

To: Master Plan Study Team
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Three Rivers
California 93271

January 24, 1969

From: Tehipite Chapter, Sierra Club
1042 E. Pico Avenue
Fresno
California 93704

Subject: Master Plan recommendations

Gentlemen:

Our group was organized in 1953, and at the present time we have grown to a membership of more than five hundred. Many of our members have spent a great amount of time in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, which are practically in our back yard. This report has been drafted by compiling the thinking of our various members into a composite statement which reflects the thinking of the group as a whole.

You gentlemen of the Master Plan Study Team are obviously thoroughly familiar with the terms of the National Park Service Act of 1916, but we ask your indulgence in referring to it here for the benefit of the public, the press, and other interested groups. The National Park Service Act requires that

"...The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the...national parks...by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

(emphasis added)

Essentially, this is a requirement for sound planning which will permit judicious use in such a way that the resources will be left unimpaired in their natural state. This is a statement of basic conservation principles, and the phrase "purpose is to conserve" is a key part of the wording. The National Park Service is thus, by law, a conservation organization.

This may come as a shock to some, for there was a time when "conservation" had evil connotations, and it still does to those who equate an ever-larger Gross National Product with Progress. But recent years have seen a growing public awareness of the fact that conservation is essentially a matter of wise planning for the future, with the underlying principles being based on an esthetic and moral philosophy as opposed to a strictly economic one.

We feel, then, that the park service is required, legally as well as morally, not to permit the carrying capacity of the land to be exceeded. If the capacity is exceeded, then the park service will have failed to comply with the requirements imposed upon it by Congress.

All of our recommendations which follow are based upon this one fundamental assumption -- that the carrying capacity of the land must not be exceeded under any circumstances. This holds true regardless of whether the considerations are of esthetics, ecology, or the emotional and physical health of the visitor.

CEDAR GROVE

We might start with the Cedar Grove area, not because its carrying capacity is being threatened, but for precisely the opposite reason. We feel that this extensive, flat-bottomed valley, lying at a moderate elevation where snow problems are minimal, is being under-utilized at present. The only other comparable area in the Sierra is Yosemite Valley, which suffers from too many people. It would seem that a judicious development of facilities at Cedar Grove, on an all-year basis, would not only relieve some of the pressure from Yosemite, but could also help instill in the public a greater understanding of the purposes for which Kings Canyon National Park was established.

Much has been made of the fact that the access road would be difficult to maintain during the winter. However, consultation with the California Division of Highways has indicated that the principal barrier to winter maintenance of this road is the present lack of public demand. Given the demand, they anticipate the time when the road will be kept open throughout the winter. This being the case, we suggest that the park service, too, should make the basic assumption that the road can be maintained, and proceed from that point.

We feel that it would be entirely appropriate to develop at Cedar Grove facilities such as more extensive overnight accommodations, a restaurant, a lodge, a visitor center, nature walks and other interpretive services, and essential administrative buildings. In particular, there could be much more extensive campground development, but this should not be done in such a way as to encourage long-term camper and trailer parking by people who are merely looking for a rent-free place to live. (This general problem of campground development is dealt with elsewhere in this report.)

Developments which we would oppose would be convention centers, Ahwahnee-type hotels, golf courses, firefalls, and any other features which would attract people for reasons having little or nothing to do with the purposes for which the park was established. This specifically includes tramways to the valley rim for the ostensible purpose of "letting the visitors see the back country". Observation of tramway operations in other areas leads us to conclude that "going for a ride on the tram" becomes an end in itself for the visitor, and the tram is frequently even promoted on that basis. The result is an influx of people who couldn't care less about park values, and who are in no mood to learn. Lookout Peak has been mentioned as being a possible tramway terminus. May we point out that there is already a road which goes practically to the summit? We have no objection whatsoever to the more sedentary visitors taking an interest in the back country, but we suggest that this interest would be better served by improving an already existing road rather than by installing a tramway.

It should be carefully noted that we are not advocating any development, other than trails or nature walks, beyond the Roaring River bridge on the south side of the Kings River, or beyond the road terminus at Copper Creek on the north side of the Kings River. There is ample room for the developments we advocate in those portions of the valley through which roads already run.

It should also be noted that we question the wisdom of using prime ground in the middle of the valley for a dump. We urge that every effort be made to eliminate the dump, and that in the future trash be trucked out of the valley to an area which would be less likely to conflict with those purposes for which the park was established. Even if it proved necessary to haul it all the way to Barton Flat, this would still be no greater a distance than that over which trash is now being hauled from Yosemite Valley.

CAMPGROUNDS

Non-wilderness camping consists of that which is more or less accessible by motor transportation, either public or private. There are essentially three distinct types of such camping activity, and these result in a public demand for three different types of facilities. We characterize these as follows:

1. The traditional campground consisting of a vehicle parking area, a space to pitch a tent, a table, and a fire site. This arrangement is noted for consuming a large amount of space. Toilet facilities are nearby, and there is usually a water supply and garbage can.
2. The walk-in campground consisting of all the above, with the exception that the vehicle is parked some distance away.
3. The "roadside-rest" type, which consists of a parking area for trailer and camper units, with toilet facilities nearby; no other facilities are necessary. A water supply and garbage can, while desirable, are nevertheless not essential, since people who eat and sleep within their vehicles usually have their own water supply and garbage container.

