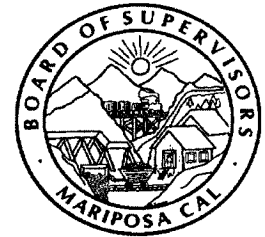




COUNTY OF MARIPOSA

P.O. Box 784, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 966-3222



GARRY R. PARKER, CHAIRMAN
DOUG BALMAIN, VICE-CHAIRMAN
PATTI A. REILLY
ROBERT C. STEWART
BOB PICKARD

DISTRICT IV
DISTRICT II
DISTRICT I
DISTRICT III
DISTRICT V

MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: PATTI REILLY, District I Supervisor
BOB PICKARD, District V Supervisor

FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board *MW*

SUBJECT: Comments on the Merced River Management Plan; Res. 00-103

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,

ADOPTED THIS Order on March 21, 2000

ACTION AND VOTE:

Discussion and Possible Direction Regarding Comments on the Merced River Management Plan
(Continued from 3/14/00) (Supervisors Pickard and Reilly)

BOARD ACTION: A draft letter to Yosemite National Park Superintendent with Board Comments on the "Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan" for the Chairman to sign was handed out to the Board along with comments drafted by a subcommittee of the El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee to be labeled as "Exhibit A." Discussion was held. Supervisor Pickard requested the following two changes to the letter: a paragraph be added to the end of number 7, page 4 that reads, "By way of comparison, the General Management Plan received over two years of public review and comment compared to approximately 70 days of public review for the River Plan. The Board of Supervisors believes the River Plan will be every bit as crucial to future development in the Park as the General Management Plan and the public has been short-changed regarding the ability to review, assimilate, and meaningfully comment on the River Plan because of the fast tracking of this proposal," and that paragraph 4-B on page 3 be deleted. (M)Pickard, authorizing Chairman to sign letter with foregoing changes, (S)Reilly, Res. 00-103 adopted, with the changes as requested by Supervisor Pickard/Ayes: Reilly, Balmain, Parker, Pickard; Excused: Stewart.

cc: File

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

District 1.....PATTI A. REILLY
District 2.....DOUG BALMAIN
District 3.....ROBERT C. STEWART
District 4.....GARRY R. PARKER
District 5.....BOB PICKARD



JANET HOGAN
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Board

P.O. Box 784
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA 95338
(209) 966-3222
1-800-736-1252

FAX (209) 966-5147

March 23, 2000

David A. Mihalic, Superintendent
Yosemite National Park
Post Office Box 577
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

Re: Mariposa County Board of Supervisors Comments on the "Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan"

Dear Superintendent Mihalic:

Thank you for providing the County of Mariposa with a copy of the "Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan," hereinafter referred to as "River Plan," and the opportunity to comment upon the contents of the River Plan. As you know, the River Plan contains in excess of 1,000 pages of information and numerous alternatives with each alternative in turn containing a number of alternatives. It is a daunting task to assimilate all of the offered information and make cogent comments relative to the future of the River Corridor in Yosemite National Park. While the Board of Supervisors has attempted to gather as much information as possible, in order to make fully informed comments on the River Plan, the fast track that the federal government has established for public review and adoption of the River Plan is, in our opinion, far too compressed to allow the Board and the general public sufficient time to prepare meaningful responses. The Board of Supervisors urges the National Park Service to give serious consideration to the responses contained below.

1. Environmental Health Issues:

(a) With the exception of the no action alternative, each of the alternatives utilizes a river protection overlay zone that addresses activities within 100 feet to 150 feet of the ordinary high water mark in the River. There are currently a number of historical mosquito abatement diversion ditches located within the river protection overlay, and the document discusses the possibility of removing these drainage ditches. Recent sewage spills in Yosemite Valley have been contained within at least one of these historic ditches thus preventing the sewage from entering the River; therefore, any alternative selected should include provisions for containment, dikes, levees or depressions around sewer manholes to prevent sewage from entering the River in the event of a spill.

(b) Each of the alternatives break the River down into separate zones. Zones 1c "High Use Trail" and 3a "Walk in Camping," should include provisions to allow construction of restroom



facilities and necessary infrastructure to the extent that they are consistent with other aspects of the River Plan.

2. Planning Issues:

(a) There are at least two (2) proposed land exchanges being considered at the present time between the National Park Service and private landowners in Mariposa County. The Seventh Day Adventist Church project in Wawona involves a land exchange with the National Park Service to move some of the Seventh Day Adventist camp facilities further away from a designated "wilderness boundary." If the federal land which has been identified for exchange is in the boundaries of the land governed by the River Plan, then the River Plan could impact the Seventh Day Adventist project if the proposed project is not allowed or accommodated by the River Plan.

