



# ACKERSON MEADOW RESTORATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY  
JULY 2021

**Cover Photos:**

Ackerson Meadow Landscape courtesy Rob Hirsch Photography

Other photos courtesy National Park Service

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Stanislaus National Forest • U.S. Forest Service • U.S. Department of Agriculture

# ACKERSON MEADOW RESTORATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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JULY 2021

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## CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS SUMMARY

The park conducted a 30-day public comment period for the release of the Ackerson Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment from June 2, 2021 through July 8, 2021. The National Park Service (NPS) and United States Forest Service (USFS) provided information about the project and the public comment period through the following means:

1. The NPS sent an electronic newsletter on June 2, 2021 to Yosemite National Parks’ mailing list. The “eblast” announced the public comment period, the release of the Environmental Assessment, and a request for public input.
2. The NPS distributed an electronic press release on June 2, 2021 to area media outlets. The press release announced the public comment period, and included project information and a request for public input.
3. The NPS posted a project Fact Sheet and a copy of the Environmental Assessment on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website.
4. The USFS published a newspaper ad in the Union Democrat on June 8, 2021 announcing the release of the Environmental Assessment and a request for public input.

During the public scoping period, the NPS received 17 correspondences, generating 27 individual substantive comments. All correspondences were submitted to the online PEPC system (Appendix A).

Below is a summary of the public comments submitted during the 30-day public comment period for the Ackerson Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment.

## CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS

The correspondences received from the public during the public comment period are provided in Appendix A. Substantive comments within the correspondences are summarized below and shown in Table 1 and organized by relevant project issues or themes.

**TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE ACKERSON MEADOW RESTORATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

<b>Project Issue/Theme</b>	<b>Total Comment Tally</b>
Alternatives – No Action	1
Alternatives – Full Fill	10
Alternatives – Hand-Built Structures	2
Alternatives – Hybrid	1
Resource – Biotic Environment	2
Resource – Grazing	2
Resource – Air Quality	1
Transportation – Roads	1
Resource – Socioeconomics	1
Visitor Experience – Public Access	1
Herbicide Use	1
Public Engagement – Public Involvement	1
Other Comments – Funding	2
Other Comments – Cumulative	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>

## **ALTERNATIVES – NO ACTION**

*"I'm sure you have done your homework on this but I prefer the no alternative option. This looks like naturally occurring erosion from runoff. Do not further restrict any area of the Park." (Correspondence 7, Individual)*

## **ALTERNATIVES – FULL FILL**

*"I strongly support the first option Alternative 1 (preferred) which would completely fill the gully system with soil to the level of the meadow terrace. because it supports complete restoration of the area. I think it is worth the need to bring in fill material." (Correspondence 2, Individual)*

*"To me, Alternative #1 sounds like the most logical and environmental method for the project. The restoration of natural meadows is a win for all." (Correspondence 3, Individual)*

*"I support the preferred option (alternative 1). I believe this option has the best outcome of the three and does the most to restore this meadow to a natural state." (Correspondence 5, Individual)*

*"The alternative # one is more expensive, but is the only that will have lasting effect and return the meadow to it's serene beauty with a small stream running through it.... I can wholeheartedly support Alternative #1, and will be willing to do what ever I can to assist in this accomplishment. It will take time beyond my life to restore this meadow to it's original state, but it will be worth it!" (Correspondence 8, Individual)*

*"I fully support Alternative 1 to fully restore Ackerson Meadow to its orginal unspoiled condition, and to include as many acres of wetland and meadow habitat as possible. Any lesser action would be unacceptable in restoring the ackerson Meadow complex." (Correspondence 10, Individual)*

*"The Sierra Club supports the preferred alternative; maximum restoration. National Parks should be maintained in as natlural a state as possible and this alternative accomplishes that." (Correspondence 11, Sierra Club)*

*"We support the preferred alternative, complete restoration by filling in erosion gullies." (Correspondence 12, Nature Sounds Society)*