The last type, number three, is exemplified by the roadside rests found on the interstate highways in California, Oregon, and Washington. Number two, the walk-in campground, is found in at least one location in Yosemite. To our knowledge, the only type of non-wilderness camping facility found in Sequoia-Kings is number one, the traditional drive-in campground.

We are puzzled over the almost total absence of walk-in and roadside-rest type facilities, not only in Sequoia-Kings but also in other units of the National Park System.

A 1967 survey for seventeen National Park Service areas showed that trailer and camper units accounted for more than fifty per cent of the vehicles using NPS camping facilities.* Since most of these units require only a place to park and nearby toilet facilities, why take up space to provide a table, fire site, and tent space which is not needed?

*Christian Science Monitor

If existing parking areas were designated for overnight use by camper and trailer units, it would free the traditional campgrounds for use by those who cannot sleep in their vehicles. In many cases there are toilet facilities already in existence near parking areas, but present regulations force the camper or trailer visitor to occupy campground facilities he doesn't need.

The occasional use of the Wolverton parking lot for overnight camper and trailer parking is an excellent idea which the Sequoia administration has already put into practise. We feel that such use of this parking lot should be made routine, whereas up to now it has apparently been resorted to only as an emergency measure to relieve overcrowding in the regular campgrounds. If the present toilet facilities are not adequate to handle such routine use, then we would recommend that they be expanded. We would not, however, recommend the construction of new roadside-rest type facilities except in lower and less scenic areas. Our primary interest is in better utilization of already existing facilities.

With the traditional drive-in campground it sometimes happens that a space is occupied by someone who does not have a vehicle. Again, half the facility goes unused simply because the visitor was not offered the choice of a more simple walk-in campground, which he undoubtedly would have preferred for its more natural setting.

In some instances, it appears that it would be feasible to have a blend of the three types of activity in a single campground. Although accommodating different types of camping activity, there could be common toilet, water, and garbage disposal facilities.

Generally, however, we feel that the roadside-rest type of facility would constitute an unwarranted intrusion on park resources, and consequently recommend that it normally be considered only in areas of lesser esthetic value. These would typically be at lower elevations and closer to park entrances; in many cases such facilities could be placed outside the park. This point is raised in the recently issued NPS road policy statement, and we support it wholeheartedly.

To summarize, we feel that, in view of the fact that more than fifty per cent of the vehicles using camping facilities are camper and trailer units, it is inefficient to direct everyone into traditional drive-in campgrounds. More people could be accommodated with less damage to esthetics and ecology if a variety of camping facilities were offered, with more emphasis being placed on directing camper and trailer units to areas where they would constitute a lesser intrusion on park values.

ROADS

We would like to include at this point a brief summary of a recently issued National Park Service road policy statement which was approved by Director Hartzog and Secretary Udall. We wish to present it because it reflects our own thinking.

"The single abiding purpose of the national parks is to bring man and his environment into closer harmony. It is therefore the quality of the park experience...which must be the primary concern.

"...(automobiles)...have begun to erode the quality of the park experience." (emphasis provided)

The following is a summary of specific points which the policy states:

Park roads should not be links of the federal network.
(Nor, by implication, of any state highway system.)

The NPS must not be obligated to accommodate camping vehicles.
The development of parking areas for trailers at park entrances is appropriate.

Rather than creating a severe road scar to facilitate a close approach to a point of interest, alternate transportation should be considered, or visitors should be required to walk.

Alternate transportation systems should be studied and pilot programs instituted.

A park road should not merely link points of interest, but should be designed to provide an enjoyable and informative experience in itself. Where appropriate, this would involve reduction of speed limits, conversion to one-way systems, interpretive signs, short walks from road turn-outs, etc.

We commend the philosophy contained in this policy statement, and intend to support it to the utmost of our ability.

BACK COUNTRY

Contrary to the popular conception of the back country as being a pristine wilderness visited only by the hardy few who have somehow managed to "lock it up" for their own exclusive use, there are many areas where the carrying capacity was exceeded long ago and which show the scars of over-use. Backpackers in ever-increasing numbers are finding it almost impossible to achieve a back country experience of the same quality as that which was easily attained just a few years ago.

For many a visitor one of the foremost rewards of a trip into the back country is the complete sense of freedom it offers -- he is on his own, the master of his fate, with the petty bickering, tensions, and regimentation of civilization left behind. Because this sense of freedom has been valued so highly, we have been reluctant to accept regulation of back country usage. But the pressure of too many people, and the consequent erosion of the esthetic values which the back country should always offer, has led us reluctantly to conclude that the park service must impose a greater degree of regulation than it has in the past.

There is no need to make rules all-inclusive, because some areas are much more in need of regulation than others. Also, there would be no justification for rangers to assume the role of policemen; it might be noted that there has been an unfortunate tendency in this direction in some units of the national park system. However, this seems usually to be the result of a personal proclivity on the part of the ranger rather than a matter of park policy; it would appear that the solution, in part, would be improved screening of personnel to eliminate applicants who display a latent police mentality.