(b) There is also discussion pending relative to a land exchange between the National Park Service and Yosemite Motels in El Portal. This project involves a land exchange with the National Park Service to modify the boundary between the National Park Service Administration site in El Portal and privately owned land in the El Portal Corridor. The proposed project would result in all of the privately owned land being on the north side of the River. The federal land that has been identified for exchange is definitely located within the boundaries governed by the River Plan. The River Plan could impact this proposed project if the concerns raised by the land exchange are not accommodated by the River Plan, and involve planning issues within Mariposa County.

(c) Yosemite West Sewer Project. The alternatives which are being discussed to expand sewage treatment for the community now include construction of a sewer line to the NPS sewage treatment facility in El Portal. If this alternative were the chosen alternative, the sewer line would have to somehow cross the Merced River. Construction would definitely be within the boundaries of the land governed by the River Plan, and the River Plan could impact this project if it is not accommodated by the River Plan.

All of the above issues will require cooperation among private individuals, the National Park Service and Mariposa County, and the River Plan should specifically accommodate this cooperation.

(d) Bridge in Wawona. As part of their discussions regarding community planning, the Wawona Advisory Committee has identified emergency egress as an important issue. This is based upon the layout of the community. The privately owned portion of the community is located on either side of the River, and there is just one dead-end road serving this development (on either side of the River). Currently, there is one main bridge in the community, at Highway 41.

In order to provide an alternative egress (in case of an emergency), one of the projects identified by the group is the construction of a new bridge. The bridge would link the two dead end roads (at or near the ends of the roads) to give an alternative emergency egress route.

Construction of the bridge would definitely be within the boundaries of the land governed by the River Plan, and the River Plan could impact this important project if it is not accommodated by the River Plan.

3. El Portal Corridor:

(a) A category for "Scenic" needs to be added to the El Portal section of the River under the proposed update and the Outstandingly Remarkable Values as shown in Table II-1, Segment 4 on pages 11-17 and 11-19. There are many areas of the El Portal Corridor which contain scenic qualities. Please refer to the El Portal Advisory comments for more details. A copy of the El Portal Advisory comments have been approved and adopted by the Board of Supervisors and are attached hereto marked "Exhibit A" and by this reference incorporated herein. If a category for "scenic" is not added, future actions may be taken without benefit of analysis regarding the protection and enhancement of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of this River Corridor.

(b) The El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee has prepared detailed comments on the River Plan and the Board of Supervisors has adopted and approved those comments. The comments are attached as "Exhibit A."

4. Wawona Corridor:

Preferred Alternative/Overlay. The preferred alternative by way of an Overlay Zone as listed in the River Plan allows certain natural processes to take affect and those natural processes could have an adverse effect in Section 35 if allowed to proceed uncontrolled. By way of example, if downed trees and other natural debris are allowed to remain in the River in the overlay portion, that natural process could have an adverse affect on private property in Section 35.

5. Overlay Zone. The Board of Supervisors is extremely concerned relative to the broad and general nature of the Overlay Zone that is recommended for the preferred alternative and other alternatives. There is far too much discretion given to the Park Service relative to future actions which could be taken within the Overlay Zone, to the extent that there can be no comfort level regarding what the River Corridor will look like in ten to twenty years from now. A prime example is that the Overlay would give the Park Service the ability to remove historic structures from the River. There are a number of other alternatives in the Overlay Zone which could have significant effects both environmentally and esthetically. However, because of the very nature of the Overlay Zone itself it is impossible to comment on those at the present time, because of the unknown nature of future acts. The Board of Supervisors would prefer to remove the Overlay Zone so that once the River Plan is adopted the public knows more precisely what can and cannot happen and what will and will not occur in the River Corridor.

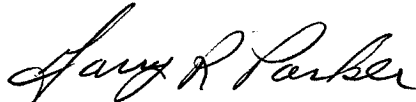
6. Coordination with Local Governments. The Board of Supervisors is concerned that there was no effort made to coordinate any of the contents of the River Plan with local governments prior to the River Plan being prepared and distributed for public comment. It is the position of the Board that there must be close coordination between the National Park Service and local governmental entities at the earliest possible stage in projects such as this.

7. Fast Tracking. The Board of Supervisors is distressed with the fast tracking of this project; as was stated earlier in this comment letter there are in excess of 1,000 pages of data with multiple alternatives which must be read, understood and addressed. The Board does not believe that the public nor local governmental entities have had sufficient time to review all of the possible ramifications of the contents of the River Plan and find no justification for such fast tracking of this proposal.

By way of comparison, the General Management Plan received over two years of public review and comment compared to approximately seventy days of public review for the River Plan. The Board of Supervisors believes the River Plan will be every bit as crucial to future development in the Park as the General Management Plan and the public has been short changed regarding the ability to review, assimilate, and meaningfully comment on the River Plan because of the fast tracking of this proposal.

The Board appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed River Plan and urges the Park Service to seriously consider the responses contained herein.

Very truly yours,



Garry R. Parker, Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

rs

encl/as stated

cc: Board of Supervisors
Janet Hogan, County Administrative Officer
Planning Commission
El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee
Fish Camp Town Planning Advisory Committee
Wawona Town Planning Advisory Committee