*"We underscore that we agree with the EA - - that while short term impacts and effects may, indeed, be negative if Alternative 1 - Full Gully Fill is selected and implemented as the chosen restoration treatment, Alternative 1 inarguably provides the level of restoration treatment that will create the greatest overall ecological benefit. **THUS, OUR CENTER STRONGLY ENDORSES THE SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVE 1 – FULL GULLY FILL – AS THE CHOICE FOR RESTORATION TREATMENT.**" (Correspondence 13, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center [CSERC])*

*"My vote would be for the "go big and get out" option. Prolonging the project in pursuit of "minimal impact" seems contradictory. Also, the longer it goes, the greater is the percent of budget expended on incidentals like administrative costs, traffic control, job site protection and remediation, etc." (Correspondence 14, Individual)*

*"The unique and rare vegetation and wildlife dependent on the conditions would be even more severely stressed in times of drought (and/or climate change), so action to restore an maintain natural processes would be desirable. The alternatives themselves, the efficacy and details for which I would not have extensive understanding, do present some basic layman concerns; The proposed preferred action would certainly be an invasive action on its own, that one would shudder to see in a natural area, although of the alternatives it may be the most effective and productive AND not require annual maintenance (definitely a concern if the*

*National Parks go into one of the staff shortage cycles and budget slashing)..” (Correspondence 17, Individual)*

## **ALTERNATIVES – HAND-BUILT STRUCTURES**

*“Alternative 2 is the best option, minimalist approach with less harmful potential than recommended plan. Take the long restoration process not the quick and expensive solutions. NPS has a bad habit of doing things poorly. NFS is not much better but then take their time doing it right.” (Correspondence 1, Individual)*

*“I write to urge Park and Forest Service staff to take a cautious and light approach as they consider restoration plans. Humans tend to be impatient and desire outcomes on a short timeline. However, the best outcomes may come over a period of many years, and indeed full recovery may not be complete within our lifetimes. The sense of urgency and the need to “do something now” shows clearly in the preferred alternative, which includes lots of machinery moving 151,000 cubic yards of material, excavating from one location, hauling it to the gully sites, all the while spewing many tons of carbon into the atmosphere. While this alternative may ultimately “work” by eliminating the gullies, it also comes with considerable risk and expense. One clear risk is that if the winter following the work turns out to be a very wet winter, much of the work could be quickly undone by a single flood event. If that were to happen, all of the expenses incurred will be lost. We note that the Park has several hand built structures as test projects to better understand the effectiveness of BDAs and PALs. We are pleased that the Park has taken the time to install these and suggest that you give these test projects time to run their course. This is a great learning opportunity and the lessons learned by this could inform future meadow restoration projects in the Park and indeed throughout the Sierra. If the hand-built structures prove effective, that will be a highly preferable restoration approach than the total-fill option as described in the Environmental Assessment.” (Correspondence 16, Tuolumne River Trust)*

## **ALTERNATIVES – HYBRID**

*“I would like to see a hybrid combo between Option 1, and maybe some test case areas of option 2. The BDA, program would be great.” (Correspondence 4, Individual)*

## **RESOURCE – BIOTIC ENVIRONMENT**

*“This is an admirable project but, I recommend delaying this project in favor of implementating a proactive forest floor management. I remain concerned that continued investment in creating new man made/augmented areas dilutes focus on an already historically underfunded necessity. We should reconsider the creatinuation of park “improvements” to the detriment of the natural areas which have included park service decisions to moderate naturally occuring fires resulting in devastating and longer lasting impacts (such as wildfires hot enough to undermine redwood forest).” (Correspondence 6, Individual)*

*“Is artificially raising the water table in Ackerson Meadow another example of humans modifying the natural erosion process to “fit” their “fancy”? By raising the water table to what it was 200 years ago when the Miwok periodically burned the meadows to prevent plant invasion, will the wetter floral return to Ackerson Meadow? Will the raising of the water table, kill the luxuriant floral display we see today and the pioneer trees and shrubs which have adapted to the drier habitat? (Correspondence 9, Individual)*

## **RESOURCE - GRAZING**

*“Modification of cattle guards near the meadow could also be helpful.” (Correspondence 12, Nature Sounds Society)*