Our specific proposals for back country management are listed below:

1. The size of groups should be limited. Some of the most severe abuse seems to originate with large groups where it becomes difficult for the leader adequately to supervise and instruct his less experienced charges. Even with adequate supervision, a large group usually subjects the terrain to trampling and other forms of intensive use from which it is slow to recover. While the people who go on such trips obviously are not seeking peace and quiet, the fact remains that many of the hikers whom they will encounter on the trail are seeking it, and the presence of these large groups inevitably detracts from the quality of the back country experience which smaller groups and individuals are seeking.
2. In areas where heavy usage is unavoidable, serious consideration should be given to designating the camping area with directional signs in order to get the activity off the main trail. Within the designated area there could then be certain limited improvements such as mentioned in items three and four below. While the concept of "improvements" in a supposed wilderness is unfortunate, the alternatives are even more repugnant.
3. In areas where heavy usage is unavoidable, toilet facilities should be designated. These need not be elaborate, nor need they even be visible. An arrangement used in some areas in the northwest seems quite practical; this is to have a pit covered with a seat, but with no walls or roof -- it is simply located in such a way that natural vegetation screens it from view. The cost would be low, the impact slight, and far preferable when it is considered that the alternative is to permit human excrement to gather in a thin layer over a wide area.
4. Another limited improvement which may be desirable in areas of heavy use is the designation of fire sites. If a hiker arrived only to find all fire sites in use, he could use the small stove which he should be carrying. (See item six below.) This may seem like an unwarranted intrusion into the supposed "right" of a citizen to build a fire wherever he feels like it, but the alternative is an ever-growing number of fire scars contributing dirt and ugliness throughout a once-beautiful camping area.
5. There should be a restriction on the number of fires any group could have at a single camp (unless designated sites were already established.) The purpose of this is to reduce the number of fire scars caused when the individuals make their own fires rather than using a communal group fire. This problem is particularly prevalent with certain types of groups -- such as young boys -- where there is a tendency for each individual to want to display his woodsmanship at every opportunity. These groups seem to have a disproportionate impact on the back country; a special effort to educate them in good back country manners would probably pay better dividends than the same effort expended on individuals.
6. In areas which have been, or are in danger of being, denuded by backpackers seeking fuel, wood fires should be prohibited. Many backpackers already carry a small stove, and many who do not are accustomed to eating cold food at camps above timberline.

It should be noted that a prohibition on wood fires can be used as a management tool to discourage camping in certain areas, even though there may not actually be a shortage of fuel. Also, by encouraging the carrying of stoves, the proliferation of fire scars will be minimized.

7. We support the park service in the imposition of camping limits in certain areas, and feel that this is a management tool which could profitably be used more widely.
8. In view of the damage to trails and meadows caused by stock, to say nothing of the spewing of manure over the countryside, we find it deplorable that the park service still uses stock in its own operations. It seems paradoxical to us to observe a crew at work manicuring a trail, while their half dozen head of stock are busily tearing up a nearby meadow which took years to recover from the last depredation. We are sure that most visitors would prefer to put up with the noise of a helicopter or mechanical trail vehicle for a few minutes, rather than be forced to look for years at the damage which stock has done to a meadow. The intrusion of mechanized park service equipment need not be feared as setting a precedent which the public must be permitted to follow, for administrative necessity and public convenience are hardly analogous. An occasional park service vehicle would be tolerable; dozens of private vehicles would not be.
9. We do not oppose private stock in the back country, for we recognize that it serves a legitimate need. We do suggest, however, that stock parties seem to contribute a disproportionate share of refuse. Since back packers are requested to carry out their non-combustible trash, it seems only fair to expect the same of stock parties. Since most stock parties seem to be those of commercial packers, it should be relatively easy to secure the cooperation of the packers in trying to educate their clients. We urge that a renewed effort be made to secure this cooperation.

Let it carefully be noted that every one of the above measures we propose has one purpose, and only one, and that is to prevent further degradation of the back country environment. None of these measures deals with the question of protecting the visitor from himself. We do not feel it is our place to suggest such measures, and we question the propriety of any government agency in attempting to assume such a role. Certainly the visitor should be protected against the acts of others, and from elements or factors of which he may not be aware. But if he knowingly wishes to assume a risk unto himself, we feel that this is his prerogative. The existence of an overly paternalistic society is one of the reasons why people seek the back country, and we feel very strongly that they should be permitted to do so without interference. We raise this point only because the question of "visitor protection" was mentioned in the news release of January 8th.

HEATHER-PEAR LAKE AREA

The Heather-Pear Lake area is unique in that its timberline terrain is exceptionally scenic and yet very easily reached by the hiker. This combination of circumstances is the cause of its

downfall, for the area is literally being trampled by swarms of people. The litter problem is severe and sanitation is questionable. Fire scars abound, and live trees are being cut in a vain search for more firewood. Solitude is impossible, tranquility rare, and wildness a thing of the past.

Our recommendation is that this area be used to conduct pilot programs for back country management ideas. It is readily accessible for administrative convenience. There is only one trail into the area, which is bounded by natural barriers on all other sides; consequently it would be very easy to keep a close count of the traffic in and out, and to assure that all visitors were aware of the regulations. The area is small enough that a single patrol ranger could cover it intensively. The effectiveness of new management ideas could be observed, and the reaction of the visitor to them could be assessed through personal contact. The value of new ideas could probably be determined much more quickly here than in the back country, and costly mistakes thus avoided. And in the process, the Heather-Pear Lake area would presumably regain some of its original attractiveness.

