trails, but that may contain some evidence of past visitor trails; otherwise they exhibit relatively little impact or intervention by humans. These areas are more difficult to travel in than areas with maintained trails. *Examples:* Rock Creek—Miter Basin, Dusy Basin.

*Desired Resource Conditions:* Natural conditions are largely undisturbed but evidence of visitor use may be apparent. Some of these impacts may be actively removed to reduce resource damage (e.g., restoring previously disturbed areas, or eliminating social trails and campsites). Resource conditions may be modified for essential visitor and operational needs, but only in a way that harmonizes with the setting and retains natural biodiversity. Archeological resources, if discovered, are generally left in place. Historic buildings and sites may be preserved and stabilized, or they may be recorded and removed or left to deteriorate.

*Desired Visitor Experience:* Visitors are overnight users, and most need to commit a minimum of two nights to use these areas. Visitation is very low, with a low probability of encounters with other users while traveling and camping. Party sizes are small. Visitors have outstanding opportunities for solitude and isolation. Visitors may experience challenges and must be self-reliant. Travel is cross-country, primarily on abandoned trails or trails created by visitors. Visitors need a high degree of backcountry skills, including map reading. Stock may be permitted in some areas, where related impacts may be seen.

*Appropriate Activities:* Activities include hiking, backpacking, and winter uses. Stock use may be permitted.

*Appropriate Facilities:* While there are abandoned trails or trails created by visitors, no facilities are provided. Bridges, directional signs, campsites, and related facilities (toilets, fire rings, or food storage lockers), High Sierra camp facilities, and backcountry ranger stations are prohibited.

## Boundary Adjustment Criteria

Major park additions require congressional authorization. Many of the additions recommended by the public are already managed by other federal agencies. As required by NPS policy, possible additions will be highlighted in the

draft general management plan / environmental impact statement. Those that appear to meet the following criteria may be proposed for future detailed study.

- Areas include significant resources or opportunities for public enjoyment related to park purposes.
- Areas address operational and management issues such as access and boundary identification by topographic or other natural features or roads.
- Areas protect park resources critical to fulfilling park purposes.

Recommendations to expand park boundaries would have to be preceded by determinations that:

The next step will be the development of a draft environmental impact statement. When that is completed and published, there will be a comment period with public meetings. Substantive comments received on that document will be addressed in the final general management plan / environmental impact statement.

### **Staying in Touch with the Planning Team**

You can stay in touch with us in the following ways:

- Get on the mailing list for the newsletters by contacting the park GMP coordinator.
- Participate in future meetings about the draft environmental impact statement.
- Visit the Internet planning page for the National Park Service and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. These pages will be updated throughout the planning process.
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You are welcome to contact the team at any time. The Sequoia and Kings Canyon GMP Planning Team includes:

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