




United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

FOREST SERVICE  
PACIFIC  
SOUTHWEST  
REGION




**MERCED  
RIVER**

**SOUTH FORK  
MERCED  
RIVER**



# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF  
LAND MANAGEMENT

FOLSOM RESOURCE AREA  
BAKERSFIELD DISTRICT




**MERCED  
RIVER**



**FINAL EIS NOV 1991**

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**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
STATEMENT**

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# **South Fork and Merced Wild and Scenic River Final Environmental Impact Statement**

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**MARIPOSA AND MADERA COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA**

**USDA FOREST SERVICE**

**Sierra National Forest, Mariposa Ranger District**

**Stanislaus National Forest, Groveland Ranger District**

**USDI BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**Folsom Resource Area, Bakersfield District**

## **FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

### **Proposed Action and Location:**

South Fork and Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Mariposa and Madera Counties, California

Sierra National Forest, Mariposa Ranger District  
Stanislaus National Forest, Groveland Ranger District

BLM, Folsom Resource Area, Bakersfield District

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**Abstract:**

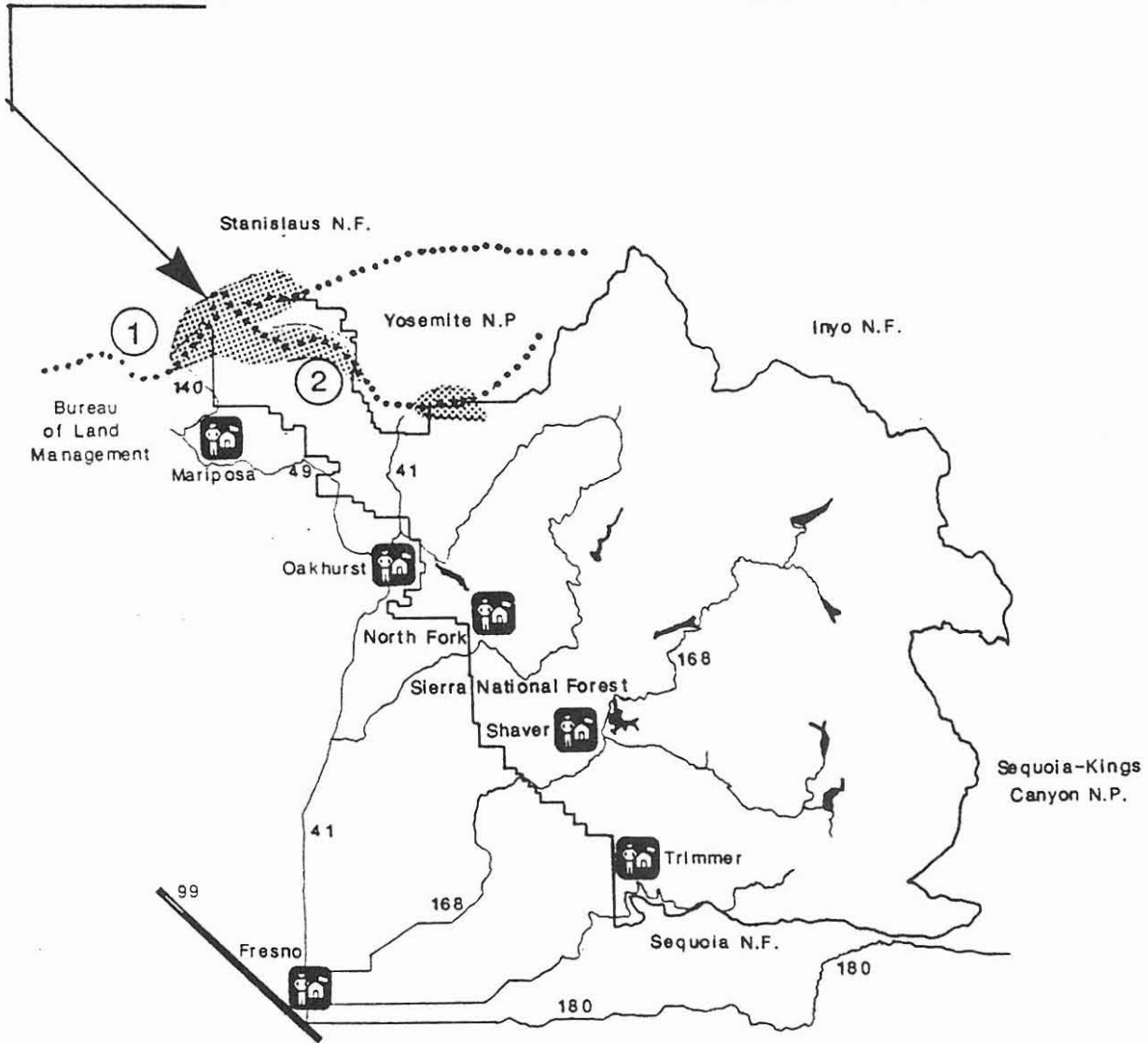
This Environmental Impact Statement EIS documents the results of an analysis of four alternatives which were developed for possible management of portions of the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers. The alternatives are: Alt. A (Present Use) This alternative would continue the existing mix of uses and continues present management. Alt.B (Limited Use) This alternative would maximize primitive and semi-primitive and recreational use and provide limited recreation facilities. Alt. C (Moderate Use) This alternative would vary management emphasis of primitive, semi-primitive, semi-primitive motorized and recreational by zone and provide minimum to moderate recreation facilities. Alt D (Maximum Use) This alternative would emphasize increased recreation opportunities within all zones.

The preferred alternative is Alternative C. The rationale for recommending the preferred alternative described above is explained in the body of the Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision.

# PROJECT AREA



# PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AREA



## Legend

- ① Merced River
- ② South Fork Merced River

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# 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND

In November 1987, President Reagan signed Public Law 100-149 amending Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C.1274(a) giving Wild and Scenic River status to a total of 114 miles of the Merced River System. This includes 71 miles of the Merced River and 43 miles of the South Fork Merced River. A total of 33 miles of this Act's designated Wild and Scenic Rivers are within public lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (29 miles) and the United States Department of Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management (4 miles). The Forest Service and National Park Service jointly manage 3 miles and the remaining 78 miles are within lands administered by the USDI National Park Service.

The Act requires that after consultation with State and local governments and the interested Public and within three years after the enactment, the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA Forest Service) and the Secretary of the Interior (USDI Bureau of Land Management) shall complete a comprehensive management plan (Implementation Plan) for their designated river portions. This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) fulfills this requirement and is a companion document to the Implementation Plan (Plan) and the already completed Boundary and Classification Environmental Assessment (EA).

This FEIS contains the analysis required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The preferred alternative is

determined from this analysis. The Plan is based on the preferred alternative and provides the management guidelines for the rivers' use, protection, development levels and operation and monitoring criteria. The already completed EA records where the boundaries and classifications are established for the 36 miles of W&SR corridor within portions of the Merced and South Fork Merced river that are administered by the Forest Service and BLM.

Accompanying this FEIS is the Plan. Alternative C is the preferred alternative and is the basis for the Implementation Plan.

### **1.1.1 Classification of Segments**

The Wild and Scenic River classification decisions for the eight segments within the 36-mile jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior have been previously documented in an Environmental Assessment that was published in April 1989. The EA established and documents the final Wild and Scenic River's boundary and classifications.

#### **South Fork Merced River**

The 21-mile portion of South Fork is within the Sierra National Forest and includes Segments 6, 7, 8, and 8A. These segments extend from the Sierra National Forest and Yosemite National Park boundary to the confluence of Merced River. Segment 6 was (highest) eligible for "wild" and is classified as "wild." Segment 7 was (highest) eligible for "scenic" and is classified "scenic." The 3-mile (Segment 2) portion, which is jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Forest Service, was (highest) eligible for "wild" and is a "wild" classification.

Because of public recommendations through the Environmental Assessment planning process, the lower 3.5-mile portion of Segment 7, which was eligible for a "wild" classification, is classified "wild." This portion became a new Segment 8 in the Environmental Assessment process and is documented as such. The remaining 0.5-mile portion of Segment 7 was eligible for a "recreational" classification only and shown as Segment 8A. The

remaining 2-mile portion of Segment 7 remains "scenic" which is it's highest eligible classification.

### **Merced River**

The 15 mile portion of the Merced River is within lands administered by the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests and Bureau of Land Management (Segments 7, 8, & 9). The segments extend from the El Portal Administrative Site (administered by Yosemite National Park) and Sierra National Forest boundary to a point 300 feet upstream of the confluence with Bear Creek on lands administered by the BLM. The only classification applicable to these segments is "recreational."

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this Environmental Impact Statement is to complete the environmental analysis, determine the preferred alternative and establish a Management (Implementation) Plan for the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers as required by Public Law 100-149. The Plan's goal is to have a document that will guide the management of the river area in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

## **1.3 ISSUES**

Request for comments regarding the two agency (BLM and Forest Service) recommendations for the Wild and Scenic River Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Plan were solicited through public scoping meetings. Environmental organizations, California State Department of Fish and Game, political representatives, the media and the public were included through a series of public scoping meetings.

The process for identifying public issues included the consolidation of issues generated by the public at external scoping meetings and concerns added by the agency officials and specialist at

internal scoping meetings. The results of the internal and external scoping meetings are included in this document's appendix. From these internal agency scoping meetings and from previous external public scoping meetings, the agencies have determined the issues as follows:

#### ISSUES CONSIDERED:

**CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES:** What actions will be necessary, if portions of the plan are implemented, to meet the criteria of the cultural resources following Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act?

**FIRE:** What measures are needed to keep fire potential at acceptable levels in the river canyon? Do the two National Forests and the BLM have a coordinated fire plan or policy within the WSR corridor?

**FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE:** What will the affects be on wildlife from recreation activities, motorized uses, mining, and fuels management? What types of fisheries management policies will be included in this implementation plan?

**GEOLOGY AND SOILS:** Will implementing any recreation development or activity have any effect on erosion or the geologic integrity of the area?

**GRAZING:** How should livestock grazing be managed within the designated river corridor?

**RECREATION:** What types and amounts of recreation use are appropriate within the designated corridor, or on specific segments? How can recreation use best be monitored and controlled, and regulations enforced? Should bridges or fords be constructed across rivers for recreation access reasons?

**LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE:** How will any recreation improvements planned by the agencies affect the private land owners within the corridor? How will scenic easements effect the private land owners? Will the concern of motorized or non-

motorized use on specific trails/roads be resolved through this plan?

**MINERALS:** Where and what kinds of mining activities are appropriate within the river corridor. Where should this type of activity be excluded, outside "wild" segments, through mineral withdrawals? Should there be seasons for recreational mining?

**SOCIO-ECONOMICS:** What effect will the limits of acceptable change implementation process (LAC) have on the existing commercial permittee who operate rafting or stock packing operations for the public on federal lands? What commercial resort activities should occur on Federal lands?

**THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES:** How are the sensitive plants found within the WSR corridor going to be protected from the public? What effect will the construction and maintenance of roads, trails and rights of ways have on the T & E species?

**VEGETATION:** Are vegetation management plans necessary within the WSR corridors?

**VISUAL RESOURCES:** How can the naturally appearing landscape viewed from within the river corridor be maintained or improved? Will all the planned activities and improvements meet the criteria of visually not evident or visually subordinate when implemented?

**WATER RESOURCES:** How will the water quality of the South Fork Merced and the Merced River and its watershed be maintained?

## **1.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA**

### **SOUTH FORK MERCED RIVER**

From its source near Triple Divide Peak, at an elevation of 10,500 feet through a glacial gorge, the South Fork Merced River



extends down to the Merced River. The length is 43 miles, but only 18 miles (Segments 6, 7, 8, 8A) are totally within the Sierra National Forest and are considered in this Environmental Analysis. There are three miles (Segment 2) shared with the Yosemite National Park. The river is the boundary between Yosemite National Park and Sierra National Forest; each agency is therefore responsible for their side of the 3.0 total miles. The remaining 22 miles (Segments 1, 3, 4, 5) of the South Fork of the Merced River are contained in Yosemite National Park.

Below the Yosemite National Park boundary on the Sierra National Forest, the river flows through a deep 3,500 foot alluvial valley. The lowest point of the river segment is about 1,400 foot elevation. The river is one of the last major free-flowing rivers remaining in California. There are no intrusions along the South Fork of the Merced River within the National Forest boundaries except some development in the Wawona area inside the National Park. It is within physiographic section 23d (Cascade-Sierra Nevada) and in Congressional Districts 15 and 18.

## **TABLE 1 IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF SOUTH FORK MERCED RIVER SEGMENTS**

Segment # 2 (Classification "wild") description is as follows: Extends from Johnson Creek to approximately the Madera, Mariposa County line. The length is 3.0 miles with the northern side of the river managed by USDI National Park Service (Yosemite National Park) and the southern side of the river managed by USDA Forest Service (Sierra National Forest). The Forest Service acreage within the river corridor is approximately 480 acres along the 3.0 mile segment.

Segment # 6 (Classification "wild") description is as follows: Boundary of Yosemite National Park and the Sierra National Forest to about 1.5 miles east of Hite Cove. The length is approximately 12.5 miles and is managed as a Wild and Scenic River by the Sierra National Forest. There are two small private parcels within the river corridor. The river is free-flowing, unpolluted with a primitive shoreline. Access is by trail only.

Segment #7 (Classification "scenic") description is as follows: About 1.5 miles upstream east of Hite Cove around the Marble Mountain to about 0.5 mile down stream west of Hite Cove. The length is approximately 2.0 miles and is managed the same as Segment #6. There are two small private parcels within the corridor. The river is free-flowing. Access is provided by a foot-trail and two, four-wheel vehicle routes. The shoreline has some existing old mining buildings.

Segment #8 (Classification "wild") description is as follows: Approximately 0.5 mile down stream west of Hite Cove to approximately 0.5 mile up stream from the confluence of the Merced River. The length is approximately 3.0 miles and is managed the same as Segment #6. There is one private land parcel within the river corridor. The river is free-flowing, unpolluted water and the shoreline is primitive. Access is provided by a foot-trail.

Segment #8A (Classification "recreational") description is as follows: From the confluence of the Merced River up stream in

the South Fork Merced River to approximately 0.5 miles. The length is approximately 0.5 miles and is managed as a Wild and Scenic River. There are two private land parcels within the river corridor. The river is free-flowing, unpolluted water and the shoreline has some private development. Access is provided by a foot-trail.

Most of Segments #1, 4 and 5 are administered by Yosemite National Park and include approximately 160 acres of lands within the Sierra National Forest. These National Forest-administered lands will be considered during the revision to the Park's General Management Plan

The total length for Segments 2, 6, 7, 8, and 8A is 21.0 miles with the Sierra National Forest administering 17.0 miles and sharing administration of 3.0 miles with the National Park Service. The private land parcels total approximately one mile.

## **MERCED RIVER**

From its source at the south side of Mt. Lyell at 13,114 feet through a glacially carved canyon within Yosemite National Park, the river extends down to Lake McClure Reservoir. The total length is 79 miles but the Wild and Scenic River designation includes only 71 miles and this Environmental Assessment only considers 15 miles (Segments 7, 8, 9) of designated Wild and Scenic River portion from the boundary of the Sierra National Forest and El Portal Administrative Site (Yosemite National Park) to a point 300 feet upstream of the confluence with Bear Creek on lands administered by the BLM. The remaining 56 miles (Segments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) of the Merced River are administered by Yosemite National Park. The river forms the boundary between the Stanislaus and Sierra National Forests. The river flows through rugged mountains and foothill country in a series of rapids to Lake McClure at approximately 900 feet elevation. Historical artifacts create an area of historic and cultural significance along the river. There is a major highway along the south side of the river. The physiographic section is 23d (Cascade-Sierra Nevada) and in Congressional Districts 15 and 18.

## **TABLE 1 IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF MERCED RIVER SEGMENTS**

Segment #7 (Classification "recreational") description is as follows: Extends from the boundary of the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests and El Portal Administrative Site (Yosemite National Park) boundary to the confluence of the South Fork Merced River. The length is approximately 5.5 miles and is administered by the Sierra National Forest. The river forms the boundary of the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. There are approximately 15 private property, leasehold and limited commercial uses included along this segment. The slopes along the river are sparsely vegetated making the river highly visible to the traveling public. White water boating, fishing and picnicking are popular along this segment. Access is provided by a major State highway parallel to the river.

Segment #8 (Classification "recreational") description is as follows: Extends from the confluence of the South Fork Merced to the north west boundary of the Sierra and the south east boundary of the Stanislaus National Forests. The length is approximately 5.5 miles and is administered by the Sierra National Forest. The river forms the boundary of the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. Approximately four private parcels are within the Wild and Scenic River corridor. The valley cuts through significant metasedimentary rocks. There are occasional summer home developments along this segment. The river is free-flowing. The main highway into Yosemite National Park is adjacent and visible.

Segment #9 (Classification "recreational") description is as follows: Starts at the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest boundary and extends to a point 300 feet up stream of the confluence with Bear Creek near Briceburg. The length is approximately 4.0 miles and is managed by the BLM. There are three private and State land parcels within the river corridor. The river is free-flowing. State highway #140 runs parallel to the river to Briceburg and is visible.

Segment #6, (Classification recommended by Park Service is "recreational") description is as follows: Is within the El Portal Administrative Site and administered by Yosemite National Park. It includes two noncontiguous parcels of land totaling ap-

proximately 345 acres or one mile within National Forest boundaries. These National Forest river portions will be considered during the revision to the Park's General Management Plan.

The total length for Segments 7, 8, and 9 is 15.0 miles with the Sierra National Forest administering approximately 11 miles and the BLM administering approximately 4 miles.

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## 2.0 FINDINGS OF ELIGIBILITY AND CLASSIFICATION

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The agencies already established through the Environmental Assessment planning process "wild," "scenic" and "recreational" classifications based on these criteria:

1. *"Wild river area---those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America."*

2. *"Scenic river areas---those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads."*

3. *"Recreational river areas---those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past." (16 U.S.C Sec. 1273 (b)).*

This is a summary of river classifications as documented in the final Boundary and Classification Environmental Assessment completed in April 1989. The following classifications for the South Fork Merced and the Merced Rivers are established:

*SOUTH FORK MERCED RIVER*

*Classification.....Final EA*

*Seg 2.....Wild.....Wild*  
*Seg 6.....Wild.....Wild*  
*Seg 7.....Scenic.....Scenic*  
*Seg 8.....Wild.....Wild*  
*Seg 8A..Recreational.....Recreational*

*MERCED RIVER*

*Classification.....Final EA*

*Seg 7.....Recreational.....Recreational*  
*Seg 8.....Recreational.....Recreational*  
*Seg 9.....Recreational.....Recreational*

The agency determined the outstandingly remarkable values for each river and documented these in the Forest 1986 DEIS documents and the final 1989 Boundary and Classification Environmental Assessment for the South Fork Merced and Merced Rivers. The summaries are as follows:

*SOUTH FORK MERCED RIVER*

*All segments of the river had geology, wildlife, fishery and recreation as common outstandingly remarkable values that made the river eligible for "wild" and "scenic" river classifications. For geology, the oldest gold-bearing rocks were determined to be outstandingly remarkable. There are suitable habitat areas for the threatened limestone salamander. The river habitat is important to the native fish. The high level of use and accessibility of the river for OHV, fishing and nature study provided the outstandingly remarkable value for recreation. In addition there are rare and endangered plant species within Segment 6 which gave this vegetation/botanic zone an outstanding value.*

*MERCED RIVER*

*All segments of the river had geology, vegetation, wildlife, recreation and cultural/historical benefits as common outstandingly remarkable values that made the river eligible for a "wild" or "scenic" river classification. For geology, the contact between metasedimen-*

*tary and granitic rocks was determined to be outstandingly remarkable. There are 4 state-listed rare and endangered plants within the vegetation/botanic zone. A threatened limestone salamander inhabits the riparian, wildlife zone. Outstanding white water rafting, camping and hiking account for the outstandingly remarkable value for recreation. The old Yosemite railroad and old mining sites contribute to the outstandingly remarkable value for the cultural/historical resources.*

The following table shows a summary of activities allowed by classification. They are guidelines only and should be confirmed with the specific Acts.