WINTER SPORTS

A few years ago there was some publicity regarding the possibility of new ski cabins being constructed beyond the present one at Pear Lake. We consider such facilities to be entirely in harmony with a wilderness concept so long as they are unobtrusively located away from summer trails and are properly administered. The construction of a series of ski cabins would be very beneficial in that it would enable more visitors to have a meaningful park experience during the winter, when such opportunities are normally relatively limited. We are assuming that access to these cabins would be permitted only on foot (i. e. with ski or snowshoe.) If there should be any thought whatsoever of motorized snow vehicles being permitted into these areas, we would be absolutely opposed to the construction of the cabins.

Regarding motorized snow vehicles, in general we have no objection to their winter use on roads which are normally open to the public during the summer. However, it seems entirely possible that there might be some areas where this would be unwise, and each route should be considered on its individual merits. Similarly, it is possible that certain cross-country routes could be laid out and the vehicles permitted to use these on the condition that they not deviate from the marked route. The characteristics of these vehicles are such that we are definitely opposed to their unrestricted use, and they most certainly should not be permitted in areas which are closed to motorized vehicles during the summer. It is our understanding that the Yosemite administration has permitted a group of snow vehicles to travel into what was formerly the Ostrander ski cabin. If true, this would constitute a gross violation of park values, and we would condemn it in the strongest terms. We request that the Sequoia-Kings administration not fall into a similar error of judgment.

MINERAL KING

The futility of piecemeal "planning" is an old story, and the necessity for regional planning seems so self-evident that there should be no necessity for even bringing it up. Yet, time and again, the story is repeated: Two or more government agencies with a common

concern fail to cooperate, and the public ends up being the loser.

Mineral King shows every sign of becoming the epitome of a horrible example. The details of the Disney obsession for altering and manipulating the total environment have become distressingly clear, and there is no point in reiterating them here. A few figures supplied by the Division of Highways really tell the entire story. In 1967 Highway 198 through Three Rivers carried a maximum of 2,260 cars per day. The Division plans to rebuild this highway to accommodate 16,000 cars per day; for peak traffic we notice they say to multiply by three, which would come out to 48,000 cars per day? These figures tend to substantiate the intention of Disney Productions to stuff as many people into tiny Mineral King as presently crowd Yosemite Valley. We refuse to accept the myth that this many people can be put into such close proximity to Sequoia Park without damaging the values for which the park was established.

For this reason, we are totally and unequivocally opposed to the present plan, or any plan which Disney Productions seems likely to produce. We feel the entire project should be halted, and a new beginning made as it should have been in the first place, commencing with joint discussions between the administrations of Sequoia National Forest and Sequoia National Park.

If reason were to prevail in such discussions, and the public welfare were to be the primary consideration, we feel certain that the conclusion duly arrived at would be that the Mineral King enclave should be incorporated into the park, and then developed in a manner compatible with park values. This is the policy we strongly advocate, although we hardly expect it to come about in the hypothetical manner described.

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION

In closing, we would like to observe that most of the recommendations we have made in connection with specific problems are little more than stop-gap measures. So long as our population continues to grow, the national park system will be confronted with the problem of increasing numbers of visitors. The ultimate solution to the problems of the national parks (as well as many other problems of our society) lies in an effective population control program. While it is perhaps somewhat unrealistic to expect the National Park Service to attack this problem directly, it seems entirely appropriate for the NPS to assist the visitor in gaining some insight into the problems created when infinite numbers of people are pitted against a very finite environment. Certainly no interpretive program should be considered complete until this is made an integral part of it.

In the meantime, pending sufficient public awareness of the problem to result in meaningful steps to cure it, the only hope for the national park system probably lies in promoting recreational development on a regional basis. Perhaps more people can be induced to entertain themselves in areas where the environment is not so fragile, or where the destruction of it would not constitute as great a loss as it would in the national parks. If so, then possibly the numbers of people who will still come to the national parks, seeking in them the values for which they were set aside, will remain small enough that the visitors will not destroy the very values they seek.

George W. Whitmore

George W. Whitmore
Conservation Committee Chairman

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26 Jan 69

Dear Tony,

I was very happy to receive your letter of inquiry regarding the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Master Plan hearing.

The hearing was held in Visalia on January 24th, and the record will be held open for written comment, such as yours, until February 3rd. Letters should be sent to the Chairman, Master Plan Team, c/o Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, California 93271. Request that your letter be made a part of the record. (I did not ~~igx~~ give the dates in the last Topics because they had not yet been announced at "press time".)

I am enclosing a copy of the statement I submitted for the chapter. You might get ideas from it, and it will show you the type of recommendations that can be made; you will see that no particular format is called for -- they are more interested in ideas than in form.

It is very important to sound like you are speaking as an individual, and not merely repeating the "party line". The easiest way to do this is to pick something that you can speak on from ~~fi~~~~kk~~ first-hand knowledge. If you ~~mak~~ back pack, then ~~ay~~ you could comment on changes you have observed a need for in the back country. If you car-camp, then you could comment on camp-ground needs; etc. Try to be specific, rather than speaking just in generalities.

It usually helps to identify yourself in some ~~ay~~ way so it will look like you are a responsible citizen who knows what he is talking about. For example by vocation, as student, teacher, farmer, etc.; and as a frequent visitor to the parks, back packer, hiker, camper, etc. Do NOT identify yourself as being a Sierra Club member, or say that you ~~have~~ been asked to write; this would seem self-evident, but apparently a lot of people do it, and their letters are given less consideration as a result.