*“Damming up Ackerson Meadow cuts off water to users down stream, wildlife and cattle that have grazing allotments of the USFS! Any neighbor should not be allowed to do this to their neighbors. If it wasn't the government it would be illegal....I object to the cost of 150,000 cubic yards of fill material. The Park Service nationwide is in debt. I know from a lifetime of caring for my private land that feeds our cattle that some of the comments from the Park Releases and CSERC are not true about livestock grazing. Everyone has their opinions and theories, but they are not all fact.”* (Correspondence 15, Individual)

#### **RESOURCE – AIR QUALITY**

*“It will be cheaper, less invasive, less risky, and produce less carbon to the atmosphere.”* (Correspondence 16, Tuolumne River Trust)

#### **TRANSPORTATION – ROADS**

*“We suggest that, in addition to the hydrological restoration, the natural soundscape be improved by creating a 25mph slow zone near the meadow between sunset and sunrise. We saw an experimental slow zone in Grand Teton National Park in 2016.”* (Correspondence 12, Nature Sounds Society)

#### **RESOURCES – SOCIOECONOMICS**

*“I am extremely uncomfortable with the dismissal of "socioeconomic" ... as seen on page 38...”*  
(Correspondence 14, Individual)

#### **VISITOR EXPERIENCE – PUBLIC ACCESS**

*“I am extremely uncomfortable with the dismissal of ... "public access" analyses, as seen on page 38... Ackerson Meadow is within the sphere of influence of Yosemite National Park, which is a dynamic and high visibility "human ecology" (if you will allow the term). Any mention of amenities or natural attractions near Yosemite will draw attention. Public demand for access to Yosemite has already increased collateral development nearby, and beautiful Ackerson Meadow will be added to Carlon Falls, Diamond "O", and Hetch Hetchy as one of the features of the area. So it would be proper if the impact statement induced planning for these inevitable impacts. I do not agree that these concerns are "extraneous". I am confident that the restoration project will accelerate the "annual visitation" to Ackerson Meadow and along Evergreen Road in general. I am also confident that most of the pertinent public officials and administrators already know this to be true. I do not raise these concerns to question the validity of the restoration project or its documents (I know their scope must be limited) except to the extent that there needs to be official and ongoing recognition of the biggest and hardest environmental issue pertaining to Yosemite National Park, which is that we are still "loving it to death".* (Correspondence 14, Individual)

#### **HERBICIDE USE**

*“One is uneasy about the herbicidal introduction that while effective in the struggle with invasives, it does have its own gaggle of impacts. Needless to say, any chemicals used should be documented and monitored for impacts, but a question that i would raise is what are the long term impacts and interactions with the fill material. Would that constitute an atypical situation that would have its own intensity or dispersal of biochemical interactions?”* (Correspondence 17, Individual)

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

*“Also, would be great, to have all the developments and science communicated to the public in a transparent and engaging way. A lot of time people see these types of projects, and don't understand what is going on. Would be a good opportunity to share, and educate the public.”* (Correspondence 4, Individual)

## **OTHER COMMENTS – FUNDING**

*“I hope that the funding exists to move this project forward at speed as I wish to see the meadow as it once was.”* (Correspondence 5, Individual)

*“Some might raise issues about expense for just a meadow in this Park with all its spectacular monumental rock and water presences, but given its prominent primary standing in our treasury of natural resources, an important meadow should be part of the experience, especially as habitat for species treasured as a viewing experience in this public area. We are reaching a point where formerly common geographical types are disappearing or subject to infringement, so places set aside need the attention that is invested in their recognition for stewardship.”* (Correspondence 17, Individual)

## **OTHER – CUMULATIVE**

*“I am extremely uncomfortable with ...the myopic approach towards "cumulative" and "secondary" impacts seen on page 39.”* (Correspondence 14, Individual)

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## APPENDIX A: PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

### Correspondence (#1)

Top of Form

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#### Author Information

Name: G-man Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

#### Correspondence Information

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jun 1, 2021	Date Received:	Jun 1, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

#### Correspondence Text

Alternative 2 is the best option, minimalist approach with less harmful potential than recommended plan. Take the long restoration process not the quick and expensive solutions. NPS has a bad habit of doing things poorly. NFS is not much better but then take their time doing it right.