## 2.1 Summary of activities under each classification

ACTIVITY.....	WILD.....	SCE.....	REC
Timber cutting.....	NO.....	Yes.....	Yes
Water supply dams.....	NO.....	NO.....	NO
Hydroelectric.....	NO.....	NO.....	NO
Flood control			
new.....	NO.....	NO.....	NO
existing.....	NO.....	NO.....	YES
Mining claims/leases			
new.....	NO.....	YES.....	YES
existing.....	YES.....	YES.....	YES
Road construction.....	NO.....	YES.....	YES
Agriculture grazing.....	YES.....	YES.....	YES
Recreation development.....	YES.....	YES.....	YES
Hiking trails.....	X.....	X.....	X
Campgrounds.....	NO.....	YES.....	YES
Interpretive centers.....	NO.....	YES.....	YES
Administration headquarter.....	NO.....	NO.....	YES
Fireplaces.....	YES.....	YES.....	YES



Shelters.....YES.....YES.....YES

Structures

new.....NO.....YES.....YES

existing.....YES.....YES.....YES

Utilities.....YES.....YES.....YES

Motorized travel

new.....NO.....YES.....YES

existing.....YES.....YES.....YES

Hunting and fishing \* .....X.....X.....X

X = Not addressed in the Act, Regulations or Standards and Guidelines. Any conflicts between Acts or Regulations regulate in favor of the more restrictive provision. All the "yes" guidelines in "wild" or "scenic" classifications have conditions.

\* = Subject to California State Department of Fish and Game regulations.

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## **3.0 ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION**

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### **3.1 Management Direction common to all Alternatives**

Some management direction is common to all alternatives. This direction is required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, other Federal laws and regulations, Forest Service policy, existing land management plans or existing first phase Wild and Scenic River Boundary and Classification Environment Assessment. Additional management direction will be contained in the forests Sierra and Stanislaus Forest Land Management and Resource Plan when they become available.

1. Comply with the implementing regulations of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and Executive Order 11593.
2. Identify and propose treatment of all cultural properties eligible to the National Register Historic Places prior to implementing any portion of the plan that may effect them.
3. Allow prescribed burning for wildlife enhancement and fuel reduction in all segments. Prescribed burns shall meet the visual quality objective (VQO) retention within five years after burning.

4. Manage "wild" segments for semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) recreation opportunities. Manage "recreational" segments for roaded natural (RN) opportunities. Manage "scenic" segments for semi-primitive nonmotorized (SPNM), or semi-primitive motorized (SPM) opportunities, depending on the selected alternative.

5. "Wild" segments are withdrawn from mineral entry. Require operating plans for mining in other segments to be consistent with the intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

6. Make section 7(a) Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and section 4 (e) Federal Power Act determinations for all proposed power projects that may affect the designated river.

7. Construct and maintain trails in the most suitable locations based on topography, obstructions, soils, slopes and other environmental concerns

## **3.2 Formulation of Alternatives**

Alternatives were developed to protect the Wild and Scenic River values. The alternatives response to identified issues and concerns and are shown in this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The following analysis discusses four alternatives. The draft alternatives were presented at public scoping meetings and have been amended depending on public issues and concerns. A Draft EIS and Implementation Plan was sent to the public and a preferred Alternative C was recommended. The draft Implementation Plan was completed based on the preferred alternative. This final EIS and Implementation Plan represents the composite thinking of both public and agency desires. A revised Alternative C is the preferred alternative recommended in this Final EIS/Plan.

### **3.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study**

Several alternatives or portions of alternatives were considered in the preliminary public analysis period. Because of initial public, agency, or internal staff concerns, a few preliminary ideas or alternatives were eliminated from detailed study and not considered further.

### **3.4 Description of Alternatives and management direction**

Four alternatives including a "no action" existing alternative were analyzed. All alternatives were developed while considering the following objectives:

1. Protect the free flowing condition of the river, preserve and enhance the values for which it was designated.
2. Provide recreation opportunities within the capability of the resource.

A description of each alternative and its management requirements follows, accompanied by a conceptual map showing existing boundary locations and classifications and proposed general locations of use. Levels of use and access increase by each alternative from a continuation of present management and existing use to a maximum use alternative. A section showing how the alternatives compare, follow these descriptions.

### **Alternative A, (Present Use or No Action)**

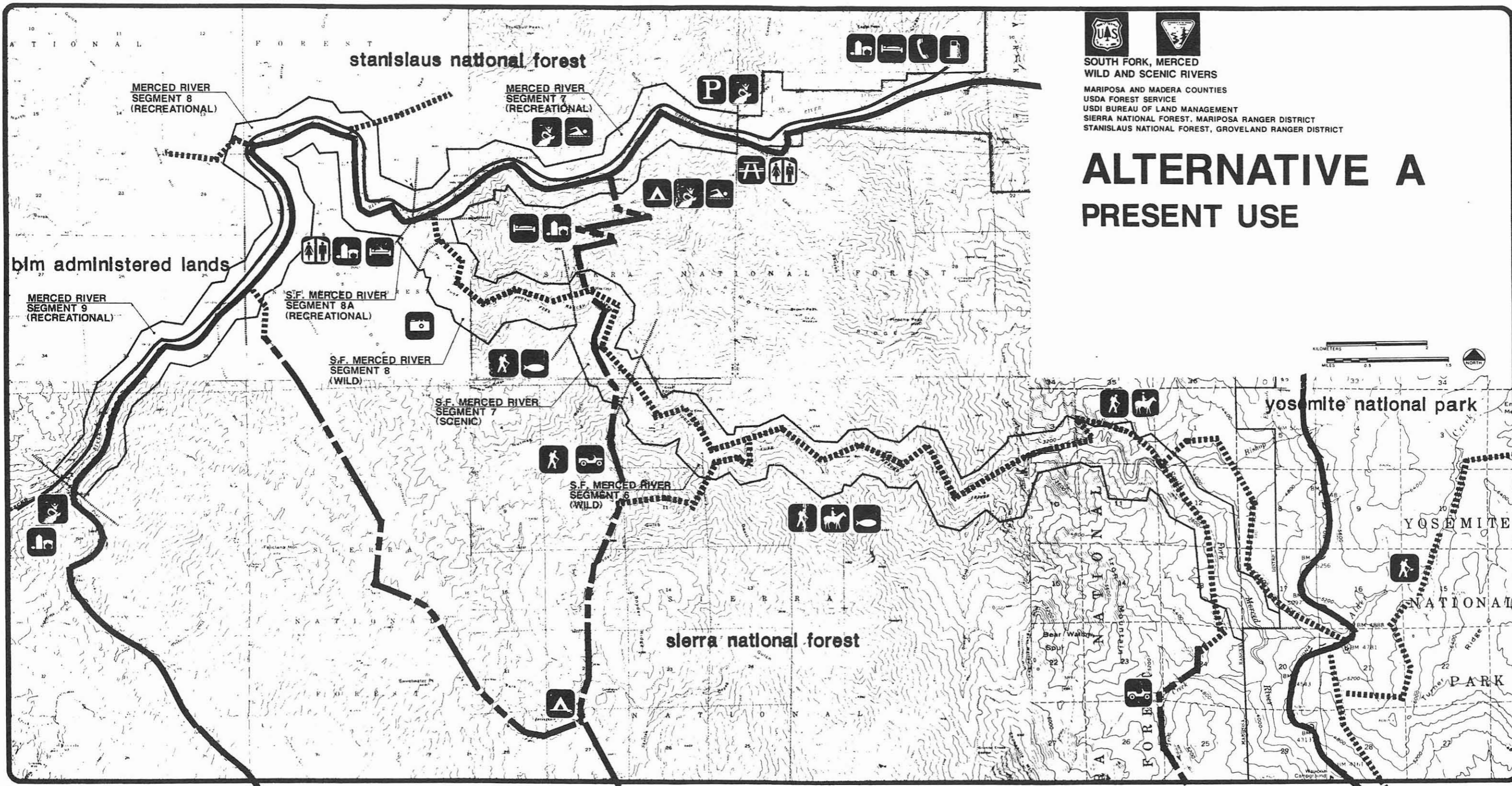
This alternative continues "present management." Only improvements and policies covered by approved plans, site specific Environmental Assessments, and the current management direction documents will be implemented. River segment classifications are the same as indicated in the WSR Merced and South Fork Merced 1989 final Environmental Assessment (EA). Current emphasis is to provide limited recreation facilities and opportunities for dispersed recreation. Maintained to minimum levels are the Hite Cove road on the South Fork Merced and the Incline Road on the Merced. The North side Hite cove road is gated because of private ownership and closed to the public. This North side is presently zoned Semi-primitive motorized (SPM) in the current Forest management guidelines. Developed sites in the recreational Forest Service and BLM segments are not rehabilitated. Sites outside the corridor boundary may be improved to serve existing use. On site visitor information service (VIS) is provided in developed sites. Minimal interpretation services (IS) at the Hite Cove area are provided. Maintained are existing system trails. The existing prehistorical cultural resources at Hite Cove are maintained to minimal archaeological standards but existing improvements are not rehabilitated. Current whitewater commercial rafting is maintained and allowed to continue under the Forest and BLM's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).



Segment classifications, boundary locations and uses are shown in the enclosed alternative A map. Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and use scale summaries by alternatives are shown in 3.5.1 the end of this chapter.

Management requirements for Alternative A are:

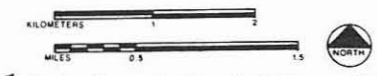
1. Allow for existing historical structures to remain but no rehabilitation of these improvements at the Hite Cove site will occur.
2. Retain the SPM zone around the Hite Cove area as recommended in the current forest management directions. Designate no public motorized access routes on the North side of the Hite Cove area. Allow the existing motorized access on the South side to continue.

3. Complete existing site rehabilitation as necessary for safety and public need requirements.
4. Complete a VIS plan for the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River.
5. Prepare a withdrawal from mineral entry proposal for all "recreational" and "scenic" classification areas within the designated corridor.
6. Obtain easements for public access across private lands where needed.
7. Acquire scenic easements or purchase private lands within the designated corridor.
8. Complete a fire management plan for the designated corridor.
9. Prepare a visual resource monitoring plan and establish photo points.
10. Identify and establish priorities for rehabilitating areas within the designated corridor that do not meet retention or partial retention, as viewed from the river.
11. Study pest management options on a case by case basis, considering impacts, of the pest and proposed treatments, on Wild and Scenic River values and recreation improvements.
12. Complete a water monitoring and protection plan.
13. Do not side cast materials excavated during road or recreational rehabilitation projects. Re-vegetate soil during construction except for bare rock or cuts steeper than 1 1/4:1.
14. Prohibit motorized access in or across all "wild" segments, except where it can be shown that private landowners within the corridor have legal rights of way for motorized access across Federal lands.
15. Establish Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC). Monitor and adjust capacities, permits or allocations as necessary to protect the river resources.




  
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# ALTERNATIVE A PRESENT USE



- |   |                   |   |                      |   |                     |   |                    |   |                         |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | camping (vehicle) |  | bicycle trail        |  | viewing area        |  | lodging            |  | road (paved)            |
|  | picnicking        |  | hiking trail         |  | interpretation area |  | telephone          |  | road (unpaved)          |
|  | rafting           |  | horse trail          |  | rec vehicle trail   |  | restrooms          |  | railroad grade (unused) |
|  | camping (walk-in) |  | fishing              |  | information         |  | gas station        |  | trail (maintained)      |
|  | swimming          |  | parking (trail head) |  | grocery store       |  | handicapped access |   |                         |

## **Alternative B, (Limited Use)**

Emphasis is placed on providing limited recreation facilities while maximizing the primitive (P) and semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) experience within the "wild" classified areas, the semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) within the "scenic" classified areas and the Rural (R) experience levels within the "recreational" classifications. River use enhances the existing to limited type experience. Dispersed recreation is emphasized. Public motorized access will not continue on the existing single lane unpaved Hite Cove south side route. The North site route to Hite Cove will continue to be maintained as a single lane unpaved administrative access route only. The incline road remains in the existing paved and un-paved levels and public motorized access is allowed to continue. Developed sites on the Forest Service and BLM administered lands are not rehabilitated. Minimal new camp, picnic or put-in raft area improvements may be added if required for safety and health reasons. On-site Visitor Information Services (VIS) is limited and remains only at existing locations. Minimal Interpretive Services (IS) are provided at the Hite Cove Area. The existing prehistorical cultural resources are maintained to minimal archaeological standards and the existing historic structures rehabilitated. Existing trails are maintained to current operational use standards. Commercial rafting use remains at the same levels and allowed to continue in the future under the Forest and BLM's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Segment classifications, boundary locations and uses are shown in the enclosed alternative B map. Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS), use scale summary alternatives are displayed at the end of this chapter.

Management requirements for Alternative B are:

3-15 Same as Alternative A, plus the following 16-25 numbers.

16. Designate the Hite Cove Area as a Historical/Cultural area, provide minimal interpretation and rehabilitate the existing historical/structural improvements within the area in accordance with archaeological guidelines.

17. Retain the SPM zone around the Hite Cove area in accordance with the forest existing management directions. Designate



no existing roads to public motorized use on the north or south side.

18. Construct a minimal amount of new recreation facilities in the existing development areas to meet existing safety and health needs.

19. Maintain the number of whitewater allocations to enhance the Wild and Scenic river values on the Merced River. Allow separate zoning of commercial and private launch sites. Allow no new commercial whitewater permits on the South Fork Merced River.

20. Allow the potential multi-agency "Merced River" trail on the old incline railroad grade to be implemented on FS and BLM administered lands. Manage for foot, horse and mountain bicycle use. Develop trailheads and parking at designated road access points .

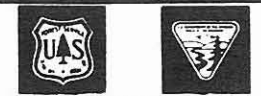
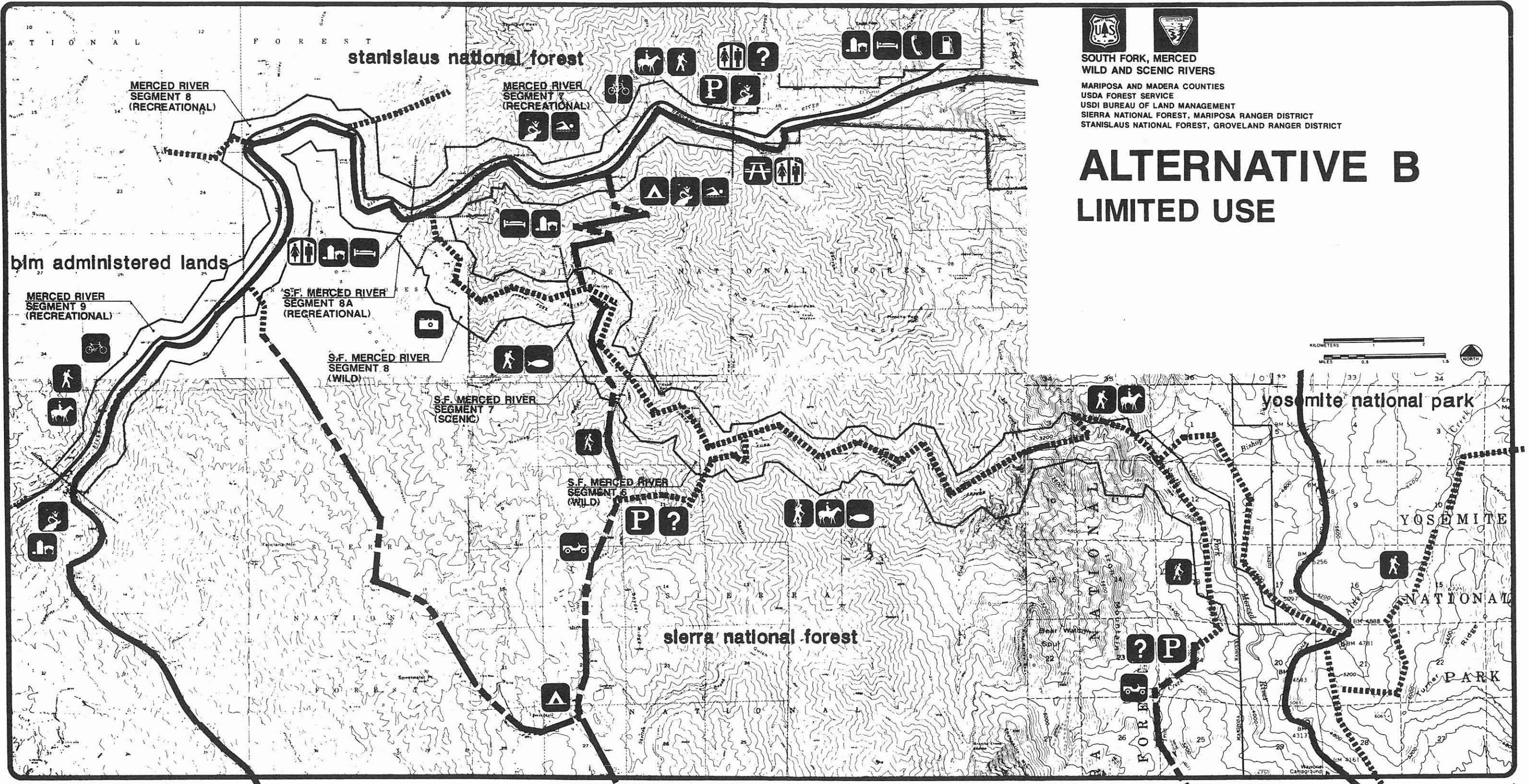
21. Reconstruct the Incline road with minimal turnouts and shouldering where Wild and Scenic values can be protected. Reconstruct the road and trail to the proposed new interagency "Merced River" trail criteria standards.

22. Develop primitive walk-in camping sites at designated sites along the river corridor. Install sanitation facilities along the river where road service access is possible.

23. Identify and interpret significant cultural resources that are not subject to damage from increased visitor use.

24. Prohibit motoried water craft use on the surface of the water within all river classifications.

25. Allow no bridges to accomodate foot, horse, or mountain bicycles at the Hite Cove and Devils Gulch river trail crossing areas.



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# ALTERNATIVE B LIMITED USE



- |                   |                      |                     |                    |                         |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| camping (vehicle) | bicycle trail        | viewing area        | lodging            | road (paved)            |
| picnicking        | hiking trail         | Interpretation area | telephone          | road (unpaved)          |
| rafting           | horse trail          | rec vehicle trail   | restrooms          | railroad grade (unused) |
| camping (walk-in) | fishing              | Information         | gas station        | trail (maintained)      |
| swimming          | parking (trail head) | grocery store       | handicapped access |                         |

### **Alternative C, (Moderate Use)**

Emphasis is placed on providing moderate recreation improvements within the river corridor while protecting the existing qualities of each river segment. The segments classified as "recreational" on the Merced WSR will maintain the existing roaded natural (RN) and rural (R) experiences within the river corridor. The south Fork Merced River will emphasize the semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) within the "wild" segments and semi-primitive motorized (SPM) within the "scenic" segment. This alternative includes primitive walk-in campsite developments along the Merced river corridor. All developed recreational sites along the Merced are rehabilitated and expanded to meet existing use and include the whitewater put in trail heads. Two wheel mountain bikes will be allowed on designated trails within the Merced river "recreational" classifications. Non-commercial whitewater allocations are unlimited and permits are not required. Commercial whitewater allocations are based on the existing carrying capacity of the river recreation resource and will be allowed to continue in the future under the Forest and BLM's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Minimal improvements required for public safety on the existing designated motorized OHV south side Hite Cove route and the motorized Incline roads will be allowed. Public OHV use will continue on the single lane unpaved Hite Cove South side road. The un-paved North side Hite Cove road will remain maintained for administrative use only. On site visitor information services (VIS) will occur on all "recreational" classification segments on the Merced River. On site interpretive services (IS) will occur on the "scenic" classification segment on the South Fork Merced River. The existing prehistorical cultural resources around the Hite Cove area are maintained to moderate archaeological standards. Minimum historic structures will be allowed to be rehabilitated or moved to the site under archaeological standards. Existing system trails are maintained. A complete foot-trail system from the Merced River confluence of the South Fork Merced to the Yosemite park entrance will be established and maintained.