Again, I really appreimate your show of interest. The strength of the Sierra Club has come in great measure from the ~~mei~~~~xx~~ active participation of its members. It helps for people to pay their dues, but this is as nothing compared to the contribution that people such as yourself can make if a little personal effort is put forth. Thank you.

Sincerely,

George Whitmore

TEHIPITE CHAPTER
SIERRA CLUB

1042 E. Pico Avenue
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1 February 1969

Master Plan Study Team
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Three Rivers
California 93271

Gentlemen:

The following is in response to questions raised at the public meeting of January 24. It contains new ideas and opinions, as well as clarification of some of our statements which may possibly have been misconstrued. We request that this be made a part of the official record.

On the question of back country tourist camps, we would not oppose these in principle. The conception and administration, however, would have to be watched very carefully to avoid problems such as those found in the present system of camps in Yosemite. These problems include:

1. Poor location (on or near trails; in ecologically fragile areas; too close to roads, thus encouraging inappropriate usage; on lakeshores, thus aggravating the pollution problem).
2. Over-consumption of firewood supplies in some areas.
3. Encouragement of incompatible activities, as in the case of volleyball courts.
4. Failure to haul out refuse, even though this is (properly) required of back packers. This results not only in esthetic degradation, but also imperils the public safety because of the attraction of bears and the development of aggressive behavior in them.

Regarding installation of water supply systems in back country areas, we feel that this would be unacceptable primarily because there has been very little effort made to remove the cause of the pollution. Toilets should have been installed years ago in some areas. Attempts at public education have been minimal. We are not aware of any significant attempt having been made to minimize pollution by stock; regulation seems to have been conceived almost solely from the point of view of forage problems and meadow damage. We see no reason why stock should not be excluded entirely from some areas if a simple camping prohibition is insufficient to prevent pollution.

If the water is still found to be contaminated, after all possible measures have been taken to remove the cause of the pollution, then it would appear that the point has been reached at which a quota system must be established to limit the numbers of people and/or stock. We think it likely that a quota system must eventually be established, but would object vigorously to its institution merely for the sake of administrative convenience.

Even if a water system were installed at Rae Lakes, for example, what provision could be made for the many miles of stream and river valley below that point? If the water is polluted at its source, it would appear that pollution would be a problem at any point downstream. The provision of water systems throughout this entire drainage would be an immense undertaking. The effort and money would be far better spent in preventing the cause, rather than in attempting to alleviate the symptoms.

The question of buffer strips around wilderness areas was raised. In view of the fact that there is no statutory provision for classification of land to "buffer" status, the protection that such classification would give is highly questionable. Under present law, the only way in which land can be protected from over-development is by inclusion within the National Wilderness Preservation System. Much of the land which is excluded from the system now will come under pressure for development in the future. Lacking statutory protection, there is no reason to think that the "buffer" zones will be able to resist this pressure. While the concept of a buffer, threshold, or transition zone is desirable, the failure of the present law to acknowledge it makes it impractical.

We spoke favorably of the recently issued Park Service road policy statement. We specifically mentioned the desirability of roads being designed to provide an enjoyable and informative experience. Of course we were referring to the conversion of existing roads in order more fully to meet these objectives. In general, we would oppose the opening of roads currently closed to the public, or the construction of new ones. We avoided use of the term "motor nature trail" because of the controversy which has surrounded this concept. We feel that much of the criticism stems from the Park Service's misapplication of what is basically a sound idea.

We spoke several times of the damage to back country environment caused by the proliferation of fire scars. We mentioned that one helpful measure would be to encourage the carrying of small gas stoves by visitors. Of course people would still tend to build warming fires. Just as we recommend regulation of cooking fires, we also recommend regulation (and prohibition where necessary) of warming fires. A warming fire is rarely a matter of health or safety in the Sierra Nevada, and the needless scarring of terrain should not be tolerated simply for the sake of visitor convenience.

We recommended that the Park Service discontinue the use of stock in its own operations, and instead use helicopters and mechanical trail vehicles. By the latter we meant the so-called "mechanical mules" which are used to transport equipment and supplies, but not people. We were not advocating the use of four-wheel drive vehicles or "trail bikes."

We spoke of population pressure as being the basis of most of the problems of over use. We should also have mentioned increasing leisure, greater affluence and mobility, and the desire to escape the increasing complexity of our society as being factors which compound the basic problem of increasing numbers of people. Even if our population were to remain static, these other factors would result in increased pressure on the national parks. Since it would be undesirable

or impractical to attack these other factors, it is even more imperative that the birth rate be brought into balance with the death rate. An effective attack upon this problem awaits a greater public awareness of it. Since "the single abiding purpose of the national parks is to bring man and his environment into closer harmony,"* we believe it to be one of the responsibilities of the interpretive programs to make the public aware of the impact of their own numbers upon the park environment.

Since a solution based on population control will be slow in coming, we feel that the only hope for the parks lies in the development of recreational facilities in the regions surrounding the parks. We were appalled at the almost complete lack of comment upon this by those who spoke at the Study Team's public meeting of January 24th, particularly since it has been repeatedly stated that regional considerations were to be undertaken by the Study Team. Quite to the contrary, many who spoke obviously were thinking only in terms of what should be done within the park boundaries. The narrowness of such thinking is extremely disturbing, for the size alone dictates that Sequoia-Kings is incapable of absorbing everyone who may wish to enter it in the future.

