

Yosemite National Park
Merced River Plan
Outstandingly Remarkable Values Roundtable
El Portal
July 13, 2010

Notes from the question and answer session following a presentation of the *Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan Outstandingly Remarkable Values Report, June 2010*, by park staff. *Italic type* represents NPS responses to questions and comments.

There are significant biological issues missing from the document. When will the details be fleshed out? Specifically, there is a *quercus lobata* (Valley Oak) grove in El Portal, a significant resource that is not addressed. Species such as the side-banded snail are also not addressed.

Scoping comments were submitted in the past, but are not included in these ORV's.

Unique hydrological processes are occurring in the Gorge and at El Portal, but are not mentioned in the ORV report.

Extirpated species should be restored (Coho salmon, Sierra Nevada Big Horn Sheep, Grizzly Bears and others).

A re-licensing of Lake McClure is pending before the Federal Energy Relicensing Commission. FERC will be considering restoration of native salmon.

Comprehensive entomological studies, concerning aquatic insects such as stonefly and mayfly, have not been done in Yosemite. Yosemite may have unique fauna that is not yet discovered.

For river management purposes, rare, unique or exemplary features are the key focus, rather than those natural resources that may be considered special or significant.

A unique place exists near Yosemite View Lodge (just downstream), a specific example of an area that meets the ORV criteria and merits protection. Resources include a braided river, which should be address under the geologic, hydrologic criteria.

Meadow complexes that are disconnected should be restored in Yosemite, including the "Camp 6" day use parking area, which can be restored.

Consider restoration of the El Capitan moraine, near Bridalveil Fall; destroyed in the distant past. Consider this action to protect and enhance the Meadow ORV.

How do we know that our comments are received and addressed? *A contractor was hired to summarize all comments. We are looking to do better job over time and make this information available in the immediate future. The Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PECP) web*

site provides one venue. If you submit a letter, it will be transcribed into electronic data. There are privacy issues that limit the ability to post letter with personally identifying information.

Regarding past litigation, when in the course of this process will you address user capacity issues? User capacity experts are engaged in the planning effort, and were involved in developing these ORV's. Data collection on capacity issues is proceeding through independent efforts managed by park staff. These issues will be explored in developing project alternatives.

In Yosemite Valley, there is much development and infrastructure. How will that be addressed? The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not allow "grandfathering" of prior uses. For example, Camp 6. We must look to the baseline of development that existed when the river was listed 1987. Moreover, we must consider whether older uses are appropriate.

How will this affect private property in El Portal? For example, the trailer park, the Yosemite View Lodge? The lodge is outside of the El Portal Administrative boundary. The trailer park is situated on administrative land, as is Rancheria and Old El Portal. In the prior MRP, the court rejected the NPS opinion that El Portal was specifically set aside by Congress as an administrative site, and is therefore not subject to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

At the Oakhurst meeting, the user capacity experts were excellent. That meeting gave me confidence that those aspects will be fully addressed by the plan. What the experts offered will be available in summary form online, and if you contact us, we can send you more information about them and their role in this process.

There are river-dependent populations of Thompkins Sedge in the El Portal reach of the river, which should be included in ORV report. This species might be protected under other laws outside of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. If the river is affected on private property and modifications to the river are proposed, there are other regulations that would trigger a permitting process and review by the Army Corp of Engineers. Private property owners must contend with other regulations.

There are perceived recreation conflicts with other ORVs. How will this conflict be reconciled? There is a need to resolve tension and balance factors across all the ORV's. Recreational values are suggested as being essential by Congress, in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Why is the river corridor a different width in different areas (such as the South Fork above and below Wawona)? The river forms the park boundary, or otherwise lies near the edge of the park. The NPS does not have jurisdiction outside park boundaries, though portions of the Merced River are protected by other management agencies (USFS, for example, and BLM downstream).

The need to balance recreation and biological resources is interesting; how will this task play out? Studies have shown that recreational paddle craft is not consistent with the protection of biological resources.