Segment classifications, boundary locations and uses are shown in the enclosed alternative C map. Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and use scale summary of alternatives are displayed at the end of this chapter.

Management requirements for Alternative C are:

3-15 Same as Alternative A, plus the following numbers 16-25

16. Designate the Hite Cove Area as a Historical/Cultural area and provide moderate interpretation and minimal historical structural renovations within the area in accordance with archaeological guidelines.

17. Retain the SPM zone within the Hite Cove Area. Allow existing motorized access on the South side to continue within this SPM zone. Retain the North side road to Hite Cove for administrative purposes only.

18. Construct new recreation facilities in the existing development areas to meet existing needs.

19. Establish whitewater allocations based on the existing carrying capacity of the river recreation resource. Do not require permits for non-commercial river use.

20. Allow the potential multi-agency "Merced River" trail on the old incline railroad grade to be implemented on FS and BLM administered lands. Manage for foot, horse and mountain bicycle use. Develop trailhead and parking at designated road access points.

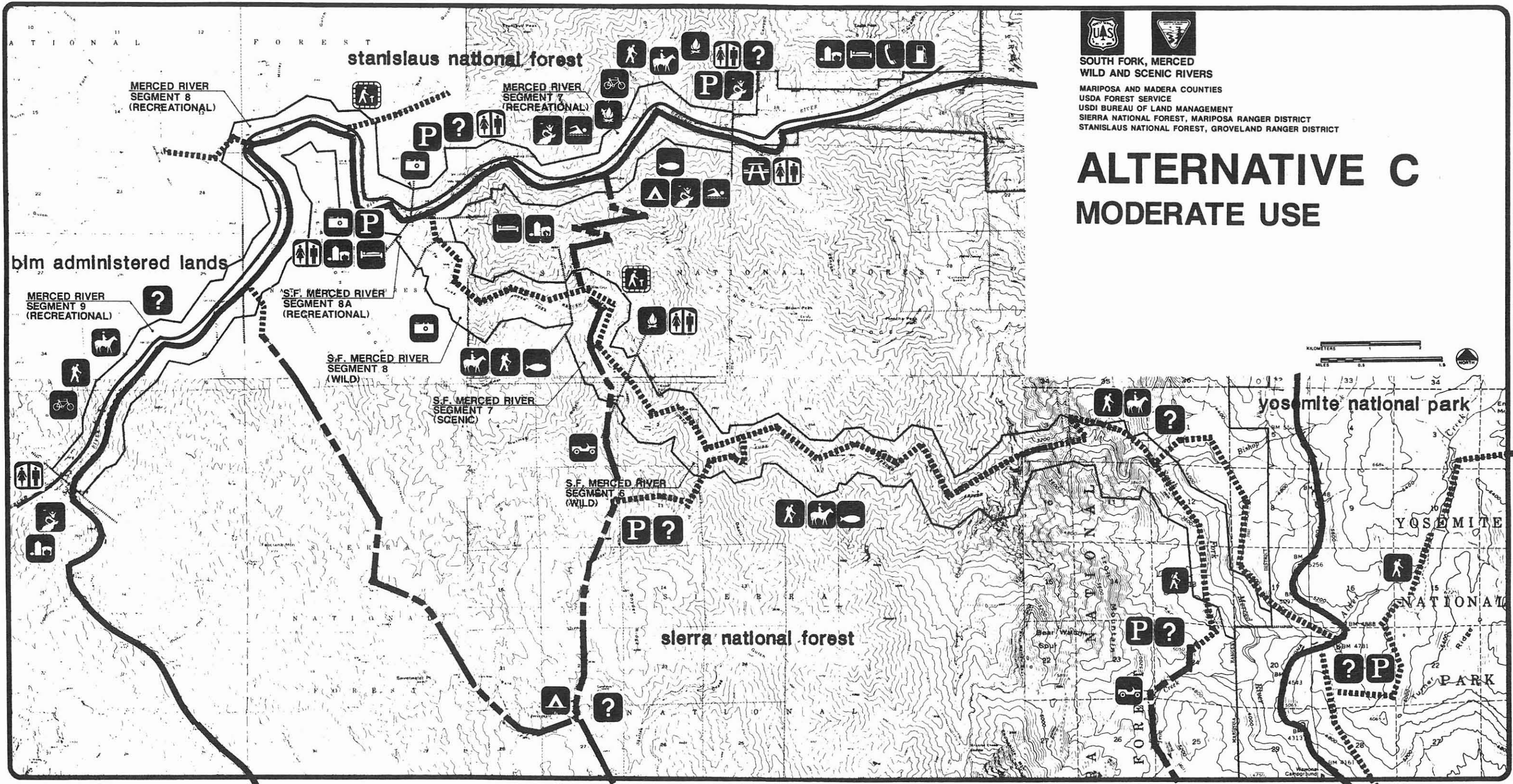
21. Reconstruct the Incline road with turnouts and shouldering where Wild and Scenic values can be protected and or reconstruct the road to the proposed new interagency trail criteria standards.

22. Develop primitive walk-in and developed camping sites at designated river sites along the corridor.

23. Identify and interpret significant cultural resources that are not subject to damage from increased visitor use.

24. Prohibit motorized water craft use on the surface of the water within all river classifications.

25. Allow a pedestrian bridge to be installed at Hite Cove. Allow a pedestrian/equestrian bridge to be installed at Devils Gulch along the South Fork Merced River trail river crossings.



## **Alternative D (Maximum Use)**

Emphasis is placed on providing a developed recreation experience and allowing for motorized use and access within the river corridor's "recreational and scenic" classifications. The areas classified as "recreational" on the Merced maintain the Rural (R) experience levels. Motorized use on the water and on designated trails is allowed. Surfacing improvements to road access and parking on the Incline and Hite Cove roads is allowed. Two wheel trail bikes are allowed on designated trails within the "recreational" and "scenic" segments. Additional facilities are developed, increasing the carrying capacity of the river recreation resource to meet expanding use. The number of commercial whitewater outfitters will be increased and will be managed under a revised Forest and BLM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Incline Road remains double lane paved and the dispersed sites along this road become developed sites and increase in capacity levels. The Merced River Trail and the Historic Train proposals could be developed along the old railroad grade. VIS and IS are prominent at all developed and dispersed sites within the river corridors. All trails are rehabilitated. Cultural resources interpretation is standard. Existing prehistorical cultural resources at the Hite Cove area are maintained to maximum archaeological standards and moderate historical structures are allowed to be moved to the site under archaeological and recreational guidelines. Public motorized access on the north Hite Cove road would be allowed if proper easements and public transportation systems could be established. The north and south Hite Cove roads would be designated OHV routes when confirmed with the 1991 forest OHV plan. Sanitation facilities are installed along the river where service access is possible.

Segment classifications, boundary locations and uses are shown in the enclosed Alternative D map. Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and use scale summary alternatives are displayed at the end of this chapter .

3-15 Same as Alternative A, numbers 3-15, plus the following numbers 16-25.

16. Designate the Hite Cove Area as a Historical/Cultural area and provide maximum interpretation and moderate historical

structural renovations within the area in accordance with archaeological and recreational guidelines.

17. Plan for public motorized access both on north and south sides of Hite Cove within the WSR corridor with a bridge/ford crossing relating to season of use at the South Fork Merced river crossing.

18. Expand developed recreation sites in the "recreational and scenic" classifications areas.

19. Increase the number of outfitter launches.

20. Manage the north and south Hite Cove roads to meet both equestrian and four wheel drive motorized use.

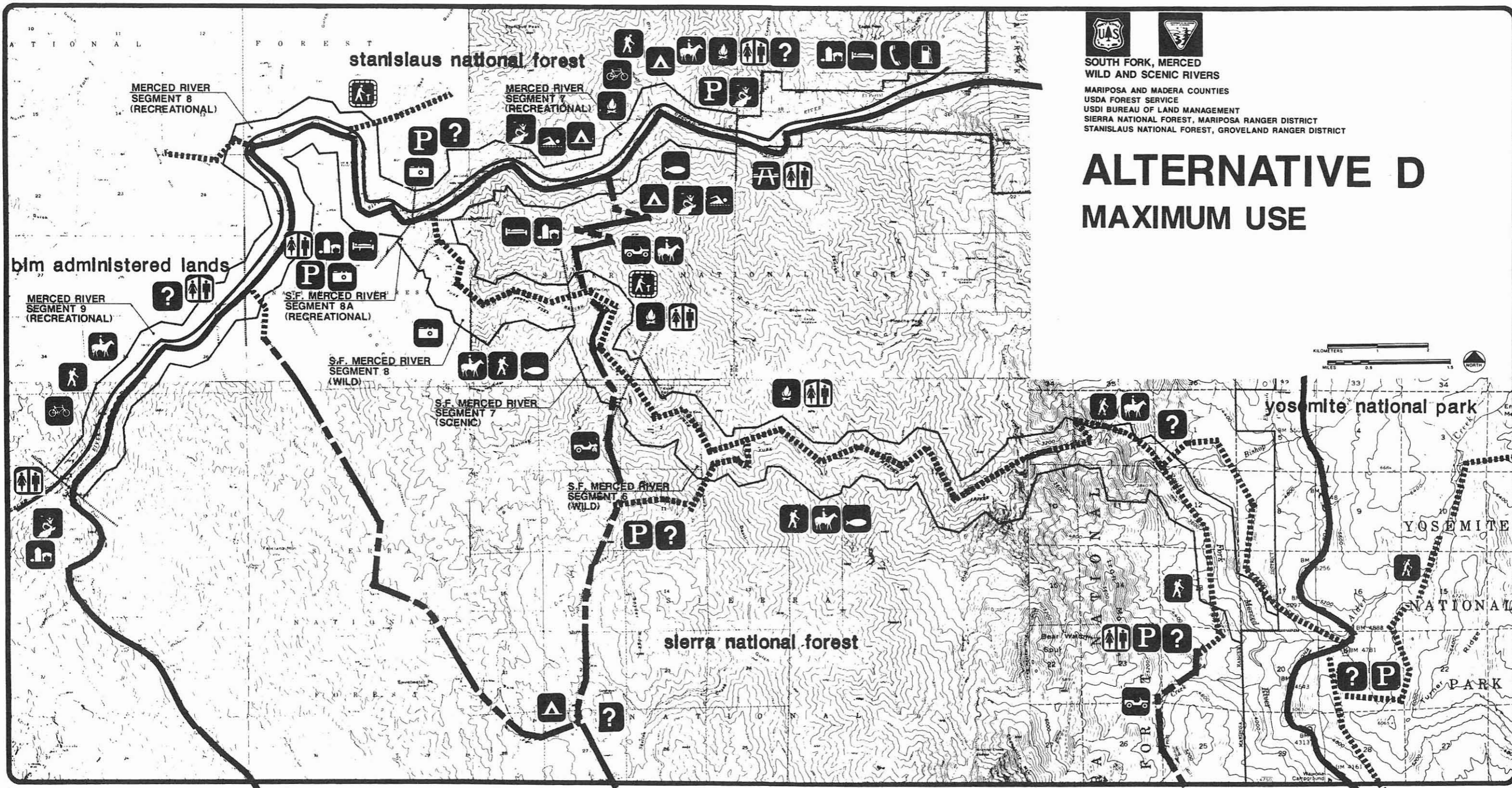
21. Improve Incline road to double lane paved standards and include surfacing improvements for the interagency trail which relates to other agency surfacing guidelines.



22. Install sanitation facilities along the river where road service access is possible.

23. Allow motorized use on the water within the recreational classifications and only on designated trails.

24. Consider motorized water craft use on the surface of the water within the recreational classification.

25. Allow a bridge/ford to be constructed to accommodate motorized vehicles crossings at the Hite Cove area. Allow a pedestrian/equistrian bridge to be installed at the Devils Gulch river crossing.




  
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# ALTERNATIVE D

## MAXIMUM USE



- |   |                   |   |                      |   |                     |   |                    |   |                         |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | camping (vehicle) |  | bicycle trail        |  | viewing area        |  | lodging            |  | road (paved)            |
|  | picnicking        |  | hiking trail         |  | interpretation area |  | telephone          |  | road (unpaved)          |
|  | rafting           |  | horse trail          |  | rec vehicle trail   |  | restrooms          |  | railroad grade (unused) |
|  | camping (walk-in) |  | fishing              |  | information         |  | gas station        |  | trail (maintained)      |
|  | swimming          |  | parking (trail head) |  | grocery store       |  | handicapped access |   |                         |



## 3.5 Comparison of Alternatives

This section compares the four alternatives as they relate to the issues, objectives and consequences. This section is a summary of the alternative's consequences. A detailed analysis of the issues and concerns identified in the scoping process is found in Section 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES. Each alternative is described in terms of affects and levels of use. A brief narrative tells how each of the issues and concerns were addressed by the alternatives.

**ALTERNATIVE A (Existing use):** A continuation of current management direction, uses the boundaries and classifications allocated in the completed WSR EA of 1989. This alternative will have a low to moderate impact to the river resources. It has a moderate amount of trails and a low level of recreation site development. The proposed interagency trail on the old railroad grade will stay in its original state with no rehabilitation of the trail on BLM or FS administered lands. The Hite Cove area will be designated a historical-cultural area but no interpretation or rehabilitation to existing improvements within the area will be provided and no improvements to the access systems will occur. Whitewater use would remain at current levels with no refurbishment to the land put-in sites planned. All river segments would be withdrawn from new mineral entries but recreational mining could continue under permit.

**ALTERNATIVE B (Limited use):** This alternative will use the same boundaries and classification allocations documented in the completed WSR EA of 1989. This alternative offers the greatest protection of Wild and Scenic river values in the "Scenic" classification areas along the South Fork Merced River because it allows no motorized vehicles. It has a moderate amount of trails and a low level of recreation site improvements. The proposed interagency Merced River trail on the old railroad grade will be developed with minimal site improvements along the trail on BLM and FS administered lands. The Hite Cove historical area will be designated a historical cultural area and provide minimal interpretation. Existing historical improvements will be allowed to be rehabilitated following archaeological guidelines. Public motorized access to Hite Cove would not be allowed via the existing south side route. Public hiking access would be allowed

via the existing hiking trail from the Merced River confluence. No improvements to the North or South Hite Cove road system will occur. Whitewater use would remain at current levels with minimal refurbishment to the land put-in sites for safety and health reasons. The classified "wild" segments would not be available for any expansion of commercial activities. Mineral entry would be withdrawn on the "recreational" and "scenic" river segments but recreational mining permits would be allowed.

**ALTERNATIVE C (Moderate Use):** This alternative will use the same boundaries and classifications allocations documented in the completed WSR EA of 1989. This alternative offers the greatest protection of Wild and Scenic River values within the "Recreational" classifications because it proposes to convert the dispersed to developed camping along the Incline Road. The "scenic" and "recreational" segments will have moderate levels of recreation use compared to alternative B. Trail development would be moderate compared to alternatives A and B. The proposed interagency trail on the old railroad grade will be developed with other trail-side walk-in camping site development. The Hite Cove historical area will be designated a historical/cultural area and will provide moderate interpretation and renovations to a minimal of imported turn of the century period items following archaeological guidelines. Public access to Hite Cove would be allowed via the existing south side motorized OHV route and the existing hiking trail from the Merced River confluence. There would be no potential for equestrian access on the Hite Cove north side route. Access would include a pedestrian only bridge built across the South Fork at the Hite Cove river crossing and a pedestrian/equestrian bridge build at Devils Gulch. Improvements to the existing south side entrance OHV route to Hite Cove will be minimal. The North Side road to Hite Cove would remain closed to public access. Alternative C has the most miles of trails open only to non-motorized uses. Whitewater use would approximate current levels. The classified "scenic" and "wild" segments on the South Fork Merced River would be available for minimal commercial permit activities like photography or cross country packing. Mineral entry would be withdrawn but recreation permits for mining would be allowed on the "recreational" and "scenic" segments.

ALTERNATIVE D (Maximum Use): This alternative will use the same boundaries and classifications allocations documented in the completed WSR EA of 1989. The classifications would be designed to the highest recreation use densities allowed with the respective "recreational," " scenic," or "wild" classifications. The greatest probability of adverse affects to the rivers will occur with this alternative unless a managed monitoring program is established by the agencies. This alternative would have the highest level of recreation use including trails allowing motorized vehicles and surfacing of roads with cost share funding. The proposed interagency Merced River Trail will be developed with drive-in high density recreation facilities developments where possible. A train would be allowed to run between Briceberg to El Portal on the old incline road alignment. The Hite Cove area will be designated a historical cultural area and will provide moderate historical turn of the century period renovations following standard recreation development guidelines. Public access would be allowed to the Hite Cove area via the existing motorized routes from the north and south sides. A vehicle bridge or seasonal ford would be constructed crossing the South Fork Merced river. The levels of mineral, transportation and whitewater rafting increases would be the maximum allowed with each classification.

### 3.5.1 ALTERNATIVES USE SCALE SUMMARY

	ALT A.....	ALT B.....	ALT C.....	ALT D
<b>ROS</b>				
MERCED.....	RN.....	RN.....	RN.....	R
S.F.MERCED.....	SPM.....	SPM/SPNM.	SPM/SPNM.	SPM
<b>DEVELOPMENT SCALE</b>				
MERCED.....	4.....	3.....	4.....	5
S.F.MERCED.....	2.....	2.....	2.....	3
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>				
MERCED.....	R.....	R.....	R.....	R
S.F.MERCED.....	W/S.....	W/S.....	W/S.....	W/S
<b>RECREATION SITES</b>				
MERCED/SF MERCED				
SITE REHAB.....	NO.....	MINOR.....	MOD.....	MAJ
NEWSITES.....	NO.....	DISPER.....	DEVEL.....	DEVEL
<b>WHITEWATER</b>				
RAFTING.....	CUR.....	CUR.....	CUR.....	INCREA
<b>MOTORIZED ACCESS</b>				
MERCED.....	YES.....	YES.....	YES.....	YES
S.F.MERCED.....	NO/W.....	NO/W.....	NO/W.....	NO/W
	YES/S.....	NO/S.....	YES/S.....	YES/S
<b>TRAILS</b>				
MAINTENANCE..	NO.....	YES.....	YES/REH..	YES/R
NEW.....	NO.....	NO.....	NO.....	YES
<b>HITE COVE ROUTE SOUTH SIDE</b>				
PUBLIC ACCESS..	YES.....	NO.....	YES.....	YES
MAINTENANCE..	YES.....	S/L UP.....	S/L UP.....	2/L UP
MOTOR VEH.....	YES.....	NO.....	YES.....	YES

HITE COVE ROAD

NORTH SIDE

PUBLIC ACCESS.....NO.....NO.....NO.....YES  
MAINTENANCE.....YES.....S/L UP.....S/L UP.....S/L EAS  
MOTOR VEHICLE.NO. ....NO.....NO.....YES

HITE COVE SITE

STRUCTURES.....EXIST..EXIST.....MIN.....MOD  
VIS/IS.....MIN.....MIN.....MOD.....MAX  
REHABILITATE.....NO.....YES.....ARC ST.....REC ST

INCLINE ROAD

MAINTENANCE.....YES.....S/L P.....S/L TO.....2/L P  
PROPOSED TR.....NO.....YES.....YES.....YES.