One gentleman repeated an often-heard argument. He cited the example of the Canadian national parks, and spoke in glowing terms of the tramways, hotels, four-lane highways, etc. He was obviously referring primarily to Banff and Jasper National Parks. It was unfortunate that he didn't go on to mention that these two parks have a combined area of 6,800 square miles, compared to 1,300 square miles for Sequoia-Kings. The Canadian parks are so huge that they can have all the "amenities" of civilization and still have large reserves of untrammeled wilderness. Those who espouse comparable developments in Sequoia-Kings should first go to Congress and obtain a five-fold increase in the size of the park. There would then be little objection to the developments they seek.

In the meantime, a much more feasible solution is to develop mass recreation facilities in the region surrounding the park. Most of this development would probably best be done by private enterprise, although certainly agencies such as the U. S. Forest Service could play a much greater role in recreational development than they have in the past.

We feel confident that if such development were diligently encouraged and assisted, the pressures for "developing" the parks and "opening up" the back country would largely disappear.

Very truly yours,

George W. Whitmore

George W. Whitmore
Conservation Committee Chairman

*N.P.S. road policy statement.

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30 April 1969

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Subject: Mineral King

Dear Mike,

Enclosed is a copy of a resolution on Mineral King passed by Tehipite's Executive Committee. The Secretary conveyed this to Ed Wayburn, but I wanted to make sure it got into your hands also.

Also enclosed is a copy of a map I did for our newsletter. I feel very strongly that the club should get out a brochure of some sort which would feature a map something on this order. One good map would be worth many, many words. I have found that people simply don't realize where Mineral King is in relation to the park, and unless they realize this the ~~arguments~~ arguments regarding over-development and commercialization will simply not register.

Regarding the map, I feel that the incongruity of Mineral King is emphasized by making the boundary of the park very prominent. The map which appeared in the Natural History article showed the park boundary with only a light line, and I don't think it was anywhere near as effective as it might have been.

Both George Murphy and Bob Mathias recently have referred to the possibility of a public hearing on the road through the park. But subsequent to their statements I asked Robert Hicks about it, and he said it now appears that such a hearing will not be held. This seems of the utmost importance, if for no other reason than that it would give us more time. If you have not already done so, I urge that you do whatever possible to see to it that a hearing is held. (According to Hicks, the Park Service at first thought a hearing should be held, but then finally decided that it was not necessary after all.) (This would be a hearing regarding road standards.)

Sincerely,

George Whitmore
Conservation Chairman
Tehipite Chapter

DATE: 27 May 69

TO: Tulare County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Tehipite Chapter, Sierra Club
P. O. Box 5596, Fresno, California 93755

SUBJECT: Wells-Seaborn Development, Silver City

Gentlemen:

My name is George Whitmore. I am from Kingsburg, and I am speaking for the Sierra Club. I am the Conservation Chairman of the Tehipite Chapter, which encompasses the central San Joaquin Valley, and I am speaking with the concurrence of the Sierra Club's national headquarters in San Francisco.

We wish to go on record as being in opposition to the proposed development of Silver City ~~as described in The Schematic Development Plan of October, 1968, and taking into account certain amendments presented at the meeting of the Planning Commission on May 14, 1969.~~

The Silver City proposal is, of course, relevant only when considered in conjunction with the Disney proposal for Mineral King. Likewise, our opposition can be understood only in the context of our opposition to the larger proposal for the entire Mineral King enclave.

Many of the reasons for which we oppose Disney also hold true for the Wells-Seaborn proposal. A few of these include:

1. High density developments are incompatible with the purposes for which the national parks were established, and therefore should not be permitted immediately adjacent to national park boundaries. In the case of Mineral King-Silver City, development would be essentially within the national park.

2. Aside from the adverse influence upon Sequoia National

Park, these developments would inundate a very limited area with far more people than could reasonably be accommodated. The result would be severe problems of water supply, sewage and garbage disposal, air and water pollution, soil erosion, earth compaction, and just plain trampling of the terrain at a rate faster than it can recover. When range land is overgrazed, the land is destroyed; just as surely, although perhaps more subtly, the presence of too many people will destroy land which wiser use would have conserved for future generations.

3. Natural beauty will be destroyed. While Disney plans to resort to (and I quote a Disney report) "extensive bulldozing and blasting in most lower areas and extensive rock removal at higher elevations," a recommendation in the Wells-Seaborn proposal describes the trees as being "generally overmature and decadent" and calls for the logging of vast numbers. A forest composed only of vigorous young trees, lacking the mature monarchs, might be beautiful in the eyes of some, but it most certainly would not be natural.
4. Good regional planning concepts are being ignored. Semi-developed areas such as Mineral King-Silver City should serve as a transition, or buffer zone, between mass recreation developments (and their accompanying high-density dwelling units) and the true wilderness areas of the national park and national forest back country. We do not object to condominiums or tramways as such, but

we feel they should generally be located in areas which have already undergone some degree of "civilizing".

Areas in a relatively natural condition are dwindling so rapidly that every effort must be made to avoid their complete loss.

The above reasons might be summarized by saying that the proposed development of Silver City would intensify the tragedy of Mineral King. The Disney proposal is bad enough by itself. Wells-Seaborn and similar proposals will only compound the problems and thereby generate further hostility toward Disney for having started it all.