### Correspondence (#2)

Top of Form

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#### Author Information

Name: Virginia T. Van Kuran Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

#### Correspondence Information

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jun 2, 2021	Date Received:	Jun 2, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

#### Correspondence Text

Thank you for this excellent assessment of the options to restore Ackerson meadow. I strongly support the first option Alternative 1 (preferred) which would completely fill the gully system with soil to the level of the meadow terrace. because it supports complete restoration of the area. I think it is worth the need to bring in fill material.

**Correspondence (#3)**

Top of Form

**Author Information**

Name: Ann L. Hardeman Keep Private: No  
 Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
 E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jun 2, 2021	Date Received:	Jun 2, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

**Correspondence Text**

I am so glad to hear Yosemite National Park and Stanislaus National Forest are taking action to reduce erosion and restore wetlands in Ackerson Meadow, To me, Alternative #1 sounds like the most logical and environmental method for the project. The restoration of natural meadows is a win for all.

As a former volunteer in Yosemite for over 25 years, this area is very special to me.

Ann Hardeman

**Correspondence (#4)**

Top of Form

**Author Information**

Name: Brooks D. Groves Keep Private: No  
 Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
 E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jun 3, 2021	Date Received:	Jun 3, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

**Correspondence Text**

I grew up around there, and know the area well. I would like to see a hybrid combo between Option 1, and maybe some test case areas of option 2. The BDA, program would be great.

Also, would be great, to have all the developments and science communicated to the public in a transparent and engaging way. A lot of time people see these types of projects, and don't understand what is going on. Would be a good opportunity to share, and educate the public.

**Correspondence (#5)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: Charles F. Dresel Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 8, 2021 Date Received: Jun 8, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

I support the preferred option (alternative 1). I believe this option has the best outcome of the three and does the most to restore this meadow to a natural state. I hope that the funding exists to move this project forward at speed as I wish to see the meadow as it once was.

**Correspondence (#6)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: Steven M. Rizzuto Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 10, 2021 Date Received: Jun 10, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

This is an admirable project but, I recommend delaying this project in favor of implementing a proactive forest floor management. I remain concerned that continued investment in creating new man made/augmented areas dilutes focus on an already historically underfunded necessity. We should reconsider the creatinuation of park "improvements" to the detriment of the natural areas which have included park service decisions to moderate naturally occuring fires resulting in devastating and longer lasting impacts (such as wildfires hot enough to undermine redwood forest).

**Correspondence (#7)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: Raymond C. Andersen Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 15, 2021 Date Received: Jun 15, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

I'm sure you have done your homework on this but I prefer the no alternative option. This looks like naturally occurring erosion from runoff. Do not further restrict any area of the Park.

**Correspondence (#8)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: Donn Harter Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Fish Camp Fire Rescue Assn. Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 16, 2021 Date Received: Jun 16, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

I was raised on our ranch on Hwy 120 near the South Fork of the Tuolumne and visited Ackerson Meadow for the first time when I was 6 in 1937. Over the years, I had visited the meadow many times and as a USFS ranger patrolled that area.

The alternative # one is more expensive, but is the only that will have lasting effect and return the meadow to it's serene beauty with a small stream running through it.

I had crawled through the grass on several occasions and fly-fished for rainbow in the creek.

In my 1998 memoires, I used the meadow as a backdrop for my picture on the cover.

The huge gully has been a growing disfigurement and leaves only my memories and pictures of this beautiful spot.

I can wholeheartedly support Alternative #1, and will be willing to do what ever I can to assist in this accomplishment. It will take time beyond my life to restore this meadow to it's original state, but it will be worth it!

Donn Harter

**Correspondence (#9)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: Neil E. Fahy Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 21, 2021 Date Received: Jun 21, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

Question:

Is artificially raising the water table in Ackerson Meadow another example of humans modifying the natural erosion process to "fit" their "fancy"?

By raising the water table to what it was 200 years ago when the Miwok periodically burned the meadows to prevent plant invasion, will the wetter floral return to Ackerson Meadow?

