

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

General Management Plan • Newsletter 6 • December 2000

*Dear Friends,*

Since the spring of 2000, a number of things have occurred that you should know about. At that time, Newsletter 5 presented the range of alternatives that will be explored in the draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS). Subsequently . . .

- On April 15, 2000, President Clinton established (on existing federal land) Giant Sequoia National Monument to protect remaining sequoia groves outside the parks, and their ecosystem. The approximately 400,000 acre monument in two units north and south of the parks will be managed by the United States Forest Service. Recreational opportunities will be much like those offered today. Private inholdings and USFS special use permits in the monument will not be affected. The largest differences that park visitors may notice is that commercial logging and mineral exploration are prohibited, and no new roads will be constructed. Since many areas in the smaller north unit are entered through the park's Big Stump entrance gate, this could potentially affect transportation alternatives at Grant Grove – specifically a Grant Grove by-pass road. The U.S. Forest Service will have three years to complete management plans that will include sequoia management, recreation and transportation components.
- We are pleased to announce that on August 17, 2000, the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District was determined eligible for listing on the national register of historic places. It's significance is for "federal management of public lands in the west, as well as the history of outdoor recreation in California . . . Forest Service recreational cabin tract planning" and vernacular utilitarian rustic architecture. In the parks as a whole, there are now two historic districts with an additional six districts under proposal; there are 18 listed historic sites within the parks, and seven more eligible for listing. Additionally there are 93 structures on the List of Classified Structures. Wilsonia Historic District, listed for similar criterion as the Mineral King Cultural Landscape District, is located within the parks on a mix of public land and private inholdings. Historic districts and buildings can be in any type of management zone within the parks.
- Staff changes at the park. At the beginning of October this year, Superintendent Michael Tollefson received a promotion and moved to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We will miss Mike and wish him well. You may want to know how this will affect the GMP. All the material developed during the GMP process and in writing a draft EIS will be used as briefing materials for the new superintendent; and the range of alternatives presented in Newsletter 5 will still form the parameters for the environmental analysis. Additionally Larry Bancroft, Chief of Science and Resources, retired; and the Wilderness and Backcountry Plan manager Ralph Moore has become superintendent of Perry's Victory National Monument. We wish them well and appreciate the enormous contributions they made to the GMP. Chief Ranger Debbie Bird has been on a detail to Manzanar National Historic Site.
- Wild and Scenic River plans will be added to the document. The upper 27 miles of the North Fork of the Kern River and 55.5 miles of the Middle and South Forks of the Kings River were designated wild and scenic rivers in 1987. The designation gives these rivers special protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and requires the managing agency to prepare a comprehensive management plan for these rivers. Planners will examine the Kaweah and San Joaquin Rivers for eligibility and suitability for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system.
- The alternatives in Newsletter 5 have been fine-tuned; and included additional potential actions – such as locations for additional seasonal or volunteer housing, transit support facilities for the Giant Forest area, and inclusion of another wilderness study area that Congress asked us to assess. Additionally both the front and backcountry management zones have been refined to make management direction clearer and provide more detail. For example, lighting criteria to protect the night sky from light pollution and discussion of river access have been added. Look for these changes in the draft document and on the web site.

As the result of these and other events, we expect the draft GMP/EIS to be delayed until the new superintendent is in place and oriented. We'll keep you posted! Your participation has already assured a strong public voice in this process. Stay with us as we continue to carefully examine the future vision for the parks. In the draft GMP/EIS we will explain how a preferred alternative was developed after examining the impacts of the range of alternatives you saw in Newsletter 5. We hope you'll take time to examine and comment on the draft document when it comes out.

**William C. Tweed, Acting Superintendent**

## You Asked: What Does Wilderness Designation Really Mean?

As we've moved through the GMP process we've had lots of questions about "wilderness".

The Wilderness Act was signed into law on September 4, 1964 (Public Law 88-577). The intent of the Congress in establishing this Act was to "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness. For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System . . . and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness." The purpose of the law was to "assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition . . . ." Four federal agencies administer wilderness areas – the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Agencies are to study areas that have wilderness suitability and recommend congressional designation. This process includes public wilderness hearings.

Wilderness is defined in the 1964 act as:

"an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value"

Certain uses are prohibited,

"subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area"

**As the following quotations show, environmental consciousness and valuing wild lands is not new.**

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**"In wildness is the preservation of the world," Henry David Thoreau**

—  
**"We do not inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children," Kenyan Proverb**

—  
**"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the tree," The Bible, Rev. 7:3**

—  
**"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," William Shakespeare**

—  
**"Laws change; people die; the land remains," Abraham Lincoln**

## Wilderness Designation Issues and the Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks GMP

Over 85% of the parks is congressionally designated "wilderness" to provide additional protection from development and the impact of population. All wilderness areas fall within proposed backcountry management zones. A few wilderness assessment

and study issues relating to the general management plan have yet to be determined. Wilderness suitability will be concluded for the following areas: Mineral King and the Chimney Rock area.

- Following addition of the 16,200-acre Mineral King area to Sequoia National Park in 1978, a development plan recommended all lands above 8000' for a wilderness study. The GMP is revisiting the Mineral King area. All GMP alternatives include the lands above 8000' in backcountry management zones that are compatible with management as wilderness. Following the completion of the GMP, this area will be formally studied for the purpose of developing a proposal for wilderness designation.
- Congress directed a wilderness suitability study when it added the 1,500-acre Chimney Rock area to Kings Canyon National Park in the 1984 Jennie Lakes wilderness bill. The area has been managed as wilderness, but no study conducted. All GMP alternatives include this area in backcountry management zones that are compatible with management as wilderness. Following the completion of the GMP, this area will be formally studied for the purpose of developing a proposal for wilderness designation.

## **What Happens Next?**

The next step will be the development of a draft document. It has a huge title – Environmental Impact Statement, General Management Plan, Middle and South Forks Kings River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan, North Fork Kern River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan – Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Tulare and Fresno Counties, California.

When it is mailed to you there will be a 90-day comment period that will include public meetings. Substantive comments received on that document will be addressed in the final general management plan / environmental impact statement.

All planning documents for this project will remain on the Internet (see address later). However, in order to most efficiently and economically provide information at a level desired by most of the public, we will place paper copies of the draft document at the park, local libraries, and other government offices. We will send out a summary document to people on our mailing list. Our mailing list is around 3,000. CD Rom or paper copies can be sent out to those requesting them. CD Rom versions are less expensive to produce and will result in a savings to taxpayers of around \$7.50 a copy. We only have email addresses for some of you, but we will try to inform you when planning documents come out so you may visit the web site.

## **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 (DEIS).
- 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.

<http://www.nps.gov/planning>

or

<http://www.nps.gov/seki>

You are welcome to contact the team at any time. The Sequoia and Kings Canyon GMP Planning Team includes:

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