Our main concern is with the Disney proposal. From the very start we have been concerned over the fact that, once begun, such a development is extremely difficult to control. Both the Forest Service and Disney have stated that they recognize that Mineral King has ecological and esthetic limitations, and that the development will be kept within those limits. Yet only one month ago Robert Hicks was still distributing a brochure which states that "All of us promise that our efforts now and in the future will be dedicated to making Mineral King grow to meet the ever-increasing public need. I guess you might say that it won't ever be finished."

Like a cancer which has once become established, there is no stopping its malignant spread across the landscape. Silver City is just the first manifestation of the spread of this ugly disease. Given the Disney impetus, the Wells-Seaborn proposal was inevitable. Other attempts to convert our natural heritage into dollars will follow the pattern Disney has laid down. Given the existence of a

high-speed highway into this area, there will be intense pressure to capitalize on its presence. We question whether the Forest Service has either the expertise, the financial resources, or the political muscle to defend the public interest against the inroads of multi-million dollar developers.

It remains to be seen whether the Supervisors of Tulare County can see beyond the illusory vision of "progress" typified by tramways, condominiums, automobiles, and asphalt. They might do well to remember that many residents of Tulare County came here to escape the tentacles of "progress" in southern California. They sought a more relaxed way of life close to the fields, orchards, and mountains of Tulare County. They sought clean air and clean water and space to breathe. These things they found--for a while.

Gentlemen, the decision is yours. May it be one with which your grandchildren can live.

George W. Whitmore

George W. Whitmore
Conservation Chairman

-/-/-

P.O. Box 485
Kingsburg
California 93631

30 May 69

Albert Hill

Dear Albert,

Just a brief note to give you some things I should have sent earlier.

1. Tehipite Chapter resolution. This has been sent to Wayburn, but I fear that the matter will not be brought before the board. (I see M.K. is not on the agenda.)

It is my understanding the club has not yet come out in favor of inclusion of M.K. in the park. Is this correct?

2. Map I made for our newsletter. I am including this as a reminder in hopes that your group will hurry up and get out a brochure which features a similar map. Such a map is worth many, many words. And a realization of M.K.'s relationship to the park is essential to an understanding of the significance of the development descriptions and high-usage figures. I believe that McCloskey concurs in this--it is/~~is~~ ^{the} starting point in presenting the argument. Soft-pedaling of M.K. location by both Disney and USFS seem to corroborate this.
3. Copy of two clippings. Dinuba Sentinel is small-circulation local weekly (or bi-weekly?). Notice that Fresno Bee reporter covered only one aspect (the lawsuit) of ~~the~~ your entire interview. Nothing whatsoever as to why the club is interested in stopping the project.
4. Letter from Bob Mathias to a constituent. Do you know anything about the public hearing he mentions?? I asked Hicks about it and he said that it now appears that such a hearing will not be held. Hicks comment ~~was~~ followed those of Mathias and Murphy and so presumably was more current.
5. Copy of article from "American Forests" (American Forestry Association"). They had an article about Trail Peak in the November issue.

Re. Trail Peak, I cannot find it, but somewhere I believe I ~~found~~ read that Board of Dir. came out against Trail Peak for ski development. (I saw it somewhere in S. Club mailings, I believe.) But when I tried to ~~find~~ look it up all I could find was that board had come out "urging" that there be no further extension of road, which seems to be not the same as opposing ski development; at the time of the board action the road apparently already ~~went~~ went practically all the way there anyway. Clarification of this seems rather important since it bears closely on M.K. situation, and we should be able to field questions on it.

Re. your inquiry about area just downstream from Tehipite Dome, in looking at map I am wondering whether you are referring to Tehipite Valley. This was taken into the park (along with Cedar Grove) about 1965. The new boundary follows the section line (Section 11) which runs across the mouth of Tehipite Valley (Little Tehipite Valley is still outside the park.)

The area of Silver Spur and Eagle Spur (which rise above Little Tehipite Valley) and the entire south side of Junction Ridge have been more or less under consideration for wilderness designation for some time; my impression is that the USFS (it involves both Sierra and Sequoia National Forests) would like to so classify the area so they could conveniently forget about it. It would be a headache to try to administer it in any way except as wilderness.

As for trying to launch a counter-offensive to put a piece of Nat. Forest into a Nat. Park, why not concentrate all the effort on M.K? The arguments for so doing are probably as strong as you will find anywhere else. My impression is that the effort should not be fragmented--why not bring everything possible to bear on the one ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ big problem of immediate concern, M.K.

In my haste I have probably used some sloppy phrasing; hopefully the same cannot be said ~~to~~ of my thinking.

Sincerely,

George Whitmore

STUDY IN W. CALIFORNIA

P. O. Box 485
Kingsburg
California 93631
15 July 1969

Mrs. Elaine Dewell
5030 E. Hammond Ave.
Fresno
California 93727

Dear Elaine,

Enclosed are things that might be helpful concerning Mineral King.

Your trip has the greatest potential for furthering the cause of conservation of any outing scheduled by the Chapter this summer. Of course, the area speaks for itself, and mere exposure to it should convince people that the proposed development would devastate the area. However, there will undoubtedly be people along who will miss this and will not be able to put two and two together. So, actually, you will have to assume the role of a "guru."