Will the raising of the water table, kill the luxuriant floral display we see today and the pioneer trees and shrubs which have adapted to the drier habitat?

Humans have played god in the past with disastrous consequences. Be careful!

**Correspondence (#10)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: John c. Modin Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 22, 2021 Date Received: Jun 22, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

I fully support Alternative 1 to fully restore Ackerson Meadow to its original unspoiled condition, and to include as many acres of wetland and meadow habitat as possible. Any lesser action would be unacceptable in restoring the ackerson Meadow complex.

John and Christina Modin

**Correspondence (#11)**

Top of Form

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**Author Information**

Name: Alan Carlton Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Sierra Club Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jun 22, 2021 Date Received: Jun 22, 2021  
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No  
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form  
Notes:

**Correspondence Text**

The Sierra Club supports the preferred alternative; maximum restoration. National Parks should be maintained in as natural a state as possible and this alternative accomplishes that.

## Correspondence (#12)

Top of Form

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### Author Information

Name: Dan Dugan Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Nature Sounds Society Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

### Correspondence Information

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jun 23, 2021	Date Received:	Jun 23, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

### Correspondence Text

This is the comment of the Board of Directors of the Nature Sounds Society (NSS), <http://www.naturesounds.org>. The NSS has adopted Ackerson Meadow as one of the national park sites where we do annual soundscape recordings, NPS study YOSE-00370. We made brief trial recordings in the spring of 2020, and accomplished our full overnight protocol in the spring of 2021. This year we observed species of interest willow flycatcher and great gray owl. Contact [dandugan@naturesounds.org](mailto:dandugan@naturesounds.org) for more information.

We support the preferred alternative, complete restoration by filling in erosion gullies. At night, we observed significant effects on the natural soundscape from aircraft overflights and traffic passing on Evergreen Road. We suggest that, in addition to the hydrological restoration, the natural soundscape be improved by creating a 25mph slow zone near the meadow between sunset and sunrise. We saw an experimental slow zone in Grand Teton National Park in 2016. Modification of cattle guards near the meadow could also be helpful.

## Correspondence (#13)

Top of Form

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### Author Information

Name: John Buckley Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

### Correspondence Information

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jul 2, 2021	Date Received:	Jul 2, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

### Correspondence Text

The following comments are provided on behalf of the staff and our members of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC).

#### BACKGROUND FOR THESE COMMENTS

For more than 30 years, members of our CSERC staff have visited Ackerson Meadow and the complex of associated meadows in the vicinity. We have observed great gray owls and a diversity of other bird species. We have coordinated with both Yosemite Park staff and Stanislaus National Forest staff as we have undertaken wildlife photo-detection camera surveys to learn which species are present at times in that area.

As executive director for our Center, I previously worked for the Forest Service as a firefighter and fought one wildfire in 1987 closely adjacent to Ackerson Meadow, plus on behalf of our Center, I have monitored the subsequent effects of the 2013 Rim Fire on the meadow area as well as doing field monitoring across thousands of acres in the same general area.

Based on decades of observations, CSERC strongly asserts that the condition of Ackerson Meadow overall has continued to decline over the years for a variety of reasons, rather than that ecological condition recovering. Continued livestock trailing into and out of the stream gully has added to sloughing of the streambanks. Exceptional drought conditions from multiple years of drought a few years ago combined with a significant diminishment of observed snowpack at Ackerson Meadow to result in trend weather conditions of warming, drying, and reduced areas of saturated soils once the initial spring run-off and snowmelt have completed.

Just over the past three years our Center has periodically done months of wildlife surveys at Ackerson Meadow and in nearby forest areas in response to requests from Stanislaus Forest biologists. Our knowledge from on-the-ground walking within the area over all four seasons of the year enables us to provide comments based on experience, rather than conjecture.

Accordingly, the basis for these comments is our assessment that the large, deep gully winding throughout the main meadow continues to be major ecological wound for the meadow ecosystem. That funneling of water and lowering of the meadow water table, along with downcutting and unhealthy streamside habitat in other adjacent meadow areas, totals up to a truly significant negative situation.

## REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND POTENTIAL PROJECT EFFECTS

We note that the Ackerson Meadow Restoration EA determines that Alternative 1, the preferred alternative, would pose a high degree of risk for creating a range of negative effects. Those negative potential impacts include:

- the potential for the introduction of noxious, invasive weeds;
- the risk of direct physical harm to vulnerable wildlife species, either from heavy equipment and/or from the gully-fill operations;
- the most amount of short-term alteration of existing suitable wildlife habitat;
- the greatest amount of prolonged disturbance to sensitive wildlife species from the extent of heavy equipment operation and other related actions;
- the highest degree of potential conflict with Wilderness values and resources; and
- the highest degree of short-term adjustments necessary for grazing management on USFS lands.

We underscore that we agree with the EA - - that while short term impacts and effects may, indeed, be negative if Alternative 1 - Full Gully Fill is selected and implemented as the chosen restoration treatment, Alternative 1 inarguably provides the level of restoration treatment that will create the greatest overall ecological benefit.

THUS, OUR CENTER STRONGLY ENDORSES THE SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVE 1 – FULL GULLY FILL – AS THE CHOICE FOR RESTORATION TREATMENT.

WE SUPPORT THAT RECOMMENDATION BY NOTING THAT LONG-TERM BENEFITS MATTER

1) Alternative 1 is estimated to result in 76.9 acres of rewetted dry meadow and 17 acres from filling the gully. Neither Alternative 2 or Alternative 3 would come close to resulting in that amount of restoration benefits for rewatering dried areas of meadow and for producing the highest amount of wetland, willow, stream habitat benefits.

2) Alternative 1 may have a range of short-term negative effects of varying degrees that could affect values and resources, but the long-term beneficial effects expected to result from the proposed action would far outweigh the short-term negative impacts.

Alternative 1 could result in short term impacts affecting existing habitat for sensitive wildlife species. It may have short term negative effects on rare plants (although the EA lays out mitigation that would preclude and prevent most negative effects to rare plant species). It has a high short-term risk of introducing new invasive weeds (although again mitigation described in the EA would lessen that risk). Alternative 1 might have short-term impacts as noted above for Wilderness, but the restored ecological health of the treated areas would over time likely result in a far higher ecological condition for the meadow treatment areas that lie within Wilderness.

3) Over and over, for one identified potential short-term impact after another, the predicted long-term benefit to that resource if Alternative 1 is implemented is judged to be highly desirable and to significantly outweigh the short-term risk of limited negative short-term consequences.

Our Center recognizes the varying pressures that the Park and Forest Service must consider in reaching a restoration treatment alternative. However, in this case there is an overwhelmingly higher public benefit value of doing Alternative 1 – Full Gully Fill than minimizing short term, transient disturbance effects by choosing a different alternative.

It is highly likely that this will be the sole restoration project authorized for Ackerson Meadow within the next 20 years.

Will the Forest Service and the Park Service take the least demanding and least challenging option and adopt Alternative 2 or 3?

Or will the agencies apply long-term vision and a goal to leave a healthy legacy at Ackerson Meadow for future generations by choosing Alternative 1 in order to do the significant amount of restoration work that is needed now in order to bring the meadow back to a vigorous state of health?

CSERC strongly urges the selection of Alternative 1 – the full gully fill alternative.

John Buckley, Executive Director  
CSERC  
Box 396  
Twain Harte, CA 95383

#### **Correspondence (#14)**

##### **Author Information**

Name:	Robert T. Anderson	Keep Private:	No
Address:		Organization:	Unaffiliated Individual
E-mail:			

##### **Correspondence Information**

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jul 6, 2021	Date Received:	Jul 6, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

##### **Correspondence Text**

First, I want to compliment and thank all the people involved in this worthy endeavor. I have read the documents and followed the development of the project and I don't think there are any questions about the competence and good faith of the people working on this restoration.

My vote would be for the "go big and get out" option. Prolonging the project in pursuit of "minimal impact" seems contradictory. Also, the longer it goes, the greater is the percent of budget expended on incidentals like administrative costs, traffic control, job site protection and remediation, etc.