INFORMATION

TRAIL HEADS.....O.....3.....7 UTS.....7 UTS  
RESTROOMS.....O.....O.....1 UTS.....2 UTS

HIKING/HORSE

TRAIL ACCESS

MERCED.....0.....10 MI.....10 MI.....10 MI  
S.F.MERCED.....15 M.....17MI.....15 MI.....15 MI

CAMPGROUND

DEVELOPED.....30 UTS...30 UTS.....85 UTS.....100 UTS  
RESTROOMS.....2 UTS....2 UTS.....3 UTS.....3 UTS

CAMPGROUND

DISPERSED.....0 UTS...20 UTS.....5 UTS.....10 UTS  
RESTROOMS.....0 UTS....1 UTS.....1 UTS.....3 UTS

PICNICGROUND

DEVELOPED.....10 UTS...10 UTS.....20 UTS.....30 UTS  
RESTROOMS.....1 UTS.....1 UTS.....1 UTS.....1 UTS

BOAT PUT-IN.....3 UTS...3 UTS.....5 UTS.....5 UTS

RESTROOMS.....3 UTS...3 UTS.....3 UTS.....3 UTS

VISITS

YEAR/SEASON...60,000.....40,000.....80,000.....100,000

TOTAL COST

PROJECT.....\$75,000.....\$200,000.....\$500,000..\$1,000,000

O/M COST/YR....\$25,000.....\$30,000.....\$40,000.....\$50,000

Staff.....\$25,000.....\$30,000.....\$40,000.....\$50,000

TOTAL O/M/yr....\$50,000.....\$60,000.....\$80,000.....\$100,000







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## **4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

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This section discloses the current environmental conditions (Affected Environment) and potential consequences (Environmental Consequences) or impacts of each of the alternatives described in Section 3.0. This provides the analytical basis for the comparison of alternatives.

During the interdisciplinary analysis, environmental impacts were identified, which, while not necessarily significant, could be modified to lessen undesirable consequences. Where possible actions were developed to incorporate these modifications. Mitigating measures are listed where needed for the alternatives considered. Actions necessary to implement the next phase of this project are listed in Appendix D, Management Actions.

### **4.1 CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES (ARCHAEOLOGY)**

#### **4.1.1 South Fork Merced River**

Native American sites are located along the South Fork of the Merced. Hite Cove, a historic mining district reported to have

one of the richest hardrock gold mines in the State in its time, is located along the South Fork. The entire lower canyon holds special cultural significance for the descendants of the Yosemite Indians. The river canyon was also a migration route for the Yosemite Indians. Early stage routes and Indian trails cross the river in several places.

The river figures prominently in early efforts to acquire additional water for mining and agriculture in Mariposa County (1850-1867). Several historic mines and mill sites were located along the river, many structure foundations exist today. In 1870 John Hite had the Chinese laborers build a road to his mine from Jerseydale. This historic trail probably followed earlier Indian migration routes. The south side Hite Cove Road is the only existing, four wheel drive route to the river. Research has indicated that the road from the north side was financed by Shirley Temple's step father and constructed in the early 50's. It was used for mining exploration work and because it was dangerous, not open to the public. Since the early years the road has been gated and has been used solely as an administrative road. It presently crosses several private properties.

The entire South Fork was within the Yosemite National Park and under the administration of the U.S. Cavalry (1890-1906), and the Iron, Savage-Lundy and Skelton Creek trails were built by the Cavalry in 1903-1904 in order to deal with increasing encroachments (grazing, logging) on the public domain. The complete history of the area is the subject of the book Treasures of the South Fork (1983) that briefly outlines numerous special qualities of the river, particularly its Indian and white history.

#### **4.1.2 Merced River**

Several historic sites are located along the Merced. The old Yosemite railroad grade and several trestles are visible along the river. The incline at Trumbull was built by the Yosemite Lumber Co. during the winter of 1923-24. It was used until 1927, then reconditioned in 1935 by the Yosemite Sugar Pine Co. The last trainload of logs went to Merced Falls Mill in late 1942.

Savage's Trading Post, claimed to be the site of a trading post established by Col. James Savage of Mariposa Battalion fame, is located at the confluence of the Merced and South Fork Merced. The trading post is a California Historical Landmark.

Some major turn-of-the-century mining sites and the trails built to access them are present near the river. The remains of features such as stamp mills and powerhouses are still visible at some of these sites. Several old mine and mill sites, circa 1890, are still present. The town of El Portal is an old mining town. Mining has been in progress in the Merced River canyon from 1857 to the present time. At least 25 mines below El Portal were opened in the 1870's. These activities declined to almost nothing in the middle years of this century, but have experienced a recent resurgence. Unpatented mining claims around the BLM lands have increased 128% in the years between 1975 and 1980.

Ethnographic sources ascribe aboriginal habitation of this portion of the Merced drainage to the Southern Sierra Miwok. Indian sites are expected along the river that was a travel route for the Miwok. Many of these sites have been damaged by mining and other activities. Placer mining, evident in many places in the canyon, was particularly deleterious to archaeological sites. The railroad has had a major impact on ethnographic Indian villages and archaeological sites. Several such sites were destroyed or damaged during railway construction, including the Soo'-wut-oo-lah'site at El Portal. Many of the sites near the river are inundated and scoured by high-water runoff in the spring.

Surveys have been conducted along several segments of the river. There were 43 sites recorded in the eastern upstream section of the river and 21 sites around El Portal. The BLM has recorded 43 cultural properties with 33 occurring immediately adjacent to the Merced River. Both prehistoric and historic sites are represented. The historic sites are generally associated with mineral exploitation.

### **4.1.3 Effects of implementing alternatives on the Cultural Resources**

The FEIS and Plan will require that archaeological reconnaissance and Native American consultation take place prior to any project activity. No adverse effects will occur under any alternative. However, the level of mitigation versus protection will change with each alternative. Those aspects of cultural resource management that vary by alternative are:

Alternative A (Present Use) There will continue to be use-caused wear and surface deflation of identified archaeological sites known to exist within the areas of potential environmental impact (APEI). Known sites will be protected. Archaeological surveys will be limited to areas where management projects are planned. No comprehensive inventory will be available to assist in planning except as already completed for selected sites. This alternative has the most potential for adversely affecting unidentified cultural resources. Illegal artifact collecting and vandalism within the W&SR corridor are problems that will be mitigated. Many existing areas within the river corridor are on lands of high archaeological sensitivity for both prehistoric as well as historic sites. Available mitigation include recommending the Hite Cove Site as a National Register Cultural site, avoidance, more data recovery, and more archaeological research.

Alternative B (Limited Use) The use-caused wear and surface deflation of identified archaeological sites known to exist within the areas of potential environmental impact may be eliminated. Systematic surveys will occur in places where use-cause damage is occurring and where cultural sensitivity is indicated. Sites where damage is occurring will be closed to vehicle entry and monitored on a regular basis. If damage continues, sites will be stabilized or closed to all public entry. There will be an initial cost for research and recording followed by a continuing cost for monitoring and protection. No development will occur on identified cultural properties. This will limit management options. There may continue to be effects to the cultural resources with illegal artifact collecting and vandalism around the Hite Cove areas. Available mitigation includes recommending Hite Cove as a National Register Cultural site, on site education to the public

at the South Fork and Merced river areas, more data recovery and uniformed site monitoring.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) The use-caused wear and surface deflation of identified archaeological sites known to exist within the areas of potential environmental impact may be eliminated. Oral history and surveys will be the same as alternative B. Information from that research and evaluation will be utilized in determining appropriate site improvements along the Merced river (hiking, mountain bike trail and developed camping sites) and along the South Fork river (Hite Cove pedestrian bridge/sanitation structure and interpretive signs). Sensitive sites will be included in undeveloped, natural areas within the W&SR corridor. Motorized and non-motorized access will be restricted except on designated routes or trails. There may continue to be effects to the cultural resources with illegal artifact collecting and vandalism around the Hite Cove area. The potential effects on the old railroad trestles will not be known until they can be evaluated before the planned Merced River trail system is developed. Available mitigation includes recommending Hite Cove as a National Register Cultural site, on site education historic stations at selected South Fork and Merced river areas, more archaeological research and uniformed law enforcement site monitoring. Interpretation at selected areas will address the history and prehistory of the area. On-site interpretation may occur at the Hite Cove area if the site or sites can be protected from vandalism.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) The use-caused wear and surface deflation of identified archaeological sites known to exist within the areas of potential environmental impact may be eliminated. Oral history and surveys will be similar to alternative B and C. Information from that research and evaluation will be utilized in determining the planned site improvements along the Merced river (hiking/mountain bike trail and or historic train system and developed camping) and along the South Fork river (the Hite Cove OHV south/north river crossing and access system, sanitation structure and interpretive structures). Identified sites in high-use zones along the Merced and the Hite Cove area along the South Fork will be tested for significance. Those determined to be significant will be protected or mitigated. Where no other suitable site could be found for a planned project, develop-

ment on sites will be allowed following state and federally approved data recovery or stabilization. Mitigation will result in some loss of future potential. There will continue to be effects to the cultural resources with illegal artifact collecting and vandalism. The potential effects on the old railroad trestles may be significant if a planned railroad system is implemented on the existing railroad grade. Available mitigation measures are similar to alternative C.

## **4.2 FIRE**

### **4.2.1 & 4.2.2 Merced and South Fork Merced River**

Sierra and Stanislaus National Forest policy for the suppression of wildfire in general forested areas is to complete one of the three pre-determined suppression strategies: Confine, Contain and Control. The suppression strategy in the Merced River canyon would be control with an acreage objective of 10 acres. Because of the steep terrain, the use of heavy equipment is limited in the canyon bottom as well on the walls of the canyon. Control is defined as to complete a control line around the fire, any spot fires from any interior stands to be saved; burn out any unburned areas adjacent to the fire side of the control line; and cool down all hot spots that are immediate threats to the control line until the line can reasonably be expected to hold under foreseeable conditions. Aviation and Fire Management will be conducted by the Sierra in accordance with a Local Operating Plan agreed to by the Sierra and Stanislaus.

The Bureau of Land Management fire policy is to suppress wildfire. Because of the steep terrain, the use of heavy equipment is limited. Non-mechanical means of control could be used. Within the river corridor the policy would be the same. The BLM has a Burn Plan for 30,000 acres which includes lands located along the BLM's 4 mile portion of the Merced Wild and Scenic River. The Plan will include a prescribed burning policy. The objectives are watershed enhancement, hazard and fuel reduction, improved livestock forage condition and improved wildlife habitat.

The fire management policies within Merced Canyon's W&SR corridor on lands administered by the Yosemite National Park are outside the terms of reference of this FEIS.

#### **4.2.1 Effect of implementing alternatives on Fire**

Alternative A (Existing Use) Sierra and the Stanislaus National Forests and BLM fire policies are compatible with all proposed alternatives. Fire management and suppression activities will be carried out according to the agency Fire Management Plan to protect the Wild and Scenic values. Fire potential in much of the canyons will remain high, primarily due to natural factors. The potential for accidental, person-caused fires is high with this alternative because of existing dispersed camping use along the Incline Road. Mitigation measures include a prescribed burn policy within the Merced and South Fork Merced canyons, and a Memorandum of Understanding fire management operating plan between the Stanislaus and Sierra National Forest.

The effects of wildfire on BLM and National Forests lands in 1987 have significantly reduced the available deer winter habitat. The BLM will delay further implementation of the prescribed burns within the river corridor until these areas have rehabilitated. Future prescribed burning projects will be coordinated with the California Department of Fish and Game and with the livestock operations in the burn project areas.

Alternative B (Limited Use) Same as Alternative A except the potential for accidental, person-caused fires will be present along the Merced's Incline Road where dispersed, unregulated camping will be allowed.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) Same as A except the potential for accidental, person-caused fires will decrease along the Incline Road within the Merced W&SR corridor because of regulated and developed camping use.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) The potential for fire is highest because of the potential of more visitor use. There will be a high potential for fire if the railroad plan is implemented on the

Merced River Canyon. Mitigation measures include a prescribed burn policy within the canyon to reduce fuel loading.

## **4.3 FISHERIES**

### **4.3.1 South Fork Merced River**

One of the few remaining pristine Sierra fisheries, the South Fork Merced River is inhabited by self-sustaining populations of rainbow trout, brook trout and brown trout. Downstream, located 2 miles above Peachtree Bar, hardhead, squawfish and smallmouth bass are present. Fishing is for the most part very high in quality. The section in the Sierra National Forest is one of 21 California State designated Wild Trout Streams.

The river, within the Forest boundaries, supports a diverse fishery of both native and introduced species including rainbow trout, Sacramento squawfish, Sacramento sucker, hardhead, and brown trout, respectively. This river is acclaimed as a trophy fishery for rainbow and brown trout. Due to difficulty of access and terrain, the river receives relatively little angling use.

### **4.3.2 Merced River**

Below El Portal, within the Sierra National Forest, the following fish are present in order of relative abundance: sculpin (species unknown), Sacramento sucker, rainbow trout, Sacramento squawfish, brown trout, California roach and smallmouth bass. Occasionally, coho salmon are known to migrate from McClure Reservoir into the Merced River into BLM and Forest Service boundaries. The coho salmon excepted, the other fish are self-sustaining. The Merced River is also stocked regularly during the summer months with legal-size trout. The stocking is limited to areas near campgrounds.



#### **4.3.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Fisheries**

Alternative A (Existing Use) The existing fishery may be maintained at its current level. There is the potential that fishing benefits may decrease due to limited public controls. No additional impacts from recreational suction dredging and other forms of recreational mining will occur in any of the Alternatives because these activities will only be permitted in accordance with existing mining permits and plans. Fishing use could increase due to W&SR designation and subsequent increase in recreation use.

Alternative B (Limited Use) The fishery will be maintained at its current level. Fishing benefits will be maintained due to adequate public management controls. Fishing use will increase as the result of the new W&SR river designation. No additional impacts from road building will occur in Alternatives B and C because there will be no additional road construction. It is anticipated that the existence of self sustaining trout population capable of providing an attractive fishery along the South Fork Merced will continue.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) The existing fishery may be maintained at its current level. Fishing benefits may be maintained due to adequate public management controls. Fishing use will increase as the result of the new W&SR designated rivers becoming better known to the public. All W&SR Merced and South Fork river segments will receive an increase in angling pressure. Mitigation measures could reduce impacts to acceptable levels. Management activities such as limiting the flow of people to specific seasons, could be implemented. A self sustaining trout population will continue with use controls.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) The existing fishery would have to be supplemented to be maintained at its current level. Fishing benefits will be maintained due to aggressive public management controls. Fishing use will increase as the result of the new W&SR designated rivers becoming better known. All river segments will receive an increase in angling pressure with a potential effect of moderately decreasing the fishing quality. The impacts on the South Fork Merced will cause a decline in fishing quality as a result of increased angling pressure expected when pedestrian and motorized river crossing and access are allowed on both sides

of the Hite Cove Area. Mitigation measures could reduce impacts to acceptable levels. Management activities such as limiting the flow of people to specific seasons could be implemented.

## **4.4 GEOLOGY AND SOIL**

### **4.4.1 South Fork Merced River**

**Geology:** The portion that is within the Sierra National Forest flows through a V-shaped gorge carved into metasedimentary rock. This striking metamorphic-granitic contact zone is near Zip Creek. This contact zone along with the one above Wawona have created narrow, steep-walled gorges.

**Soils:** Starting from the Forest boundary in Section 20,T.4 S., R.21 E. close to Highway 41 and ending at the confluence of the Main Fork Merced, the river runs generally through soil with a high erosion hazard potential. The exception is the first 2.5 miles where the river runs through highly productive soils. These soils have a high to very high erosion hazard potential when vegetation is removed. The river then flows through low-producing soils all the way to the confluence of the Merced River. These soils are shallow to moderately deep and have a very high erosion hazard potential.

### **4.4.2 Merced River**

**Geology:** Below El Portal to Briceburg, the river valley cuts through metasedimentary rocks that are geologically significant. The slopes along the river are sparsely vegetated. This reveals a variety of rock types along the river including limestone blocks forming prominent escarpments.

**Soils:** The river runs through low-producing soils throughout the stretch from the El Portal area in Section 19,T.3 S., R.20E. to the edge of the Sierra National Forest. The soils are shallow to

moderately deep and have a very high erosion hazard potential throughout this area.

A variety of soil series are found in the BLM's chaparral type river zone. Two major soil associations found in this chaparral type are the Maymen-Mariposa association and the Auburn-Dalton association. These types of soils are well drained, 8 to 20 inches in depth, moderate to strongly acidic and have metasedimentary bedrock.

#### **4.4.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Geology and Soils**

Alternative A (Existing Use) Change to the existing geology and soils will be minimal. There will be potential for geologic hazards, loss of productivity and erosion around the existing foot trails and OHV routes if no mitigating measures are planned.

Alternative B (Minimal Use) Change to the existing geology and soils will be minimal. Activities allowed under this Alternative which could affect the soils resource include prescribed burning, pedestrian, and equestrian use. Monitoring of trail and route use will determine when impacts reach levels where controls are necessary.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) Change to the existing geology and soils will be moderate. Activities allowed under this Alternative which could affect the soils resource include those listed in Alternative B with the addition of OHV use (South side of Hite Cove area). Mitigating measures will be established to control the adverse impacts to soils along the access systems.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) Change to the existing geology and soils will be moderate to heavy. Activities allowed under this Alternative will include those listed for Alternative B and C plus motorized OHV route access (North and South side of Hite Cove) and a train access system along the Incline Road within the Merced River corridor. Substantial mitigating measures will have to be established to control the adverse impact to soils along the access systems.

## 4.5 GRAZING

### 4.5.2 Merced River

BLM leases approximately 22,880 acres of public land bounded to the south and east by the Merced Wild and Scenic River. The area provides forage for livestock under a single authorized grazing lease. The Bureau leases 2057 AUMs of use to a Mariposa County cattle rancher. The rancher has a cow/calf operation which utilizes both Bureau and Forest Service land. The grazing season of use authorized on BLM lands extends from March 15 to September 15. The highest percentage of livestock use on BLM and Forest lands occurs from March to June. In accordance with a memorandum of understanding between the Sierra and the Stanislaus National Forests signed on December 8 1989, all range and fuels management responsibilities that are on the north or Stanislaus side of the river corridor will be retained by the Stanislaus.

### 4.5.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on grazing

Alternative A (Existing Use) The resource emphasis will not change. Grazing will continue at the current level. Potential conflicts between rafters on the Merced River and cattle during the early part of the rafting season will continue to be a problem. Opportunities to improve grazing will be implemented on a case-by case basis. AUMs will remain the same depending on the allotment plans. The BLM Merced River 1970 Allotment Management Plan (AMP) includes portions of the 1987 designated W&SR Canyon area. Historically cattle have made use of this Merced River corridor. There will be effects to the existing allotment plan if it has to be updated. There will be effects to grazing with the Bureau's burn plan to reduce brush densities in the AMP areas. This burn policy places emphasis on natural vegetation succession following burning. There will be effects to the bureau's policy of de-emphasized type conversion from brush to perennial grass within the corridor area.

Alternative B (Limited Use) The resource emphasis will be to more biological diversity. Grazing will continue at current levels. Opportunities to improve grazing and vegetation conditions will be implemented where compatible with seasons and other resource uses. AUM's will remain the same. If over-utilization of riparian flats occur and ample forage is available at higher elevations, redistribution opportunities will be established. The effects to grazing with the Bureau's burn plan will be same as shown in Alternative A. Available mitigation for potential project effects include public education that grazing is historically acceptable. Site specific revised grazing allotment plans that follow the NEPA process will be completed as necessary. The goal will be to protect the river corridors, sensitive riparian areas and cultural resources sites. Grazing will be managed to protect water quality of the river and the riparian ecosystem. Best Management Practices (BMP's) 8-2, Controlling Livestock Number and Season of Use will be considered in the allotment plans. Fencing the rafting lunch stopping areas that are traditional grazing watering areas will be considered in the allotments plans.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) The resource emphasis will vary by zone. A slight increase in grazing potential may be emphasized in the Recreational (Merced River) zone. AUM's will remain the same. The goal of protecting river corridors will be met with redistribution. Opportunities to improve grazing and vegetative conditions on the upper slopes of the canyon will be considered. All other effects and mitigation measures are the same as Alternative B.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) The resource emphasis will be on development. Grazing will be eliminated on the Merced river flats during the high-use recreation season when the train and or hiking/mountain bike/horse trail is being used. Opportunities to improve grazing and vegetative conditions on the upper slopes of the canyon will be considered. AUM will decrease slightly as a result of moving the off-date to insure cattle are out of the area prior to heavy recreational use. All other effects will be similar to Alternative A. Mitigation measures are the same as Alternative B.