Following are the addresses of Hill, Rettenmayer and Jones.

John Rettenmayer
1738 Purdue Ave., Apt. 10
Los Angeles, Calif. 90025

Albert Hill
1739 Franklin St., Apt. A
Santa Monica, Calif. 90404

Brian Jones
Physics Department
U.C.L.A.
Westwood, Calif.

Sincerely,

George W. Whitmore

George W. Whitmore
P. O. Box 485
Kingsburg
California 93631
15 July 1969

Mr. John Rettenmayer
Mr. Albert Hill
Mr. Brian Jones

1738 Purdue Avenue, Apt. 10
Los Angeles
California 90025

Dear John,

Our Chapter has a trip in Mineral King scheduled next month, and would like to get some materials for the participants and perhaps people they encounter.

Would you send 50 bumper stickers and 100 of the information summaries. Because we will be away during August, please send the materials to the trip leader:

Mrs. Elaine Dewell
5030 E. Hammond Ave.
Fresno, California 93727.

She might have written to you already.

Send the bill for the materials and postage to me, so I can take care of it with Chapter funds. But it is important that the materials get to Dewell, or they will be of no value.

We have a tape of the KMJ radio program on Mineral King, but have not played it, because we haven't got our hands on a player that has the 1 7/8 speed.

Sincerely,

George W. Whitmore

I am writing to all three of you, in case one or more of you are out of town. I trust you will coordinate so that duplicate orders are not sent.

George W. Whitmore
P. O. Box 485
Kingsburg, Calif. 93631

15 July 1969

Mr. Ed W. Grey
120 Canal Street
Chowchilla
California 93610

Dear Mr. Grey,

I am sorry for the delay in getting in touch with you, but I have been unsuccessful in trying to get someone to coordinate our Chapter's efforts for some intensive action in Mineral King this summer. I appreciate your interest in Mineral King and willingness to do something, as evidenced by your call to Norman Poitevin.

Since there is no "committee" for Mineral King at this time, individual action is needed. And this, properly executed can be most effective. As far as I know, no one in your area is fighting for the preservation of Mineral King. So you have an excellent opportunity for doing some educating, letting people know the facts that the news media have chosen not to make public.

One of the most effective instruments is the letter to the editor of your local paper, Merced, Madera, Fresno papers, any other papers. A well-written letter could result in several letters being written to your congressman and senators. In fact, if you were able to write only one letter, a letter to the editor would probably bring about greater results than a single letter to a congressman.

I have enclosed a couple of petitions, which you may wish to pass around, although the value of a name on a petition is negligible compared to the value of that same name on a personal letter. Petitions are better than nothing, however! I feel that the greatest value of a petition is that it gives you an opening to talk to people.

For information concerning the Mineral King situation, read the enclosed reprints and refer to the following issues of the Sierra Club Bulletin: Nov. 67, Sep. 68, Jan. 69, and Jun 69, and also to the following issues of our Tehipite Topics: Apr. 69 and May 69. The last article is of particular value in that it has information about where to write and what to say.

Sincerely,

George W. Whitmore
Conservation Chairman
(1) "If you are Concerned" (Rettenmayer & Hill, 24 Mar 69)
(1) Hope, "The King Besieged" Tehipite Chapter
(1) Santa Cruz Sentinel series Sierra Club

encl. (2) petition forms

(1) "If you are Concerned" (Rettenmayer & Hill, 24 Mar 69)

(1) Hope, "The King Besieged" Tehipite Chapter

(1) Santa Cruz Sentinel series Sierra Club

Editor of the Bee-Sir:

Recently Representative B. F. Sisk recently stated that, since the ^{As quoted in Fresno Bee of 20 Oct 68} ~~Sierra Club~~ ^{implied} did not oppose a Minaret Summit road in 1937, they ^{could} should not oppose it now. ~~He might~~ have gone back even more than thirty-two years. When it was formed in 1892, the Sierra Club felt that more roads were needed in the Sierra Nevada. Considering the situation at that time, this was undoubtedly correct.

But times change. Along with the Sierra Club, our general population is finally coming to realize the importance of environmental problems. They are beginning to realize that man is sustained by the good earth, and that our previous conceptions of "progress" are inevitably destroying our source of sustenance.

Our population increases, our environment becomes more polluted, and man himself becomes one of the endangered species. Fortunately, the Sierra Club recognizes the impact of change, and the consequent necessity for reassessing its position. That which may have been desirable in 1892 was merely tolerable by 1937. By now it has turned out to be one more link in mankind's lemming-like progress toward ~~the~~ oblivion.

⁴¹ Asphalt, gasoline, and dollars will prove to be poor substitutes for fresh air, green forests, and open space. To try to justify such a fraud by citing population growth is to relegate mankind to the status of the lemming -- man would be doomed to reproduce himself until finally driven to self-destruction.

⁵⁸ We ask Mr. Sisk to join us in realizing that the capacity of our planet to sustain mankind is limited. Realizing this, may we also ask that he reassess his conception of "progress"?" While a Minaret Summit road may have seemed permissible in 1937, the passage of time has shown that such a road would no longer be in the public

interest. It would consume huge amounts of the taxpayers' money, but ~~many~~ there is apparently always more where that came from. More important, it would consume one more chunk of our natural environment, and that is not replaceable.

Tehipite Chapter
Sierra Club

by George W. Whitmore
Conservation Chairman

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