I am extremely uncomfortable with the dismissal of "socioeconomic" and "public access" analyses, as seen on page 38, and the myopic approach towards "cumulative" and "secondary" impacts seen on page 39. Ackerson Meadow is within the sphere of influence of Yosemite National Park, which is a dynamic and high visibility "human ecology" (if you will allow the term). Any mention of amenities or natural attractions near Yosemite

will draw attention. Public demand for access to Yosemite has already increased collateral development nearby, and beautiful Ackerson Meadow will be added to Carlon Falls, Diamond "O", and Hetch Hetchy as one of the features of the area. So it would be proper if the impact statement induced planning for these inevitable impacts. I do not agree that these concerns are "extraneous". I am confident that the restoration project will accelerate the "annual visitation" to Ackerson Meadow and along Evergreen Road in general. I am also confident that most of the pertinent public officials and administrators already know this to be true. I do not raise these concerns to question the validity of the restoration project or its documents (I know their scope must be limited) except to the extent that there needs to be official and ongoing recognition of the biggest and hardest environmental issue pertaining to Yosemite National Park, which is that we are still "loving it to death".

Thank you,  
R.T. Anderson

### **Correspondence (#15)**

#### **Author Information**

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Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
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#### **Correspondence Information**

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jul 7, 2021	Date Received:	Jul 7, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
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#### **Correspondence Text**

Ackerson Meadow was irrigated with a water right on the Middle Fork of the Tuolumne River and hay was cut on it until the 1930s when the YNP took the water right from the owners. The irrigation ditches are grown over now with grass. Some can hardly be identified as a ditch. There is no erosion caused by water in these ditches. Ackerson Creek which flows out of the Park above Ackerson Meadow is in a deep gully that is likely due to heavy spring storms and snow run off. The meadow is not eroded all over!

Damming up Ackerson Meadow cuts off water to users down stream, wildlife and cattle that have grazing allotments of the USFS! Any neighbor should not be allowed to do this to their neighbors. If it wasn't the government it would be illegal.

About two thirds of South Meadow was taken by condemnation in the 1930s. Since that time there has been no domestic grazing on it. In a wet year the entire meadow, private & Park portions, water would run over a person's boots. I know from repairing fence. The grass on the Park portion could be 2 1/2' to 3' tall and matted down. We hardly ever see deer there or the Great Gray Owl. We see the owl mostly in Stone Meadow where the cattle graze it shorter in the late summer and fall months. Flooding Ackerson will probably cause it to look like South Meadow. The meadow will also over a period of time become smaller due to encroaching willows and trees. An Example of this is Tuolumne Meadow. It take a long timer a big meadow, but it happens.

I object to the cost of 150,000 cubic yards of fill material. The Park Service nationwide is in debt.

I know from a lifetime of caring for my private land that feeds our cattle that some of the comments from the Park Releases and CSERC are not true about livestock grazing. Everyone has their opinions and theories, but they are not all fact.

### Correspondence (#16)

#### Author Information

Name: Patrick Koepele Keep Private: No  
Address: Organization: Tuolumne River Trust  
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#### Correspondence Information

Status:	New	Park Correspondence Log:	
Date Sent:	Jul 8, 2021	Date Received:	Jul 8, 2021
Number of Signatures:	1	Form Letter:	No
Contains Request(s):	No	Type:	Web Form
Notes:			

#### Correspondence Text

I submit these comments on the proposed Ackerson Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment. Ackerson Meadow is an exciting recent addition to Yosemite National Park. The meadow provides incredible scenic vistas to the east from Evergreen Road as well as a tremendously diverse habitat for species unique to the Central Sierra. The headcutting and erosion in the meadow clearly needs to be addressed before it gets worse and the meadow dries out and converts to a different habitat types.

I write to urge Park and Forest Service staff to take a cautious and light approach as they consider restoration plans. Humans tend to be impatient and desire outcomes on a short timeline. However, the best outcomes may come over a period of many years, and indeed full recovery may not be complete within our lifetimes.