## 4.6 LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE

### 4.6.1 South Fork Merced River

Land ownership: National Forest (Sierra National Forest) 40% or approximately 17.0 miles, Private 2% or approximately 1.0 mile, National Forest and National Park (Sierra National Forest and Yosemite National Park) 7% or approximately 3.0 shared miles. The remaining 22.0 miles (51%) are administered by the National Park and not addressed in this FEIS.

Land use: There are 6 patented mining claims along the Sierra National Forest section of the river. Some of these 1/4 sections have 1 to 20 unpatented claims. However, there is limited activity going on at the present because dredging permits for mining are not being issued by the California State Department of Fish and Game. Recreational gold panning may be done on the river if it is not under claim. There are a few private land parcels that are patented mining claims. There is a utility company easement dating from 1920.

Approximately 40 acres of a commercial logging zone will be able to be viewed from the river corridor. A Research Natural Area (RNA) has been recommended by the Sierra National Forest near the Bishop Creek, Devil Peak, Devil Gulch area.

There are two existing crossings of the South Fork Merced River, the Wawona road and Highway 140 at the confluence with the Merced River. Access is available at three additional points by trail and at two points by vehicle. The river is paralleled by a foot trail for 80% of its length. However, due to terrain, the trail is frequently one-quarter to one-half mile slope distance from the stream and hiking access is difficult. In the lower reaches there are two, four-wheel drive roads/trails that go to Hite Cove. The Hite Cove south OHV route parallels the South Fork River approximately one mile within the W&SR corridor and is presently open to the public. The Hite Cove north route is presently open to administrative use only.

#### 4.6.2 Merced River

Land ownership: National Forest (Sierra-Stanislaus National Forests) 13% or approximately 9 miles, Public Domain ( Bureau of Land Management-Folsom District) 6% or approximately 4 miles, Private 3% or approximately 2 miles. The remaining 56 miles (78%) are administered by the National Park and not addressed in this EA.

Land use: Below El Portal, and within the Sierra National Forest, land use presently includes a few small scale mining activities. These mining activities on the river are primarily part-time or recreational in nature. Suction dredging for placer gold is a popular pastime on many streams and rivers throughout the Mother Lode area of California. The California State Department of Fish and Game regulates and permits suction dredging throughout the year. Within the Sierra National Forest there are numerous mining claims along the river. Each 1/4 section along the river has at least one claim with most having three or four. There are private land parcels that are patented mining claims. The BLM reports that the number of unpatented mining claims increased 128% in the years between 1975 and 1980, with a 58% increase from 1979 to 1980 alone.

There are seven utility company power line easements within the Forest Service's section dating from 1930 that include from 1 to 90 acres. There are also Federal Power Act Withdrawals (FERC) extending for most of the Sierra National Forest and BLM river corridor lands which are from previous hydroelectric power proposals. These withdrawals are now being reviewed to see if they are still necessary. BLM has the responsibility by 1991 to recommend to Congress if these withdrawals should be removed.

There are approximately 28 private land owners within the boundaries of the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. There are also private land owners along the BLM'S portion of the river corridor sections of the Merced River.

Mariposa County is interested in protecting its rights to withdraw water from a portion of the Merced River. The County has no water rights at this time. However, an application for water

rights through the California State Water Resources Control Board will probably be completed by 1992.

The river below El Portal, on Sierra National Forest and BLM-administered lands, is paralleled by the all-year State Highway #140. There are two bridge river crossings but none on Forest Service-administered lands. There are approximately 11 miles of vehicle access within National Forest public lands. The remaining 4 miles of vehicle access to Briceburg are on BLM-administered lands. The river forms the boundary between the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. However in accordance with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed December 8, 1989, the wild and scenic river corridor will be administered by the Sierra National Forest. This will provide the public with a single administrative unit responsible for all National Forest System lands adjacent to the Merced River. The Management or Implementation Plan which will be mutually agreed upon by both the Sierra and the Stanislaus, will set the resource management direction within the river corridor.

#### **4.6.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Land Ownership and Use**

The effects of implementing the management plan on Federally administered lands is the subject of this entire document. The discussion in this section will focus only on issues not addressed in other parts of this analysis. There will be effects on the private land ownership within the South Fork Merced and Merced river corridors if both agencies attempt to purchase the land from willing seller-willing buyer agreements that include fee title purchase, exchange or donation or acquire scenic easements. Management direction for property acquisition is the same for each alternative. As parcels become available for acquisition or exchange, offers from landowners will be tendered by the Forest Service or BLM or a third party that is working with the agencies to exchange lands. No management direction will be established for the activities that may occur on the non-federal lands while under private ownership. Plans for private land use development will be monitored through the county planning department processes. Proposals which are determined to be inconsistent with the purposes of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will be



considered for condemnation action. The goal is to reach a mutual agreement with the landowner. Condemnation would only be used as a last resort to prevent existing or potential land use or developments from degrading the outstanding values of the wild and scenic river corridor.

Alternative A (Existing Use) Existing impacts to private lands will continue unchanged. Effects include fire hazards, noise, trespass, litter, vandalism to private improvements, sanitation problems, liability problems, hunting restrictions, motorized access problems, wildlife regulations and damage to private property caused by recreationists using private lands along the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers. Public motorized use within the "scenic" classification of the South Fork Merced will continue and be subject to impacts associated with motorized access. Public hiking and equestrian use will continue along the South Fork Merced and be subject to existing impacts like vandalism to the historic artifacts, litter pollution, shooting and fire hazards. Available mitigation for potential project effects include communicating to the public by signing, media, and publications that private land exists along the wild and scenic river corridor. Mitigation also includes enforcing county guidelines and regulations which relate to the W&SR river values.

Alternative B (Limited Use) Existing impacts to private lands may continue unchanged. The effects are the similar to Alternative A with three exceptions. 1. Public motorized use within the "scenic" classification of the South Fork Merced will be discontinued. Therefore public access impacts will not affect the private lands outside the W&SR corridor on the south side access to Hike Cove. 2. Public hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use proposed on the old railroad grade along the Merced River will impact private lands if this trail is implemented. Mitigation measures are the same listed in Alternative A. 3. The existing dispersed type of public recreation use on the Incline Road within the Merced River corridor will continue to be a potential fire, sanitation and vandalism problem for those private land owners living along the river corridor. Equal enforcement regulations between the BLM, Forest Service, County and State agencies will be established. Partnership agreements between the private land owners and government agencies for financing necessary improvements like fences, installing planting or natural visual buf-

fers, guide and information signs, relocation or improvements to trails will have to be negotiated.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) Existing impacts to private lands will change. The effects are similar to Alternative A with two exceptions. 1. Public hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use on the old railroad grade along the Merced River will impact private lands if this trail is implemented. 2. The planned developed camping use along the Incline Road within the Merced River corridor will help to mitigate potential fire, sanitation and vandalism problems for private owners. Mitigation measures are the same listed in Alternative A and B including formal partnership agreements between the federal agencies and Cal Trans concerning the Merced Highway, right of way responsibilities, signing and maintenance agreements.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) Existing impacts to private lands will change. The effects are similar to Alternative A and C with two exceptions. 1. Public hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use and or the proposed train system on the old existing railroad grade will impact private lands if these hiking or train systems are implemented. 2. Retaining the south and opening up the north side routes to public OHV use within the W&SR at the Hite Cove area will impact private lands outside the W&SR corridor. Easements or purchase agreements outside the W&SR corridor will have to be negotiated for the north route. Mitigation measures are the same listed in Alternative A, B and C. Formal partnership agreements between the federal agencies, the state and county agencies and the private land owners concerning the operation and maintenance of a hiking and or train access system on the old railroad grade will have to be completed.

## **4.7 MINERALS**

### **4.7.1 Merced River and South Fork Merced River**

Environmental consequences to mineral resources on the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers will be similar in all alternatives. The river's classifications have already been determined as either "wild," "scenic," or "recreational," within the lands

administered by the BLM and Forest Service. Under the "recreational" and "scenic" classifications, which includes the river segments within the Merced River and one segment within the South Fork Merced River, existing valid mining operations or new mining claims will be allowed to continue. All claims, in any segment open to location, will be examined for validity prior to approval of operating plans. Operating plans on claims of proven validity will be subject to environmental conditions prescribed, by the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management, to protect the values for which the river was designated. Mining activities within this classification are subject to regulations (36 CER 228). In these portions the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior may prescribe to protect the values of the wild and scenic rivers. Mineral activities will be conducted in a manner that minimizes surface disturbance, sedimentation, pollution and visual impairment. Under the "wild" classification, which includes all but two small segments on the South Fork Merced River, new mining claims will not be allowed. Existing valid mining operations will be allowed subject to the conditions outlined above. The California State Department of Fish and Game has closed the South Fork of the Merced to river dredging. However, valid claims would be able to be worked by methods other than dredging and therefore could become active.

Portions of the Merced River lying on BLM administered lands are presently encompassed by placer mining claims. Areas under claim include BLM administered campgrounds, whitewater boating access points, day-use areas, and other public use areas. Most claims are supporting small-scale operations producing only small quantities of gold. A few of the minors do not have approved plans of operations. Interlocutory decisions to void these plans of operations were issued in January 1991. The claimants did not live in state approved structures. The structures failed county health and building code inspections on three separate occasions. The claimants have been cited for violations of federal regulations regarding these structures and are currently scheduled for trial in federal court. The public at large has access along the Merced River from Briceburg to Bagby (outside the terms of reference of this EIS). The public used Merced River Trail runs this entire distance. There is road and vehicular access to the river from Briceburg to Railroad Flat. The mining structures are subject to the same aesthetic guidelines given other BLM and Forest

Service lands. Their existing mining activities are commercial in nature. However, the miners in the past have allowed the public to recreation pan and use small dredges on their claims. The agencies are considering installing a permit system to manage this secondary use. The goal will be to make sure this use protects the values for which the river was designated. This dredging or panning recreational type use will have to meet these criteria: minimize surface disturbance, sedimentation, pollution and visual impairment in order to be acceptable. The responsible agency will made this decision. At present, placer mining on the Merced consists primarily of suction dredging with vacuum nozzles having intake diameters of up to 8 inches and sluices on small flotation platforms. Most placer mining claimants do not suction dredge on their claims more than a few weeks out of the year. Given that most of the Merced River is under claim for placer gold, the public at large has been excluded from the recreational mining activities currently enjoyed by mining claimants. A few placer claims have been purchased by recreational mining clubs for the exclusive use of their members. Such purchases are increasing in upstream areas of the Merced River administered by the Forest Service and can be expected to increase in downstream BLM areas. Under current mining laws this situation is not expected to change.

#### **4.7.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on mining**

Alternative A (Existing Use) All existing valid mining operations may continue with effects as described in 4.7.1. Available mitigation for potential and existing project effects include monitoring each claim to see if they are a valid mining operation and if they meet the guidelines as established by the wild and scenic rivers Act to minimize surface disturbance, sedimentation, pollution and visual impairment. Both agencies are also prescribing a withdrawal from mineral entry for all "recreational" and "scenic" classification areas within the designated corridor. The effects will permit public recreational mining permits to become available as existing claims lapse or are declared invalid. Such a permit system will allow recreational suction dredging and other forms of recreational mining to continue on the Merced River. This will ensure the preservation of the wild and scenic character

of the river. No new mining claims and no disposal of public lands under the land laws within the withdrawn area will be permitted. The withdrawal will not affect the patenting of lands under existing valid claims.

Alternative B (Limited Use) All existing valid mining operations may continue with effects as described 4.7.1.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) All existing valid mining operations may continue with effects as described 4.7.1.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) All existing valid mining operations may continue with effects as described 4.7.1.

## **4.8 RECREATION**

### **4.8.1 South Fork Merced River**

Swimming and fishing opportunities exist in the numerous pools along the South Fork Merced River. Canoeing, rafting and kayaking are possible on the Sierra National Forest starting about 2 miles above Hite Cove to Savage's Trading Post. Whitewater rafting presents an extreme challenge within the narrow canyon. Floating the rest of the river is often dangerous due to cascades, steep waterfalls and access problems.

There is a network of trails into the South Fork canyon that access the river corridor. These include the Hite Cove, Iron Creek, Bishop Creek, Savage-Lundy and the Skelton Creek Trails. On the south side of the Hite Cove area is a four-wheel drive route that provides existing OHV recreation use and south to north access to the river. On the north side of the Hite Cove area is a four-wheel drive route that provides existing administrative use and north to south access to the river. This north side route crosses private property parcels, is gated and has no existing public use. Another Hite Cove hiking trail runs east to west from Wawona to Savage's Trading Post via Bishop Creek and Iron Creek with two ford crossings. These trails provide ample oppor-

tunities to access plant-wildflower study, fishing, swimming, hunting, hiking and viewing scenery. Recreational use is moderate during the spring and fall. During the summer months, heat, poison oak, rattlesnakes and dense brush discourage visitors.

#### **4.8.2 Merced River**

Below El Portal and within the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests the river is used by rafters and kayakers in the late spring and early summer. This segment has a difficulty class of III/IV as listed by the River Information Digest which is a guide prepared by the Interagency White Water Committee composed of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. It has been reported that there is a zone near El Portal that, because of the significant challenge, should be rated class V + , the most difficult. At present this section from El Portal to Redbud Launch Site is seldom used by rafters; however, use is likely to increase in the future, especially by skilled rafters. Whitewater boating is outstanding from the Redbud Launch Site to Bagby as are wading and water play. Many rafters put in on National Park land at Redbud in the vicinity of El Portal or at Cranberry Flat on National Forest land and then float down to Bagby at the top of McClure Reservoir, which is within the Bureau of Land Management lands. This river trip is about 28 miles.

Camping and picnicking opportunities within the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests and the Bureau of Land Management lands are limited and restricted by high summer temperatures. However, camping exceeds capacity in the Forest Service campgrounds throughout late spring, summer and early autumn. The BLM manages three semi-improved campgrounds along its river section and reports popular use with local residents during the weekends. An increasing number of in-state, local campers have the Merced Canyon from McClure Reservoir to El Portal as their destination rather than Yosemite. Activities below El Portal include fishing, swimming, off-road vehicle use close to the river, camping, nature study, viewing scenery and kayaking. In 1983, commercial rafting companies carried 6,326 passengers; private individuals accounted for about 1,500 additional rafters.

#### 4.8.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Recreation

The environmental consequences to the recreation resource of the Merced and South Fork Merced River will vary depending on the recreation opportunities provided in each alternative. There will be effects on the recreation opportunities, the levels of development, recreation use, sanitation, pollution and controls. Recreation use may increase over time up to the capacity of each alternative. Use will be monitored according the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) guidelines outlined in the river's Implementation Plan and within each management river zone. Future changes may occur based on the finding of this monitoring system.

Alternative A (Existing Use) Recreation capacity remains at current levels. The Merced River segments classified "Recreational" will be managed for Rural (R) and Roaded Natural (RN) recreation opportunities. The one segment classified "scenic" on the South Fork Merced will be managed for Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). The remaining two segments classified "wild" on the South Fork Merced will be managed for Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) in accordance with the forest's existing management direction. This alternative includes existing trail-heads, public information and interpretation areas, recreational facilities and dispersed and developed recreation areas. Unplanned parking areas will develop on the Incline and Hite Cove south entrance roads. Dispersed camping will remain unregulated on the north side of the Incline road (old railroad grade). Lack of adequate parking will continue to force day users and rafters to seek dispersed campsites along the Merced River. Potential fire problems will continue to exist because of this dispersed use. The existing allocation system will remain intact until Limits of Acceptable Change is implemented and use monitored to determine if changes are needed. Public motorized OHV access will continue on the south side route to Hite Cove. Public and commercial rafting will continue unchanged on the Merced River. The river banks will continue to see the effects of sanitation problems at the heavily used dispersed areas. No mitigation to the effects will be planned.

Alternative B (Limited Use) Recreation capacity may remain at current levels of use within the wild zones. Recreation use will

increase if the planned foot, horse, mountain bike trail is constructed on the old railroad grade along the Merced River. Recreation use along the "scenic" South Fork areas will decrease. The Merced River segments remain the same "recreational" classification and will be managed with the same ROS values as Alternative A. The segment classified "scenic" on the South Fork Merced will be managed as a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) within the W&SR corridor. No public motorized (OHV) access will be allowed on the south or north side to Hite Cove within the W&SR corridor. Limiting the Hite Cove area to hiking access only will reduce the potential resource damage effects from public use. There will be an increased need for regulatory and enforcement personnel as a result of closing the south side to OHV existing use. After over 20 years of public OHV use, this closure will have to be enforced. Limiting commercial ventures in the WSR corridor will maintain the current character of the area. The remaining "wild" segments on the South Fork Merced River will be managed as Primitive (P) and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) areas. A managed use system will enhance the recreation experience for the users within the river segments. This system will monitor the effects of the recreational use within all zones and recommend changes if necessary. Public and commercial rafting will continue on the Merced River with no change in effects to the resources. The weekend use will continue to be congested with visitors trying to camp along the Merced's dispersed areas. This will cause negative effects to the resources because of lack of developed parking, sanitation and access points to the recreation site put-in and take out areas on BLM and Forest Service administered lands.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) Recreation capacity will increase from the current levels of use along the Merced River's recreational zone if the planned foot, horse, mountain bike trail is constructed. Recreation use and management of segments within the scenic and wild zones will remain the same as listed in Alternative A. The ROS will remain the same as the current management direction for the south side of the river at Hite Cove, which is Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). Retaining the existing OHV and hiking access to Hite Cove will have the same effects as Alternative A. However with this alternative a planned monitoring approach, public use controls and sanitation facilities will be implemented to mitigate potential negative effects. The



north side of Hite Cove will be managed as a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized area within the WSR corridor. Only administrative use will be allowed on the north side. There will be no sanitation, litter or access effects to the existing north road because no public use will be allowed. There will be potential negative visual or archaeological effects to allowing minor imported recreational interpretive signs or sanitation structures to be added to the Hite Cove area. Mitigation guidelines include following the forest visual quality guidelines and forest and state archaeological standards. Camping will be regulated on the north side of the Incline road. The effects to the existing and potential fire, sanitation, and litter problems will be positive. However, a developed campground at this north side location may attract campers with more equipment and facilities needs than dispersed type campers. Public and commercial rafting will continue at present levels. There will be a positive sanitation and access effect as a result of rehabilitated parking and use areas at the rafting put-in and put-out areas.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) Recreation capacity will significantly increase from the current levels of use. This alternative includes the addition of a train system along Merced River route and a south/north OHV system on the South Fork Merced River at the Hite Cove area. These new uses will contribute to the increases in public use. The recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) standards will remain the same as indicated in Alternative A. Public motorized OHV access will be allowed both on the existing north and south side routes within the Hite Cove SPM areas. The recreation effects to the OHV users will be positive because the route would be a through route from the Jerserdale south side to the highway 140 north side. The negative effects within the WSR to the fisheries, archaeological, riparian and aesthetic resources may be significant and will have to be analyzed and mitigated before the route could be open to OHV traffic. A public train system may be operated and maintained on the Merced Canyon's Incline road. The positive effects for historic recreation experiences is subjective. The interpretive effects may be positive. The access effects may be positive. The negative effects of to private owners, fire, noise, archeological and to Yosemite National Park will have to be analyzed, monitored and mitigated as necessary. The potential negative effects to the planned Merced Trail where mountain bike, hiking and horse-

back riding will take place, will have to be mitigated if the same route is chosen for both recreation systems.

## **4.9 SOCIO-ECONOMICS**

### **4.9.1 South Fork Merced River**

**Economics:** Presently no major diversion or storage facilities exist along the river. A hydroelectric power development proposal within the Forest was withdrawn in 1985.

There are over 100 mining claims along the western portions of the river corridor on the Sierra National Forest. Some of these claims may be commercially feasible. Historically the area was known for mining activity especially around the Hite Cove mine. No commercial mining is currently being done on the South Fork Merced because it is not economically feasible and the California State Department of Fish and Game is not issuing dredging permits along this river.

