To: file

From: George Whitmore < geowhit1954@comcast.net>

Subject: Tuolumne River comments

Cc:
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Attached:

[Pasted below are proposed comments sent to us by the Yosemite Committee (Alan Carlton) of the Regional Conservation Committee. Our opinions have been solicited. I have numbered the bullets to facilitate commenting. Please note that I had nothing to do with the drafting of these comments. I have inserted thoughts of my own in RED UPPER CASE. I am using UPPER CASE because the red color does not appear for some people. Please let me know your thoughts on Alan Carlton's draft comments as well as on my observations. I will be taking this to the Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee on Wednesday, February 13, so I need your opinions now. Thanks. (I sent this out earlier, without my thoughts, on January 28.) George]

The following is a draft, and should not be disseminated beyond the Sierra Club.

PROPOSED COMMENTS OF THE YOSEMITE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (Alan Carlton)

For The DRAFT TUOLUMNE WILD AND SCENIC RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

- [1.] The Sierra Club supports the preferred Alternative 4, Improving the Traditional Tuolumne Experience, on condition of action on our suggested changes and improvements as set forth below. AGENCY PLANS INVARIABLY ARE A MIXTURE OF GOOD, BAD, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN. IT IS USUALLY NOT A GOOD IDEA TO "SUPPORT" A PARTICULAR ALTERNATIVE UNLESS IT HAS BEEN SCRUTINIZED VERY CLOSELY AND HAS BEEN DISCUSSED IN SOME DEPTH WITH INTERESTED SIERRA CLUB MEMBERS. IT IS USUALLY PREFERABLE TO COMMENT ON WHAT WE LIKE AND WHAT WE DON'T LIKE, AND LET IT GO AT THAT.
- [2.] The Sierra Club supports the Actions Common to all Alternatives which make needed changes to protect the River and the meadows. We support the elimination of undesignated roadside parking IN THE TUOLUMNE MEADOWS AREA, the improvements to the water systems, the removal of unnecessary structures, and site restoration. However, the undesignated parking should not be removed until the replacement parking is available and/or vigorous additions are made to public transportation shuttle systems to allow and encourage visitor to enjoy Tuolumne Meadows without their cars.
- [3.] The Sierra Club supports the retention of the existing campground and Tuolumne Lodge. However, at Tuolumne Lodge, we suggest that the mess hall and kitchen be moved away from the River.
- [4.] The Sierra Club strongly opposes the construction of a new visitor center on Tioga Road as unnecessary expensive new construction in the heart of the Meadow. The existing visitor center should be utilized and upgraded as necessary. Additional facilities for NPS operations could be expanded at the existing ranger camp #16 or another more appropriate site away from the prime resource meadow area. "IN THE HEART OF THE MEADOW" IS QUITE MISLEADING, THE

PROPOSED VISITOR CONTACT STATION WOULD BE AMONG TREES ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE ROAD. WHILE WE ARE USUALLY OPPOSED TO NEW CONSTRUCTION AND NEW PAVEMENT, SOMETIMES IT IS LESS HARMFUL THAN THE ALTERNATIVES. IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE, IF THE CATHEDRAL LAKES TRAILHEAD IS NOT PLACED WHERE THE PRESENT VISITOR CENTER IS, WHERE DO WE WANT IT TO BE? THESE PROPOSED COMMENTS ARE SILENT ON THE SUBJECT, WHICH SEEMS TO BE A SERIOUS OMISSION.

- [5.] The Sierra Club supports the removal of the unneeded fueling station and mountaineering store.
- [6.] The Sierra Club supports combining the stables and the elimination of day use riding trips.
- [7.] The Sierra Club strongly recommends all available technologies be employed to eliminate the two wastewater ponds (industrial grade lined tanks and spray fields) north of the meadow with a new state of the art wastewater facility at the existing site #7. Replacing long outdated water gulping toilets in use throughout the area, with new ultra low flow toilet technology would significantly reduce wastewater effluent volume and may be an appropriate solution to this difficult problem of excessive wastewater flows.
- [8.] The Sierra Club supports the construction and expansion of parking lots to replace the loss of roadside parking although some of the loss of roadside parking should be mitigated through substantial and well publicized increase in public transit visitor access to Tuolumne as described below. As much as possible, the lots should be kept out of the open meadow areas and shielded from view by foliage. DELETE "AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE." PARKING LOTS SHOULD \*NEVER\* BE IN A MEADOW!
- [9.] The Sierra Club proposes landscaping existing "open" unsecluded parking lots at the wilderness center #15, Dog Lake #17, and Tuolumne Meadows Lodge #18 with Lodgepole pine or other appropriate vegetation to reduce the visual impact of vehicles at these three exposed parking sites.
- [10.] The Sierra Club supports the increases in transit and suggests more transit increase. We suggest that the Park Service consider a joint plan with the Forest Service to construct a parking lot outside the Park near Lee Vining with shuttles into the Park, which also serve the Lee Vining Canyon campgrounds.
- [11.] The Sierra Club supports maintaining, not increasing, the current visitor use levels.
- [12.] At Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp, the Sierra Club supports the reduction in overnight capacity and other improvements to reduce the environmental impact of the facility.
- [13.] THE NPS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 4 CALLS FOR A PERMIT SYSTEM FOR DAY HIKING ON WILDERNESS TRAILS, WHICH ARE SOMETIMES WITHIN A COUPLE HUNDRED FEET OF THE ROAD. SEE PAGES 7-87 AND 7-88. IT WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IF THE STANDARD IS EXCEEDED. IT IS NOT EASY TO VISUALIZE WHAT THE PROPOSED STANDARD WOULD LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE. IF NPS IS PROPOSING TO ENSURE A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE STARTING A COUPLE HUNDRED FEET FROM THE ROAD, THERE IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM. CROWDING NEAR ROADS IS TO BE EXPECTED. WE SHOULD NOT BE TELLING PEOPLE THEY CAN'T GO FOR A WALK JUST BECAUSE IT IS A DESIGNATED WILDERNESS. WITH A COUPLE EXCEPTIONS (MOUNT WHITNEY AND HALF DOME), PERMITS HAVE NEVER BEEN REQUIRED FOR DAY HIKING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA. TALK OF PERMITS FOR DAY HIKING

RAISES A RED FLAG WHICH REQUIRES OUR ATTENTION.

NOTE: THESE ARE DRAFT COMMENTS WHICH SHOULD NOT BE CIRCULATED BEYOND THE SIERRA CLUB.