The sense of urgency and the need to "do something now" shows clearly in the preferred alternative, which includes lots of machinery moving 151,000 cubic yards of material, excavating from one location, hauling it to the gully sites, all the while spewing many tons of carbon into the atmosphere. While this alternative may ultimately "work" by eliminating the gullies, it also comes with considerable risk and expense.

One clear risk is that if the winter following the work turns out to be a very wet winter, much of the work could be quickly undone by a single flood event. If that were to happen, all of the expenses incurred will be lost.

We note that the Park has several hand built structures as test projects to better understand the effectiveness of BDAs and PALs. We are pleased that the Park has taken the time to install these and suggest that you give these test projects time to run their course. This is a great learning opportunity and the lessons learned by this could inform future meadow restoration projects in the Park and indeed throughout the Sierra. If the hand-built structures prove effective, that will be a highly preferable restoration approach than the total-fill option as described in the Environmental Assessment. It will be cheaper, less invasive, less risky, and produce less carbon to the atmosphere.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Best Regards,

Patrick Koepele  
Executive Director

**Correspondence (#17)**

**Author Information**

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Address: Organization: Unaffiliated Individual  
E-mail:

**Correspondence Information**

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:  
Date Sent: Jul 8, 2021 Date Received: Jul 8, 2021  
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**Correspondence Text**

The PEPC site is not working. The statement appeared: "The Service is unavailable." The following comment was written for the Ackerson EA: A picture is worth a thousand words, and the cover photo for the project shows the lovely meadow, but as it descends we see the not so lovely gully. Further photos show examples of desired conditions and not so desirable , and then the rather ugly highly impacted sections, that no one is coming to Yosemite to visit. The reasons for the project are clear: "The Ackerson Meadow complex makes up the largest mid-elevation meadow complex in Yosemite National Park and is one of the largest in the Sierra Nevada in public ownership. This scenic and ecologically critical meadow complex is an important habitat for the State endangered great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*) and little willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), as well as other at-risk wildlife species. A large erosion gully network in the meadow has drained former wetlands and threatens additional intact wetlands. The gully network is a result of more than a century of landscape manipulation including domestic water diversion, farming, and ranching." Some would say why interfere in continuing natural processes, but the conditions of concern were caused by human intervention that this project, one has hope, will make things right, "The purpose of this project is to protect the remaining intact wetlands, restore lost wetland ecosystem function, and re-establish self-sustaining wetland processes in the Ackerson Meadow complex. While they account for only about one percent of the land cover in the entire Sierra Nevada, montane meadows and associated riparian communities provide habitat for approximately 20 percent of the 400 terrestrial vertebrate species that inhabit the Sierra Nevada (NPS 2017a). The Ackerson Meadow complex is an important mid-elevation meadow wildlife corridor and represents one of the region's most extensive and contiguous meadow systems (Yosemite National Park 2020)." " The eroding gullies have lowered the groundwater table and intercepted sheet water flows in the meadow, which has led to early-season onset of dry conditions and continual loss of wetland habitat." The unique and rare vegetation and wildlife dependent on the conditions would be even more severely stressed in times of drought (and/or climate change), so action to restore an maintain natural processes would be desirable. The alternatives themselves, the efficacy and details for which I would not have extensive understanding, do present some basic layman concerns; The proposed preferred action would certainly be an invasive action on its own, that one would shudder to see in a natural area, although of the alternatives it may be the most effective and

productive AND not require annual maintenance (definitely a concern if the National Parks go into one of the staff shortage cycles and budget slashing).. One is uneasy about the herbicidal introduction that while effective in the struggle with invasives, it does have its own gaggle of impacts. Needless to say, any chemicals used should be documented and monitored for impacts, but a question that i would raise is what are the long term impacts and interactions with the fill material. Would that constitute an atypical situation that would have its own intensity or dispersal of biochemical interactions? Some might raise issues about expense for just a meadow in this Park with all its spectacular monumental rock and water presences, but given its prominent primary standing in our treasury of natural resources, an important meadow should be part of the experience, especially as habitat for species treasured as a viewing experience in this public area. We are reaching a point where formerly common geographical types are disappearing or subject to infringement, so places set aside need the attention that is invested in their recognition for stewardship.

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