Local merchants commercially benefit from commercial river recreational users. However, floating the upper portions of the South Fork Merced river are dangerous, except around the Wawona area, due to steep waterfalls, rocks and very limited access. Although the opportunity is present, it may not be developed because of the danger and classification of "wild."

**Socio:** At present most of the users for the western portion of the river are local and in-state recreationists. There is evidence the South Fork has received more than 7,000 people annually between February and June. Many people hike into the Hite Cove area. Many are hikers looking at the flowers and taking pictures. Many like to fish and appreciate the Wild Trout Stream designation. There are some day/night swimming and camping activities enjoyed by all.

#### 4.9.2 Merced River

There is a diversity of mining claims along the river on the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests and the Bureau of Land Management-administered lands. Although some are active, they are primarily part-time or recreational in nature.

There are presently nine commercial outfitters providing one-or two-day whitewater boating trips down various segments of the Merced River according to the River Information Digest guide prepared by the Interagency Whitewater Committee composed of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. Even if the season only extends to spring with levels of III/IV difficulty, this recreation activity seems to be a trend of the future for this river. Some of these commercial outfitters are reporting the Merced offers one of the finest stretches of whitewater in California. In a 1984 Planning and Conservation League analysis of California whitewater rafting, it was reported that an estimated 14,386 visitor days of rafting on the Merced in 1982 generated an estimated \$5,294,000 in the State's economy and 90 jobs. Rafting has increased since then. The local and State economies are benefiting by money spent by rafters.

A major portion of Mariposa County's income is derived from people travelling, resting, sleeping, shopping and recreating along Highway 140. The Merced river section from Briceburg to El Portal is accessible after a five hours drive from both Los Angeles and San Francisco with a population of over twenty million people. Many of these visitors are heading to Yosemite National Park.

Socio: Everyone who drives to Yosemite via Highway 140 gets a chance as they drive through BLM and Stanislaus and Sierra National Forest administered lands to stop, see, hear and understand the values of the Merced River.

There are people living along this river at Briceburg, El Portal and Yosemite Valley who focus on the river for recreation. The General Management Plan for Yosemite proposes large increases in population of the El Portal area. These folks are very conscious of the river environment. Some will be concerned with

the river's environment, some with the environment plus the economical benefits related to the river.

#### **4.9.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Socio-economics**

**Alternative A (Existing Use)** There will be no change from the positive economic effects to the local communities if this Alternative is implemented. The existing commercial rafting, fishing, OHV use, recreational mining, recreational camping and hiking activities within W&SR corridors will continue to provide visitors in need of services and supplies to the local economy. On a social level, many people will be secure knowing that the existing numbers of people around them will not significantly change, that only the existing few information and services will be provided and that understanding their activities will require only moderate skill.

**Alternative B (Limited Use)** The effects in this alternative will be the same as in Alternative A. There may be a minimal increase in economical benefits if the Merced River Trail on Incline road gets built and used by the public. Low density areas with limited improvements, information, security, access systems and person made opportunities will dominate this alternative.

**Alternative C (Moderate Use)** The effects in this alternative will be increased as compared to Alternative A and B. There will be more visitors coming to the area because of planned facility improvements and opportunities. This will encourage more visitors to come and spend more money within the local communities. Moderate density areas with moderate improvements, more types of information, more security, improved access systems and more person made opportunities will champion this alternative.

**Alternative D (Maximum Use)** The effects in this alternative will be increased in proportion to Alternative A, B and C. More visitors, higher densities, more improvements, more money to the local communities, more improved access systems more access opportunities similar to the train improvements planned on Incline road and opening the north south OHV route to cross

country use will equal more visitors and more spending of money at the local communities.

## 4.10 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

See 4.11 Vegetation and 4.14 Wildlife to review what the effects of implementing alternatives will be.

## 4.11 VEGETATION

### 4.11.1 South Fork Merced River

Downstream, to about 5,000 feet in elevation, the vegetation consists largely of lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine and red fir. Below the middle reaches and the lower reaches, the river is bordered by white fir, incense-cedar, manzanita, ceanothus and mountain mahogany, along with digger pine.

Reference to lists of rare, threatened, and endangered plants maintained by the State of California, California Native Plant Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Yosemite National Park reveals 18 species of such plants in the canyon. Among these are the Allium yosemitense, Eriophyllum congdonii, and Lewisia congdonii, which are concentrated in the Devil's Gulch area. Clarkia lingulata, the rarest plant known in the Sierra National Forest, also grows along the South Fork.

Spectacular wildflower displays also occur for about 7 miles between Bishop Creek and Devil's Gulch. This rich botanical diversity and abundance of wildflowers in the South Fork canyon has been confirmed in a book, Wildflowers of the Hite's Cove Trail (1985). These botanical values are being heavily utilized for education purposes.

Riparian vegetation is generally non-existent or limited to narrow, sparse strips. This is backed by foothill chaparral and annual

grasses on about 75% of the corridor distance. Ponderosa pine and mixed conifer stands can be found within 25% of the proposed corridor boundary.

#### 4.11.2 Merced River

The Merced River Canyon exhibits a wide variety of flora and fauna. Below El Portal, on Sierra National Forest administered lands, the vegetation is mostly live oak-digger pine woodland. There is a very narrow strip of riparian vegetation with a background of chaparral and annual grasses. The wild canyon below Briceburg adjacent to the BLM lands contains chaparral and riparian habitat. The riparian community includes alder and willow (Salix sp.). Along the edges of the river, within the Lower Sonoran Life Zone, the vegetation is dominated by digger pine (Pinus sabiniana), interior live oak (Quercus wislizenii), California buckeye (Aesculus californica), redbud (Cercis occidentalis) and poison oak (Rhus diversiloba).

Between El Portal and Briceburg there are five Region 5 sensitive plants growing adjacent to the river. These are Allium yosemitense East., Carex tompkinsii J.T. Howell, Clarkia lingulata Lewis and Lewis., Eriophyllum congdonii Bdg. and Lewisia congdonii (Rydb.) J.T. Howell. Under current regional direction, plants listed as "sensitive" are managed to avoid future listing as threatened and endangered.

No Sierra National Forest sensitive plants are currently federally listed as Threatened or Endangered, through Clarkia lingulata is listed by the State of California as Endangered, and the other four species listed above are State listed as Rare. Except for C. biloba australis, Clarkia lingulata is a Category 1 candidate for federal listing as threatened or endangered, which means there is enough information on file with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to warrant federal listing. It is by far the rarest plant on the Sierra National Forest, occurring at only two sites.

A total of 347 plant species have been recorded for the river corridor. Of these, 209 species are located in digger pine-oak communities and 138 species located in chaparral communities.

Among the chaparral types the predominant species include buckbrush (Ceanothus cuneatus), chamise (Adenostoma fasciculatum), coffee berry (Rhamnus californicus), deer brush (Ceanothus integerrimus), manzanita (Arctostaphylos mariposa) and mountain mahogany (Cercoacarpus betuloides).

#### **4.11.3 Effects of implementing alternatives on Vegetation**

Alternative A (Existing Use) There may be adverse effects to the existing vegetation because of a lack of public use controls. These negative effects will be adjacent to the existing road, route and trail systems. Prescribed burning for wildlife habitat will alter selected areas of chaparral. This effect will be to mainly change the age class and structure of chaparral which will provide for greater species diversity. Impacts to riparian vegetation will be localized around the more popular use areas of the Merced and South Fork Merced rivers. The effects will be negligible in terms of the total riparian environment.

Alternative B (Limited Use) There will be no adverse effects to the vegetation resources. Adequate public use controls within this alternative will mitigate any potential minimal adverse effects. The other effects are similar to Alternative A.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) There may be minimal or no adverse effects to the vegetation resources. There will be adequate management public use controls within this alternative. The other effects will be similar to alternative A.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) There will be an adverse effects to the vegetation resources. Prescribed burning for wildlife habitat improvements or potential fire danger for the proposed train system will alter selected areas of chaparral. This effect will be to change the age class and structure of chaparral. The effects may be moderate in terms of the total W&SR riparian environment.

## 4.12 VISUAL RESOURCES

### 4.12.1 South Fork Merced River

The lower canyon consists of a 2,000 to 3,000 foot deep, highly primitive, "V" shaped gorge with numerous pools. Within the Sierra National Forest the river passes through the Sierra Nevada Landscape Character type with a landscape character rated as "Common" as compared to the rest of the California landscapes. This criterion was based on three variables: landform, vegetation and water forms. However, the river corridor in this section is considered to be distinctive by some because of highly varied and defined patterns along the canyons. There is little evidence of anyone's activities existing in the canyon, as viewed from the river. There are, however, historic mining remnants visible especially around Hite Cove, Sims Cove, Peachtree Bar and Bishop Creek. In fact, the trail network itself is a visual and historic resource because of these remnants. There are also outstanding seasonal wildflower displays in this lower 7 miles of the river. Selected portions of the river canyon are visible from the upper portions of the Wawona Road.

### 4.12.2 Merced River

Below El Portal and within the Sierra National Forest the river flows through the Sierra Foothill and Great Valley Landscape Character types which have some very rugged mountain and foothill country next to the corridor. There are many rapids along this section. The river runs adjacent to lands within the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. This area is rated as having a variety class B which is based on landform, vegetation and water forms. This means that the canyon's landscape is common as compared to many other California landscapes.

The BLM has also inventoried and given visual quality management classes to their sections of the river. The Merced Canyon has been given a VRM (Visual Resource Management) Class II. These areas are generally viewed as foreground or middleground from highways and access roads.



The river in both the Forest Service and BLM lands is bordered by a main highway on one side and an abandoned railroad grade on the north side. This highway is directly adjacent to the whitewater river for about 28 miles all the way to Briceburg and is considered to be a nice view to many people. The highway provides excellent vantage points to view rafters. This is one of the few places in California where spectators have easy and accessible view points to watch river recreation activities.

There are many utility lines, resorts, campgrounds, dwellings, mines, mill sites, concrete embankments, private homes and bridges visually evident in varying densities along this river segment. To some people these items may somewhat detract from scenic values. However, many of the homes and bridges are quite old and may contribute to the historic scenic values of the area.

#### **4.12.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on the visual, scenic resources**

Environmental consequences to the visual scenic resource of the Merced and South Fork Merced river canyons vary by alternative in levels of change from the existing baseline to the maximum use in Alternative D. Alternative A and B will have minimal effects to the scenic resources because there are few developments planned and there will be the least amount of visitors.

Alternative A (Existing Use) Visual quality may be maintained at its current level. There will be limited rehabilitation of developed recreation sites therefore limited opportunities to upgrade existing recreation sites or structures. The effects are that a portion of the existing improvements will not meet the visual quality objectives of the forest. There will be prescribed burning projects that will cause short term changes in the characteristic landscape. Mitigation measures, like painting structures to the current motif color standards, to meet the visual quality objectives may be completed at a project level.

Alternative B (Limited Use) Visual quality will be maintained at its current or higher level. There will be minimal rehabilitation of developed recreation sites and facilities and therefore an

opportunity to upgrade the facilities to within acceptable scenic resources levels. The effects are that the existing and potential planned improvements will meet the visual quality objectives (VQO) of the forest. This may lead to an overall improvement in the visual quality within the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Mitigation and monitoring measures to protect and enhance the existing scenic resources will be incorporated within all management activities.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) Effects of this alternative are similar to Alternative B. In addition, primitive camping improvements along the Merced canyon's Incline Road and a higher level of trail maintenance may alleviate existing litter and debris problems within the river corridors. All new and rehabilitated facilities would be upgraded to meet retention or partial retention visual quality objectives. Management activities would be designed to be visually not evident, or subordinate, to the characteristic landscape. The scenic characteristics of the Hite Cove area would similar to the existing landscape. There will be a few imported structures (e.g. signs, trails, toilet structures, information kiosks, at the Hite Cove area that would have to meet the VQO objectives.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) This alternative will have the greatest impact on the visual resource due to the amount of visitors and improvement proposed. The effects will be a combination of those from Alternatives B and C. This alternative would alter the existing landscape to what it looked like in 1930 if the train proposal on the Incline road is implemented. The scenic effects of the Hite Cove area valley will change because there will be cross country OHV use on the north and south access route and imported structures similar to what it was like in 1900 at the Hite Cove site.

## **4.13 WATER QUALITY AND WATER RESOURCES**

### **4.13.1 South Fork Merced River**

Flow Data: South Fork Merced River near the river mouth at Savage's Trading Post (USGS Gauge # 11-26-80 from 1934-1959) Average Annual Flow: 356 cfs (25 year period).

Maximum recorded flow: 46,500 cfs (12/23/55).  
Minimum recorded flow: 2.2 cfs (8/26-27/61).  
Drainage area: 241 square miles.

Seasonal Range:

Average Mean Flow (cfs)

Oct. 17, Nov. 57, Dec. 230, Jan. 476, Feb. 326, Mar. 385, Apr. 788, May 1274, Jun. 922, Jul. 213, Aug. 38, Sep. 19

The information indicates that flow is most influenced by heavy, late spring, early summer snow melt, typical of unregulated Sierra streams.

Flow Data: South Fork Merced River at Wawona ( located about 0.5 mile downstream from Big Creek)

Average annual flow: 319 cfs (10 years between 1911-1921).

Maximum recorded flow: 3770 cfs, Jan. 26, Feb. 19,20,1914.

Minimum recorded flow: 4.2 cfs. Aug. 16, 1921.

Drainage area: 131 sq. miles.

Flow Data: South Fork Merced River at Wawona ( 11-26-73 located about 0.24 mile upstream from Big Creek)

Average annual flow: 174 cfs (10 years, 1958-1968).

Maximum recorded flow: estimated 15,000 cfs, Dec. 23, 1955.

Minimum recorded flow: 0.6 cfs, Sept. 5, 1960.

Drainage area: 100 sq. miles.

Water quality of the South Fork Merced is good. The water is well-oxygenated, cold, clear and low in nutrients, phosphorus, turbidity and other pollutants. It is suitable for full body contact such as swimming. At medium and low water flows the Merced is crystal clear and dark green in the deepest pools.

#### **4.13.2 Merced River**

There are two sets of flow information for the Merced River. The valley flow data does not give a good indication of the river's flow downstream between El Portal and Lake McClure. Due to a lack of gauges, downstream flow information is limited to only one water year (1969) which was slightly wetter than normal. Flow below Yosemite Valley is much higher than the valley flow

throughout the year. Peak flows in both cases are during the late-spring, early summer snow melt. However, the downstream gauge shows a minor peak in January from rainfall. The downstream gauge was located on the left bank 150 feet upstream from Feliciana Creek and 2.8 miles northeast of Briceburg.

Flow Data: Merced River at Bagby 11-2685, located 800 ft. upstream from highway bridge at Bagby.

Average annual flow: 1158 cfs (44 years).

Maximum recorded flow: 92,500 cfs (12/23/55).

Minimum recorded flow: 13 cfs (10/05/1925).

Drainage area: 911 sq. miles.

Flow Data: Merced River Near Briceburg (Gauge #11-268200)

Average Annual Flow: 1,222 cfs (9 years, Sept 65-Sept 74).

Maximum recorded flow: 21,500 cfs ((12/6/66).

Minimum recorded flow: 27 cfs (9-30-68)

Drainage area: 691 square miles

Seasonal Range:

Average Mean Flow (cfs)

Oct. 48, Nov. 386, Dec. 395, Jan. 2833, Feb. 1699, Mar. 1683, Apr. 3587, May 8860, Jun. 6571, Jul. 2289, Aug. 416, Sep. 139

Water quality is suitable for full body contact such as swimming and rafting except at very low water levels. Below the sewage treatment plant (administered by Yosemite National Park) at El Portal, there is the chance of an accidental discharge of sewage or un-chlorinated treated effluent. Any effect would last only for a few miles downstream.

#### **4.13.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Water Quality and Water Resources**

Environmental consequences to the water quality of the Merced and the South Fork Merced Rivers will not vary significantly by alternative. Mitigation measures to protect the water quality will be implemented if necessary. None of the alternatives being considered are expected to reduce water quality levels below state standards. In order to minimize the extent of potential impacts to within acceptable limits, appropriate Best Manage-

ment Practices (BMP's) will be implemented within the river corridors. The specific BMP's are identified in the Implementation Plan. All necessary facilities and services will be located outside the riparian zone. Motorized vehicles within river corridor, except at designated put-in and take-outs sites for water craft will be prohibited. The BMP guidelines that were developed with the Forest Service and the California State Water Quality Control Board will be acknowledged. Documented non-point pollution control measures applicable to National Forest Systems Lands will be also be acknowledged. These BMP measures were certified by the State and approved by EPA as the most effective means the Forest Service could implement to control non-point source pollution. These "Best Management Practices" are designed to accommodate site specific conditions. Implementation of BMP's will be monitored and controlled by Forest Service inspectors and project leaders and the effectiveness of their implementation will be monitored by post reviews as indicated in this project's Implementation Plan.

Alternative A (Existing Use) Water quality will be maintained at its current level. The potential rehabilitation of whitewater put-in and put-out areas may slightly improve water quality through long term stabilization of these developed areas. Monitoring of use levels will determine the need for changes in the present sanitation management along the river corridor for whitewater and other recreation users. Scheduled prescribed burning projects will reduce the chance of water quality degradation from wildfire. Effects of mining will be mitigated by review of operating plans and taking action where necessary to meet the water quality standards. Any tributary developments will be assessed for effects on the water quality of the Wild and Scenic River.

Alternative B (Limited Use) Effects are similar to Alternative A. Water quality is not expected to decline from levels in Alternative A and may improve due to limits on river use and a large percentage of "wild" classifications on the South Fork Merced River. The planned Incline Road Merced River Trail, if implemented, may cause short term site disturbances but will improve long term stabilization of this existing trail and road system next to the Merced River.

Alternative C (Moderate Use) Effects are similar to Alternative A and B. Development will increase use but facilities will be designed to mitigate impacts to the water quality. The potential historic mining activity planned at the South Fork Merced River Hite Cove area will be mitigated if implemented to acceptable water quality standards.

Alternative D (Maximum Use) This alternative will have the greatest impact on the water quality due to the amount of development proposed. The effects will be a combination of Alternatives A, B, and C. Additional mitigation measures will be required to prevent impacts from increased access and use. The proposed train on the Incline Road could have an effect on the water quality.

## **4.14 WILDLIFE**

### **4.14.1 South Fork Merced River**

The stream corridor is a highly significant wildlife area. Mule deer are numerous along the entire river. The area from Wawona to Devil Gulch is the primary wintering range for the Yosemite Deer Herd and supports one of the densest populations of mountain lions in the Yosemite area. Mountain lions (cougars), which prey on mule deer, are frequently found along the stream. The black bear is common along the South Fork Merced.

The river canyon in the Sierra National Forests is considered to be a potential prime habitat for the limestone salamander, listed as threatened by the State of California. Red-tailed hawk and the Golden Eagle have also been seen in this section of the river. Many dippers have permanent nests on the river's edge. The area offers potential nesting for the endangered peregrine falcon.

### **4.14.2 Merced River**

Below El Portal within the Sierra National Forest riparian-dependent wildlife includes the limestone salamander, which is a State listed "threatened" species. Other important wildlife include mule deer, valley quail, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, cottontail, brush rabbit, jack rabbit, band-tail pigeon, beaver and muskrat.

Mountain lions are found both in the National Park and National Forest lands in the river canyon. California mule deer, black bear and coyote are also found in this area. Bald Eagles have been reported to winter above Lake McClure on BLM-administered lands. The Bald Eagle is listed on both the Federal and State endangered species lists. There is one historic nesting record for Bald Eagles on the Merced from 1925. It is possible that nesting Bald Eagles could re-occupy the Merced because of recovery efforts presently underway in California for this species. The Great Gray and Spotted Owls are probable species that occur during the winter season along the lower Merced areas. The Great Gray Owl is a State-listed endangered species. There are also many birds like the dipper and heron which depend on this stream for their home.

