

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**National Park Service****Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced Wild and Scenic River, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa and Madera Counties, California; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement**

SUMMARY: Pursuant to § 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190) and Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1508.22), the National Park Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for a Comprehensive Management Plan that encompasses protection and enhancement of the values for which the Merced River was designated as a Wild and Scenic River. During the ensuing conservation planning-impact analysis process, management alternatives will be developed which will address resource protection, development of lands or facilities, user capacities, and various stewardship practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended. The Merced River planning process will be conducted in consultation with affected federal agencies, State and local governments, tribal groups, and interested organizations and individuals.

Background

The National Park Service has previously completed the tasks of establishing detailed boundaries, classifying segments of the Merced River as either wild, scenic, or recreational (as required by 16 USC 1274(b)), and identifying the outstandingly remarkable values (ORV) for each river segment. These factors were presented for public review and comment in the 1996 Draft Yosemite Valley Housing Plan (Addendum/ Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the General Management Plan). The Merced River planning process will incorporate that information (and germane comments) into the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan (MCMP/EIS).

Scoping Results

The MCMP/EIS is being prepared by the NPS pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended (16 USC 1274(d)). The NPS has completed the scoping phase through a concerted public involvement effort, including the

following activities. An invitation letter initiating scoping and announcing four public meetings was mailed to over 8,500 individuals, organizations, agencies, and other entities during the week of June 7, 1999. On June 11, 1999 the NPS formally noticed the MCMP scoping period in the **Federal Register** (V64-N112-P31605), accepting comments through July 14, 1999. Altogether six public meetings were held in San Francisco (June 22), Modesto (June 23), Mariposa (June 24), Yosemite Valley (June 28), Wawona (July 7), and El Portal (July 12). In addition to direct mailing and the internet, all meetings were publicized via news releases sent to over 110 media contacts on June 3 and July 1, 1999. In deference to public interest, the NPS on July 13, 1999 via direct mailing and news release issued a two-week extension of the scoping period through July 30, 1999. Formal notice of the extension appeared in the **Federal Register** on July 23, 1999 (V64-N141-P40037).

Results of Scoping and Future Information

As a result of the scoping effort which elicited over 330 responses, it has been determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (not an Environmental Assessment) will be prepared. All comments received during June 11-July 30 in response to the scoping and extension notices have been duly considered, and will remain in the administrative record throughout this conservation planning-impact analysis process. In addition to the considerations mentioned above, as a direct result of the public responses received the following issues will be considered: recreational use; commercial use; access for persons with disabilities; riparian habitat protection; private property in Wawona; the river boundaries; development in Yosemite Valley within the corridor; and air, water, and noise pollution.

Updated information about various aspects of the Merced River planning process will be periodically distributed via newsletters, mailings, the Yosemite National Park Webpage (<http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning>), and regional and local news media. To request placement on MCMP/EIS mailing list, please leave your name and address on the voice mail telephone at (209) 372-0261—interested individuals, organizations, and agencies may also respond to: Superintendent, Attn: CMP/EIS, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389.

Decision Process

On July 12, 1999 a federal judge ordered the NPS to complete a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced Wild and Scenic River within twelve (12) months. This ruling stemmed from a lawsuit brought by plaintiffs opposing the ongoing reconstruction of State Highway 140 (El Portal Road) along the first seven miles of the highway situated within the park. Consequently the MCMP/EIS effort will proceed on the following compressed time schedule:

The Draft CMP/EIS is anticipated to be available for public review and comment during January and February 2000. Availability of the Draft document for review and written comment will be announced by formal Notice in the **Federal Register**, through local and regional news media, Yosemite's Webpage, and direct mailing. Comments on the Draft CMP/EIS will be fully considered, and incorporated into a Final CMP/EIS as appropriate. At this time it is anticipated that the Final CMP/EIS will be completed during early June 2000. Subsequently, notice of an approved Record of Decision will be published in the **Federal Register** not sooner than thirty (30) days after the Final CMP/EIS is distributed. This is expected to occur by mid-July of 2000. The official responsible for the decision is the Regional Director, Pacific West Region, National Park Service; the official responsible for implementation is the Superintendent, Yosemite National Park.

Dated: August 13, 1999.

Martha K. Leicester,

Acting Regional Director, Pacific West.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**National Park Service****National Park Service, Mojave National Preserve Advisory Commission; Notice of Meeting**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act that a meeting of the Mojave National Preserve Advisory Commission will be held September 28-29, 1999; assemble at 1:00 P.M. at the Needles Women's Club, Needles, California.

The agenda: Interpretative Plan Overview and Scoping Session.

The Advisory Commission was established by Pub. L. #103-433 to provide for the advice on development and implementation of the General Management Plan.