There is suitable habitat for approximately 177 species (riparian) along the lower elevations below the South Fork confluence. These riparian values are important to preserve because the State Department of Fish and Game reports that close to 90% of the Central Valley's historic low elevation riparian habitat has been lost to various human-type activities. These existing habitat values along the lower portions of the Merced can therefore be rated quite high because of their rarity.

#### **4.14.3 Effect of implementing alternatives on Wildlife**

The environmental consequences to the Merced and the South Fork Merced River resources include effects on Endangered and Threatened species and riparian habitat.

Alternative A (Existing Use) The existing Endangered and Threatened species habitat and deer winter habitat within the designated corridor are in good condition. The Wildlife resource

will remain at current levels. Riparian habitat will remain in good condition. Impacts to riparian vegetation will continue to occur at whitewater put-in and take-out sites on the Merced River. Person harassment type impacts to wintering deer and riparian related wildlife will occur around the Hite Cove area on the South Fork Merced River and along the Merced River corridor. No emphasis on wildlife management will occur.

**Alternative B (Limited Use)** This alternative will provide the highest level of protection to Endangered and Threatened species habitat and to the deer winter habitat. Riparian impacts will be minimized by recreation use controls. Existing land disturbing impacts will be mitigated. Mitigation will be designed to protect wildlife, fisheries, and cultural resources. Protection of the riparian areas may limit activities in the recreational and scenic zones. Closing the south side road to Hite Cove within the W&SR corridor will help result in limiting public harassment to wintering deer.

**Alternative C (Moderate Use)** This alternative will provide a high level of protection to Endangered and Threatened species habitat and to the deer winter habitat. Riparian impacts will be minimized and existing land disturbing impacts will be mitigated similar to Alternative B. All use zones will remain largely unmodified. The wild and scenic zones will remain essentially pristine on the South Fork Merced Corridor. Most activity will occur along the Recreational Merced River zone. Wildlife processes will be effected by human interaction. Retaining the public OHV access on the South Fork Merced south side access to the Hite Cove Area may increase impacts on wintering deer.

**Alternative D (Maximum Use)** This alternative will have the greatest impacts on wildlife habitat. Increased train or hiking/mountain bike/equestrian use along the Merced River corridor and a both north and south access to the Hite Cove area on the South Fork Merced River will increase people and vehicle numbers on the routes. The potential for wildlife harassment and use-caused reduction in habitat quality is greatest under this alternative. The potential train operation on the Incline road that follows the Merced River and the potential for higher rafting use will cause more disturbance of riparian wildlife than any Alternative. It will pose a higher potential hazard to foraging or nesting



of the red-tailed hawk, the Golden Eagle and the limestone salamander than any of the other alternatives.

## **4.15 Disclosure of Environmental Impacts**

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 mandated that every EIS fully disclose the key impacts or consequences of proposed major Federal actions. In this case, the proposed Federal action involves the decision concerning the management of two Congressionally designated Wild and Scenic rivers.

### **4.15.1 Probable adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided**

Unavoidable adverse physical effects of WSR management will be limited to trail erosion and impacts to the visual quality from trails. This erosion can be expected to be most severe under Alternative A (No action/existing use) where new trails will be user-created and not engineered to prevent erosion and visual impacts. It will be least severe under Alternative B and C which proposes minimal trail construction or reconstruction with monitoring controls. Unavoidable trail erosion and visual impacts will be severe under D because of the higher levels of use and proposed development along the trails.

### **4.15.2 Irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources**

Irreversible commitment of resources refers to non-renewable resources, such as mineral or cultural resources, or to those factors which are renewable only over long time spans, such as soil productivity. This concept also includes the loss of future options. Irretrievable commitment applies to loss of use of renewable natural resources.

Alternative A, and B would not cause any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources aside from the existing commitments to mining or potential fire dangers along the Merced River.

Alternatives C may cause irreversible commitments of 1 acre size areas in the course of construction of two pedestrian bridges across the South Fork of the Merced River. Both sites are characterized by rock outcrops and steep canyon walls. The exact amount of irreversible commitment cannot be determined until a site design and construction in the affected locations is completed.

Alternative D would cause a possible irreversible commitment of the cultural and geologic resource in the course of construction of the proposed train along the Merced Canyon unless the existing old railroad grade could be used. Irreversible cultural and water resources would be committed, if a ford or equal river crossing for the south to north OHV route along the South Fork River had to be made.

#### **4.15.3 Relationship between short-term uses and long-term productivity**

The National Environment Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires consideration of short-term uses and long-term productivity in environmental analysis, but it does not define the terms. The Relationship between the two is complex. Forest management of public lands is a long-term venture, but one that must serve the year-to-year needs of society. Hence short-term uses might be considered as annual activities. While short-term uses can adversely affect long-term productivity (e.g. if soil productivity and hydrologic characteristics are permanently impaired by short-term uses), they can also enhance long-term productivity as in the case of restoration of an impacted ecosystem.

As specifically applied to the WSR, long term productivity would relate to the self-sustaining capacity of the ecosystem and that ecosystem's ability to provide a quality setting (natural, beautiful, and healthy) for visitors' recreation activities year and after year generation after generation. Short-term uses would be the specific activities engaged in by visitors on an annual basis. Within this framework, each of the four alternatives would generate a different relationship between the short and long term uses. Alternative A (existing use/no action) would sacrifice long-

term considerations for the immediate benefit of a low level of recreation management activities. Alternative B (minimal use) would present the opposite extreme, sacrificing recreation use (both amount and type of use) for the sake of maintaining the physical resource in perpetuity. Alternative D (maximum use) would sacrifice long-term consideration for the immediate increase in recreation activities and their related impacts. Alternative C (moderate use) would present both a moderation of two extremes and attempt to manage the ecosystem pretty much as it existed at the time the Merced and South Fork WSR Act was signed.

#### **4.15.4 Cumulative effects**

Impacts to the physical resources within the WSR primarily result from recreational use of the area, and to a more minor extent to grazing, fuels management, and mining activities. Without these interventions, the ecosystem would maintain a natural equilibrium. Several facets of the physical environment--soils, water quality, vegetation, wildlife and cultural resources--are currently showing the effect of recreational intervention with natural forces or threaten to do so in the immediate future. Prevention of further deterioration and or restoration of a more pristine quality will require changes in recreation practices. Changes in recreation practices will impact the freedom and spontaneity of the forest visitor, with possible undesirable economic consequences to certain business sectors of the neighboring communities.

Recreation management requires a delicate balance between protecting and restoring the physical resource and maintaining recreation opportunities for the visitor. There is more than one way to accomplish this. The more visitors that are allowed to use the WSR either more restrictions must be placed on their activities or greater management intervention (e.g. closures, ranger patrols) must occur to mitigate the impacts. When fewer visitor are allowed in the area, fewer restrictions and or less management intervention are required to achieve the same level of resource protection however, the greater the restrictions and or management intervention, the more the ecosystem will not be just protected but actively enhanced.

Each of the action alternatives presents a different mix of the three factors affecting physical resource quality. The three factors are use level, activity restriction, and management intervention. In each case, these three factors are cumulative; change any one component of any of these factors and the resultant level of resource protection will change.

Cumulative effects of the limitations, restrictions, and management intervention under each of the action alternatives will be to protect the physical environment. Under the Alternative A (existing use/no action), the cumulative effect of no use regulation, no activity restriction, and minimal management intervention will be continued deterioration of the physical resource. Under Alternative B (minimal use), the physical resource will receive the greatest level of protection; this will be achieved with severe limitations in use, considerable restriction of activities, and minimal management intervention. Under Alternative D (maximum use), the physical resource will receive a minimum level of protection, achieved by some restriction of use levels, moderate restriction of activities, and a great deal of management intervention. Under Alternative C (moderate use), the physical resource will receive a moderate level of protection/enhancement, achievable through varied use levels within each river zone, considerable restriction of activities, and a moderate level of management intervention.

Cumulative effects of the action alternatives on the physical environment will be acceptable to the environment. Cumulative effects on the WSR visitor will be perceived differently by different users. Many will appreciate the enhanced physical quality and solitude especially within the scenic and wild zones and will be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to maintain these qualities however many will not.

#### **4.15.5 Specifically required disclosures**

##### **1. Effects of alternatives on Threatened and Endangered Species**

None of the alternatives will have adverse effects on any Federally or State listed threatened or endangered species within

the Wild and Scenic Rivers. Should the impact to any such species at any time be verified, appropriate measures will be taken to protect populations and habitat.

#### 2. Effects of Alternatives on Cultural Resources

None of the alternatives will adversely affect cultural resources. Management actions as described in the WSR Implementation Plan will protect all known historic and Native American sacred sites. However, Alternative D will require more detailed analysis of specific sites if the train on the Merced River recreation zone and south/north OHV access route within the South Fork Merced River scenic zone is implemented.

#### 3. Energy Requirements of Alternatives

There are minor direct and indirect effects upon the energy requirements necessary to carry out the proposed alternatives. There are no unusual energy requirements for any of the alternatives.

#### 4. Effects of Alternatives on Minority Groups, Women, and Civil Rights

There are no differences among alternatives in effects on women, minority groups, or the civil rights of any United States citizen.

#### 5. Effects of Alternatives on Prime Farm Land, Range Land, and Forest Land

All alternatives are in keeping with the intent of Secretary of Agriculture Memorandum 1827 for prime land. The WSR area does not contain any prime farm land or range. "Prime" forest land does not apply to lands within the National Forest System.

#### 6. Effects of alternatives on Wetlands and Floodplain

No significant adverse effects within areas of wetlands and floodplain are anticipated. This is largely due to the small size of upslope wetlands, i.e. tiny bogs, small ponds, etc. and limited floodplain along the streams and rivers.

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## 5.0 DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT

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Copies of this Environmental Impact Statement, and Implementation Plan are available at the following addresses:

Mariposa Ranger District  
41969 Hwy 41  
Oakhurst, CA 93644  
(209) 683-4665

Mariposa Station  
5158 Highway 140  
Mariposa, CA 95338  
(209) 966-3638

Groveland Ranger District  
Star Route Box 75G  
Groveland, CA 95321  
(209) 962-7825

Pacific Southwest Region  
630 Sansome Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111

Sierra National Forest (EIS/Plan coordination)  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, CA 93612  
(209) 487-5155

Stanislaus National Forest  
19777 Greenley Road  
Sonora, CA 95370  
(209) 532-3671

Bureau of Land Management  
Folsom Resource Area  
63 Natoma Street  
Folsom, Ca 95630  
(916) 985-4474

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## **6.0 CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS**

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This section describes the individuals and agencies who participated in the analysis or were consulted for comments and concerns. Comments were accepted and recorded from inter-agency meetings, staff review comments, public meetings, and public letters .

### **6.1 INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM**

The following USDA Forest Service and USDI Bureau of Land Management staff have been involved with the coordination, research, writing, editing, graphics and the publication of this Environmental Impact Statement and Implementation Plan.

Wallace McCray, Forest Landscape Architect, SNF  
Nick Nixon, Lands Officer, MRD, SNF  
Brian Curtis, Resource Officer, MRD, SNF  
Jeff Horn, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Folsom Area, BLM  
John Maschi, Forest Landscape Architect, STNF

### **6.2 REVIEW TEAM**

The following USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management and USDI National Park staff have been involved with reviewing, editing and providing suggestive comments for this Environmental Impact Statement and Implementation Plan:



Jim Shiro, Recreation Management, Forester, RO  
Paula McMasters, Special Areas, Forester, RO  
Janice Gauthier, Special Areas, Forester, RO  
Jim Shevock, Planning Biologist, RO  
Gary Brogan, Regional Landscape Architect, RO  
Bob Lehman, Wildlife Biologist, BLM  
Tim Carrol, Geologist, BLM  
Scott Murrellwright, Geologist, BLM  
Jim Eicher, Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM  
Terry Elliott, Environmental Coordinator, SNF  
Donna Heagy, Fisheries Biologist, SNF  
John Lorenzana, Wildlife Biologist/Range, SNF  
Joanna Clines, Botanist, SNF  
Marc Anderson, Assistant Forest Engineer, SNF  
Gary Thompson, District Timber Management Officer, SNF  
Fred Robberson, District Transportation Planner  
Tom Lowe, Transportation Planner, SNF  
Maria Nelson, District Administrative Officer, SNF  
Mary Keith, District Archeologist, SNF  
Ken Sonksen, Landscape Architect, SNF  
Gary Schmitt, Zone Soil Scientist, SNF  
Gordon Yamanaka, Wildlife Biologist, SNF  
Sarah Johnston, Forest Archeologist, SNF  
Jerry Degraff, Forest Geologist, SNF  
Susan Jordan, Land Surveyor, SNF  
Bob Bernal, Landscape Architect Aid, SNF  
David Harris, Assistant Area Manager, Folsom BLM,  
John Schmechel, Environmental Coordinator, STNF  
Tom Atkin, Law Enforcement, STNF  
Bob Hull, Forest Lands Officer, SNF  
Lyle Wilkinson, Lands Assistant, SNF  
Dave Kohut, Forest Fire Management Officer, SNF  
Louise Larson, Fire Management Specialist, SNF  
Steve Underwood, Management Assistant, Yosemite N.P.  
Jan van Wagtenonk, Research Scientist, Yosemite N.P.  
Harriet Adwood, Editor, SNF  
Saul Urbina, Volunteer Editor, SNF

## 6.3 MANAGEMENT TEAM

The following Forest Service and BLM staff have been involved with providing the recommended approval decisions relating to this Environment Impact Statement and Implementation Plan:

Tommy Baxter, Forest Recreation Officer, SNF  
Art Smith, Forest Recreation Officer, STNF  
Thomas C. Efirid, District Ranger, MRD, SNF  
Christopher Perlee, District Ranger, GRD, STNF  
Deane K. Swickard, Area Manager, Folsom Res. Area, BLM  
Janet L. Wold, Forest Supervisor, STNF  
James L. Boynton, Forest Supervisor, SNF

## 6.4 THE PUBLIC

The public involvement plan for this EIS and Plan included the following events. The people and organizations who were involved in this project's planning process through public meetings or written comments are also listed.

1. March 1, 1988; a Public Information and involvement plan was completed.
2. September 5, 1989; a Press Release announcing a public meeting was sent to all local papers.
3. September 5, 1989; flyers announcing a public meeting were sent to 1,450 people and agencies. This list came from the most updated mailing list of the Stanislaus N.F., the Sierra N.F. and the BLM.
4. September 19, 1989; public meeting held in Mariposa, California with 75 people attending. Concept Alternatives were presented. No preferred alternative was recommended. Public comments were recorded.
5. November 10, 1989; flyers sent to approximately 350 people who expressed a desire to participate in the planning process.
6. December 10, 1989; flyers sent to another 200 people who expressed a desire to participate in the planning process.
7. Jan-Sept 1989 information meetings held as requested with individuals, Miner groups, Sierra Club groups, Mariposa Board representatives, and owners of property within the WSR.

8. July 31, 1990; Federal Register published announcement of draft EIS/Plan. This is a national announcement seen by all groups throughout the United States.

9. August 01, 1990; flyers sent to approximately 750 people, who by returned mailings or attendance at the public meeting indicated they wished to be involved in the planning process.

10. August 28, 1990; letter with copies of the draft EIS/Plan sent to all people who requested a copy. A preferred alternative was recommended. Approximately 400 public comments that were previously recorded from meetings and letters were published along with agency answers in the draft EIS.

11. September 21, 1990; Federal Register published a due date of November 5, 1990. The due date was amended in a September 28 Federal Register announcement and amended to November 30, 1990 when all public comments concerning the Draft EIS/Plan must be received.

12. October 16, 1990; flyer #5 sent to approximately 750 people on current mailing list announcing that the next public meeting will be held November 5 1990 at the VFW Mariposa Hall.

13. October 24, 1990; A Press release announcement was sent to the Fresno Bee and other local Mariposa papers indicating an information meeting will be held November 5 1990.

14. February 1991; Flyer #6 sent to 1,017 people who made comments to the draft EIS/Plan. The flyer indicated that the final EIS/Plan is scheduled to be published by April 1991 and to expect a Record of Decision (ROD) document.

Approximately 400 public concerns were recorded as a result of the first 1989 public meetings and letters. The Forest Service and BLM answer resolutions were also recorded. These concerns and agency resolutions were published in the draft EIS/Plan. These concerns are documented in Appendix B this document and labeled "PUBLIC COMMENTS TO CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES."

Approximately 180 public concerns with 1,017 letters were recorded as a result of the Draft EIS/Plan being published and mailed to all requesting copies. The recorded public concerns to the draft EIS/Plan with agency resolutions answers are documented in Appendix G and labeled "DRAFT EIS/PLAN WRITTEN COMMENTS."

August 22 1991

Abbot, Harry	ACHP, Off.Arch.And Env.
Adams, Claude	Adams, Jon
Adams, Hon. Brock	Adan, Richard
Agree, Lisa & Marty	Ahrens, Sheri
Aichele, Jon R	Aldred, Fred
Alire, Wilifred L.	Allan, Steve
Allen, Carl G.	Allen, Bradley R.
Allison, C. W.	Altmann, Pete
Amos, Donald L.	Amos, Robyn
Anderson, Bruce	Armstrong, George
Arndt, Kent R.	Arnot, Mel
Aveggio, John	Avery, Graig
Bader, Carrie	Bader, Mark
Baggett, Art	Bailey, Larry
Bailey, Mike	Baird, Patrick W.
Baker, Dan	Baker, Jack
Balcoms, Mark	Balinski, Walt
Baltic, Tony J.	Barakatt, T
Barbero, Tom	Barbieri, Rob
Barkhoff, Dale A.	Barmore, Dr.Robert A.

Barnes D.D.S., Tim G.

Barnett, Carl

Barry, Tom

Barsanti, David

Bartholomew, Phil

Basey, Harold

Bateson, Kevin

Batsell, Randy

Baumann, David

Baxter, Pris

Bay Earth, San Francisco

Bean, Mac & Cheryl

Beckstrom, Patti A.

Bedayan, Bruce

Begley, Rich

Behm, Barry J.

Behr, Doug

Beite, Jack

Bellach, Jim

Bellicitti, Harry Jr.

Belvoir, Neil

Belvoir, Derek W.

Bennett, Randy

Bennett, Craig A.

Bennett, Mike

Berg, Bob

Bernbaum, Bruce

Berry, Robert

Bertram, Dave

Bessey, William

Bevers, Ron & Brenda

Bevoir, Neil

Biel, Mark D.

Bishop, Mike

Bishop, Phillip

Bjork, Gary

Blinkerberg, James C.

BLM

BLM

Blum, Robert

Bodenhofer, Bruce

Boeddiker, Ed

Boghosian, Jeff

Bollier, Peter A.

Bondshu, William H.

Bostick, Bruce H.

Botelho, Mark

Bower, Ben & Deanna

Bowers, Bob

Bowles, Lynn

Bowman, Jim

Boyd, Pear & William

Boyer, Doug

Boykin, Betty

Brackett, Jerry

Brattin, Harry

Brauer, George

Bray, Mary Jane

Brennan, Mathew

Brent, Carolyn

Bristol, Martin

Broadbent, William H.

Brossard, Skip

Brouillette, Barron & Letty

Brown, Olsen

Brown, Bart

Brown, Mel

Brown, P.

Brown, Rodney/Lynn

Brown, Mark L.

Brown, Pat

Brown, Peter P.

Brown, Chuck

Brown Jr., Ted

Bruce, Dail & Kerry

Bryan, Hon. Richard

Bryant, David

Buck Meadows, Lodge

Buckley, Charles E.

Buell, Dayla Reagan

Buffa, Ralph

Bunyan, Tim

Buzas, Kyndl

C.O.R., V.E.T.

C.S.A., Engineering

Calif, Riders Assoc.

California, 4 Wheel Drive

California, Save our Stream

California, Trout, Inc.

California, University of

California, Univ of

Cameron, Steve

Cardinet, George

Cardwell, M. Wayne

Carey, Brian

Carlile, Dean

Carlson, Swede

Carpenter, Scott

Carraher, Harlen

Carter, Chris

Caselli, Kevin

Caselli, Patrick B.

Casey, Brian

Cash, Ron

Casper, Rich

Cassidy, Pete J.

Cassidy, Tom

Cauthier, David

Caveney, Brian

Cavin, Benton C.

Celoni, Rod

Genningham, Barry

Cepona, Ray

Cercle, Richard, M.D.

Certini, Rose M.

Chan, Ken

Chase, John

Chedester, Jeff

Chernoff, Sam

Chestnut, Doug & Sharon

Chisum, Donna	Christensen, Steve
Clark, Dan	Clark, Tommy D.
Clark, Tim	Clark, George B.
Clark, Michael T.	Clark, Tom
Cleveland, Joe	Clevenger, George & Brian
Clovis, Branch Library	Coalwell, Jim
Coates, Will	Coats, Raymond
Cobb, Daniel W.	Colliver, Grant & Mary
Condit, Hon.Gary A.	Conley, Geoff
Connors, Scott	Connors, Paul J.
Cook, Eugene Jr.	Cook, Adena
Cooper, Colin	Cooper, Jim
Corcoran, Steve	Corley, Rodger
Correia, R.	Cosmo, Ken
Cottini, Rick D.	Coughran, Kory E.
Counts, Jerry	Cranston, Hon. Alan
Crerar, Douglas	Cress, Peter H.
Cronister, Larry	Crook, Logging Inc.
Crusius, Martha	Cummins, Mark
Cunningham, Barry	Curran, Mike



Curtis, Brian

Czadek, James

Czaja, Michael & Helen

D,Amore, Christopher

Dagman, Todd

Damaso, M.

Dart, Bill

Datan, Manuel

Davenport, Dub

Davis, Aileen D

Davis, Mark D.

Davis, Rory R. Dr.

de Bruin, Ron

Deason, Jonathan P.

Deauville, Paul M.

Decker, Kevin G.

Deeg, Kenny

Deinstadt, John

Delagnes, Jon A.

Demaree, Michael & Nancy

Dent, James E.

Devine, Pete

Dimitre, Tom

Dixon, Hon. Julian C.

Dominguez, Ron

Dona, Vincent

Donleavey, William

Douglas, David

Dowell, Duke

Dreier, Hon. David

Druff, Sheri Lynn

Duffek, Julie

Duffield, Ken

Duffin, David

Dufort, Dudley

Dufort, David

Dugger, Jim

Dunstaman, Richard

Eade, Linda

Eckert, Bret

Edward, Dennis

Edwards, Don, Hon.

Efird, Tom

Eissler, Margaret

Eissler, Fred

Elderton, Chuck

Elkins, Bill

Ellis, Ben

Enduro, Calif. Riders

Enterprises, Inc, Timber

EPA, M-I-U

Evans, Bud

Evans, Tom G.

Everson, Jay C.

Ewing, Michael J.

Exline, John M.

Faler, William H.

Fargo, Bill

Farmer, Jim

Fasanaro, Guy

Favazza, John

Fenner, Mike

Fenton, William M.

FERC, Fed. Ene Reg Comm.

Ferguson, Bonnie

Ferrante, Joe

Ferreira, Gerald

Ferrier, Douglas

Ferro, Mike

Fiddle, Footed 4wd

Fillmer, C.A.

Finaro, Paul

Fisheries, National Marine

Fiske, John & Ellen

Fite, Ron

Flores, Mark E.

Florine, Keith

Floyd, Joe

Foote, Earl

Ford, Tim

Forrister, Flint

Fortney, Marcel

Fowler, Bryce L.

Fox, Don

Fox, Joseph

Fox, Jim

Frailing, John B.

Frank, Leon J.

Fredrickson, Delvin L.

Freeborn, Dave

Freeland, Dave

Freeman, Dianne

Friedman, Leslie

Friend, Bill

Frisbie, Philip

Fudpucker, O.C.

Fulling, Jim

Furia, Tony

Futlick, Mrs S.

Gallagher, Minnie &amp; J F

Gallegly, Hon. Elton

Gallegos, Alfred A.

Galloway, Sisochi

Galloway, Lynn

Garrillo, Glen

Gaskill, Tim &amp; Pamela

Geddes, Ernest

George, Patricia &amp; Darrel

Gerber, A. Grant

Gerger, Veronica

Gerstorg, Eric

Gielen, Leslie

Gilles, J. Keith

Giract, Christopher D.

Giugni, Mark A.

Goddard, Gordon E.

Goessma, Charlie

Goetz, Don

Gogue, Bill

Gonsalves, Gary

Good, Sonny R.

Goodman, Howard

Goodrich, Anthony J.

Gorman, Gary R.

Gorran, Larry

Gould, Tacy

Gray, Leslie Scott

Green, Larry

Greenbaum, Michael

Greenhalgh, Dale

Greenman, Robert

Greer, Camp

Greiner, Loren

Grogan, Brian

Groves, Duane D.

Grow, Steward

Guidice, Rick

Guidice, Tom

Gulledge, Rodger

Gullery, Leslie

Gumbel, Tony

Guthie, Gary W.

Hall, Richard L.

Hall, Rod

Hambrick, Robert

Hammer, Bud

Hampel, Peter

Hansen, David H.

Hansen Jr, S.

Harju, Darrell L.

Hart, Wayne

Hartvickson, John

Harvey, Ken

Hathaway, Kurt

Haveri, Kurt

Haws, Dick

Hawthorne, Paul

Hay, Steve

Heddergott, Klaus

Heimberger, Norm

Heimforth, C W

Heineman, Ed & Karen

Hellgren, Eric

Helton, Steve

Hemp, Mernyn H.

Hendricks, Gary

Hendrix, Mel

Henthorn, Gary

Herbert, Gerard J.

Herger, Hon. Wally

Hesseldenz, Tom

Hi-Landers, 4Wd Club

Hickman, Lt. Don

Hickman, Steve & Janice

Hickman, Jeff & Beth

Hicks, Donald A.

Hicks, Mr. & Mrs. Louie

Hicks, Stephen

Higginbotham, Terry L.

Higgins, Jeff

High Sierra, Packers Assoc.

Hill, Stephen R.

Hill, Sam & Kathy

Hirsch, Robert N.

Hobart, Lyle

Hockley, Jim

Hoffman, Harry N.

Hogan, Ted

Hollan, Harvey

Holm, Christine

Holm, Christine

Holman, Dwayne

Holthouse, Vern

Hondsmen, California

Honeysett, Evelyn

Hoover, Vicky

Hoover, Robert

Hopkins, Lee

Hopkins, Walter

Horne, Skip

Horne, Jeff	Horton, Fred
Houck, Trevelyan	Houle, Greg
Houtz, Jim	Hovkins, Bob
Howard, Matt & Diana	Howes, Jim
Humbel, Chuck	Hunter, William
Hunter, Lowell	Huntington, Ardeth
Hurst, David	Hussey, Ted
Huston, Craig S.	Ireland, Jim
Irwin, Jeff	Izmirian, Richard, Pre.
James, Dennis & Kate	Jepson, Tom
Jette, Ruth & Luck	Jewett, Willard C.
Johnson, Tom	Johnson, Michael
Johnson, Lee	Johnston, Jack
Johnston, Mary	Johnstone, Bob
Joiner, John	Jones, Nancy & Gayle
Jones, Loyde L.	Jones, Bill
Jones, Bill	Jump, Robert
Kaltoft, Kristen	Kane, Steve
Katsura, Randall	Katsura, Robert
Kays, Joan M.	Keenan, Pat H.

Kellerman, Leslie

Kelley, Bruce

Kelly, Robert

Kennedy, Leroy

Kerner, Kert

Kerr, Edward

Kimble, Curt

Kimbriel, Joe

King, J.

Kissler, Robert &amp; Barbara

Klock, Brian

Klusman, Don

Kneisly, John &amp; Cynthia

Knowles, David T.

Koblick, John

Koch, Tom

Kopp, Michael

Kramasz, Ken

Kramer, Jerry R.

Kravchenko, Nick

Kritsch, Larry

Kruse, Scott M

Kuehl, Steve

Kuhlman, Frank

Kunstman, Richard &amp; Alice

Kunstman, R.W.

Kyl, Hon. Jon

Lagomarsim, Hon. Robert

Lahay, Robert P.

Lalanne, Jeanne

Langley, George

Lanman, Henry R., Jr.

Lareen, L V

Larsen, Windord

Larson, Mark

Larson, Doug

Laszlo, Ernest A., Jr.

Law, James

Lawler, Clyde

Lawrence, Donald E

Ldg Timber, Enterprise	Ledwith, Steve
Lee, Laura E	Lee, John
Leffler, Rick	Lehmann, Klaus
Lemire, R	Lemise, Kay
Leonis, P.J.	Lester, Bill
Lettunich, Mitchell	Levasser, John
Lewis, Clyde/Jeane	Library, Fresno City
Library, Merced Public	Library, Red Cloud
Library, Forestry	Lightfoot, Mike
Lind, Rick	Link, Don
Lipp, Ed	Lister, Don
Lobnitz, Margaret, Dr.	Lockwood, Paul M.
Loeddeke, Brian	Long, Robert P.
Longenecker, Robert	Lorimer, Eileen
Los Altos, Dirt Bike M.C.	Lowe, George
Lowery, Barry	Lucas, Mark
Luckin, O	Lupart, Steve
Lyddane, Michael C.	Lydon, Patrick J.
MacArt, Maureen	MacArthur, Greg
MacCarthy, John D., Dr.	MacCollum, Rosemary



MacMillin, Kim

Madden, Donald E., Jr.

Maier, Charles

Majerowicz, Eugene I., Dr.

Makanna, Philip

MaLaughlin, Daniel E.

Maloney, Dan

Maloney, Bill

Maneely, Tom

Marcom, Guy

Marecak, Ken

Markham, Harrison & Martin

Markle, Greg

Marks, Adele & Reid

Marr, Gary

Marsden, Paul

Marsh, Steve

Marshall, Jeff

Marshall, Leonard E.

Martens, Jim

Martin, Frankie

Martin, Mike

Martin, Jean

Martinez, Mike

Martinez, Hon. Matthew

Martinson, Duane

Maschi, John

Mathers, Richart

Matlock, Steve

Mauk, Gene R.

Maurer, Jeff

Maxfield, Allen D.

Maxwell, Richard

McAndrews, Michael

McCain, Paul

McCgee, Pete & Vernoica

McCginnis, Bill

McClelland, Scott

McCneely, Tom

McConn, Mac

McCray, Wallace

McCullough, Tim

McDaniel, Ted

McFadden, Robert & Joan

McGee, Pete

McGill, Timothy

McGrath, Wally

McGregor, P C

McKeeman, O.M.

McKey, Louis

McKinlay, E A

McKnight, Robert W.

McMasters, Paula

McRae, Alton L.

Meadows, Lodge Buck

Meagher, Tom

Medina, Sean C.

Meloy, A.S.

Menderhausen, Ralph & Ann

Mendes, Clarence D.

Mettenheim, Mark von

Meyer, Charles

Mid Valley, 4 Wheel dr.

Miller, Paul

Miller, Robert

Miller, Richard

Miller, Gary L

Miller, Clifford W.

Miller, Vickie & Lee

Miller, Robert

Miller D.D.S., Dennis

Minerals, Explor.Coalition

Mining, Western Council

Mining, Western Council

Minnesota, University of

Mitchell, Roger

Moffett, James

Montague, Dave

Moody, Tom

Moore, John

Moore, Norman H.

Moore, Bill

Moorhead, Hon. Carlos

Morris, Kurt

Morris, Derrick

Morrison, Stacy

Morrow, James W.

Moss, Larry D.

Moyer, Roy

Mt. States, Legal Foundation

Mueller, Mr. and Mrs.

Muldoon, Michael

Mullis, Virgil

Murry, Dayton

Muscio, Mark

Muth, Sterling W.

Myers, Gary

Nakayama, Teal P.

Nelson, Lelan

Newell, Peter

Newman, Joe

Nicolaus, Don

Nielson, Kenneth

Nixon, Nick

Nokes, George

Norby, Jon

Norris, Jim

North Bay, Motorcycle Club

O'Brien, Debra

O'Callaghan, Tom

O'Leary, Richard B.

Oakhurst, Branch Library

Ober, Jim

Oehlschlager, J. F.

Okerlund, Dennis J.

Olsen, Dave

Orme, Greg & Rhoda

Osgood, Robert J.

Oskert, David

Ostrom, Ken

Ott, Pierre J

Overton, David

Ow, David L.

Owen, Hank

Owen, Ray

Owens, Hunter

Ozols, Andy

Paavola, Mark

Pacifica, Motorcy. Asso.

Packard, Ron

Packer, Colin H.

Palthe, Steve

Panetta, Hon. Leon

Paniagua, Paul

Panzini, Bocci

Parker, Jayne K.

Parker, Terrence

Parke, Dick

Pavone, Tony

Pavone, Anthony

Pederson, Terry

Pelosi, Hon. Nancy

Pemberton, James & Georgia

Perasso, Herb W.

Percival, John M.

Pereira, Mike

Perin, Susan

Perlee, Kit

Perong, Susan

Perry, William

Perry, Charles N.

Peters, Brian

Peterson, Paul V.

Peterson, Stan

Peterson, James & Linda

Phillips, Ernest C.

Phillips, Lloyd

Pickett, Dave

Piedrafita, D.

Pilcher, Larry

Pille, Brian A.	Pinkerton, Steve
Pino, Richard Del	Pinsky, Jim
Piper, Robert J	Piro, Laverne & Joeeph
Piszkiewicz, Leonard	Plagenza, Joe
Pland, R H	Pleis, Mitch
Podesta, Gerald	Ponton, John
Ponzini, Bocci	Porter, M.
Porter, George H.	Potts, Robert
Power, Steve C., Jr.	Powers, Bob
Prael, Tresser	Presser, Thomas
Prestwich, Robert	Prince, Marc
Pritchard, Ray	Proctor, Kim
Prosch, Joe	Prue, Suzette M.
Pruett, Dick	Putman, Wayne
Putman, John C.	Quintero, Robert A.
Radanovich, Leroy	Raffety, Robert
Railsback, Steve	Ralpf, Bill
Ralston, Ernie	Ramas, Frank & Ethel
Ramont, Ron, Jr.	Ramont, Ron
Ramsay, Ken	Ramsey, John

Randal, Larry	Randolph, Bob
Randolph, Jim	Rasmussen, S.G., Dr.
Ray, Bill	Read, David & Margo
Reagan-Buell, Dayla	Reed, Bob
Reeder, Mike	Reese, Andy & Karen
Rego, Larry	Rehrmann, George H.
Ren, Gerald	Reta, Tom, Eng.
Reuther, Jeff & Cherie	Rhudy, Lisa L.
Rice, Tim	Rich, David
Richard, Alexander	Richards, Christopher M
Richards, Judy	Riley, Bess
Ritter, Kay	Ritzi, Bill
Robinson, David P.	Rocha, David & Nancy
Rodgers, Jim	Rogne, T.
Rohr, Matt	Romano, Rusty
Romp, Mark	Rose, Cathy
Ross, Michael	Rough/Ready, Jeep Club
Roupe, Daniel	Rovai, Angelo
Rowe, Rick	Rundel, P.W.
Rust, Jack E	Ruth, Lawrence W.

Ryan, Jean & Pete

Ryan, Thomas F.

Sallee, Art

Salmon, Bill

Sanderson, James

Santa Barbara, ATV/Club

Saunders, Michael

Schaffer, Erik

Schaffer, Paul

Schemelzer, Shirley & Bob

Schifferle, Patricia

Schletz, Jon

Schlichtig, David

Schloer, Jonathan A.

Schmelzer

Schmidt, Gerald C.

Schmitt, David

Schneider, David

Schochmel, Jerry L.

Schoefield, John

Schrobsdorf, Steve

Schueler, Dan

Schuyler, John

Scozzari, Mark M.

SCS, Soil Cons Serv.

Seigle, Richard E.

Sepute, Tom & Darlene

Seton, Joel

Shainberg, Peggy

Shank, Steve

Shannon, Mike

Shaw, Carrie

Sheehan, Alan

Shepard, Shelia

Sherard, Chuck

Shimmin, John

Shinnick, Joel

Shipman, Chuck

Shipman, Donald

Shiro, Jim

Shofshall, Erich

Shorun, Ken

Showers, Frank

Shroyer, Bill

Shuman, Paul

Shumway, Norman D., Hon

Sibley, Patrick

Sierra, High

Sikora, C. & Asso.

Simon, Larry

Simone, Don

Singer, Tom

Skaggs, Marcia

Slayton, Hawley

Slumskie, Diana

Smith, Ralph C.

Smith, Michael B.

Smith, Kirk

Smith, Lorra

Smith, Chistopher T.

Smith, Cori & Jim

Smith, Art

Smith/Evernde, Roberta, DR.

Smyth, Jim

Snavely, Carl

Snyder, Jim

Solorio, Christine

Sommer, W.E.

Sonksen, Ken

Soper, Ed

Sorensen, R.A.

Sparger, Dennis

Spears, Roberta

Speegle, Mike

Spencer, Rob

Spots, Richard

Springer, Greg & Carol

Sprong, Steve

Squibb, Vivian S.

Staal, Fred



Standley, Charles H.

Stanislaus, Trail Bike Asso.

States, L. Mt.

Steed, Don

Steed, Gary

Steed, Ernest C.

Steele, Tom

Stefani, Greg

Steinbruecker, Rich

Stephen, Thomas

Stephens, Ruth A

Stephens, Burney

Steuer, Jacqueline

Stevens P.E., Roger

Stone, Daniel H

Stork, Ronald

Storm, Donald J.

Stout, Charles A.

Stoy, Dan

Strenfel, Jim

Stroming', Elmer

Strunk, Autrey

Strvebing, Gene

Sullivan, Forest

Summer, William &amp; Karen

Sumner, Wayne

Sumpster, B. M.

Sun River, Cycles

Supervisors, Mariposa Cty Bd.

Swan, M. John, Jr.

Swanson, John R.

Swanson, Edwin B.

Sweet, Dean

Swickard, Deane

Symer, Ken

Symonds, Gregg

Taggart, Scott

Takeuchi, Kenneth

Tanti, Keith M.

Tarpley, R W

Taylor, Brad	Taylor, Scott E.
Theodore, Rich	Thieda, Mark
Thomas, Wilbur F.	Thomas, Gary
Thompson, Robb	Thomson, Kent
Thornton, Mark V.	Tobin, Ed
Toler, Sam	Toman, Billy
Toomey, Steve	Tornai, Robert
Trent, Randy	Tresler, Roger
Trigilio, Carl	Tromba, Sal
Trout, Mike	Trout, California, Inc
Trumbly, Terry	Tulloch, Alice
Underwood, Steve	USDA, F.S.
USDC, Commerce	USDE, Dept Of Energy
Valdez, Arlene/Phillip	Vallejo, William
Van Gundy, Denis	Van Horn III, Richard
Vance, Carole	VanWagtendonk, Jan
Varni, Dennis	Vens, Jim
Vetter, Christopher	Vickers, Wilson R.
Vickers, Mark	Vierra, Wayne
Vismara, Gregory J.	Viveros, Roy E.

Vogel, David	Von Der Ahe, Wilfred
Vonderscher, Richard	Vowles, W.L.
Voytilla, Ben	Wagner, Bill
Waid, Frannie	Waldheim, Edward H.
Waldron, Bruce	Walgamuth, John
Wallace, Pete	Wallace, Mike
Walling, Dan	Walsh, Dan
Waltrip, Billy	Wamack, Ruth E.
Ward, John C.	Warmuth, Leon
Warmuth, Dale	Warner, M D
Warren, Miriam	Wasley, Richard
Watkins, Peter	Way, Ron
Webb, Jack	Webb, Lowell
Webb, Kip	Webb, Nancy
Weinert, Joe	Weinman, Herb
Weissgerber, Tom	Welhaum, Nancy
Wellborn, Michael	Wells, David
Wendering, Arthur	Westberg, Ron
Wheeler, Tom	Whipple, Tom
Whisler, Ed	Whitmire, Dennis

Wick, Robert

Wiebe, Richard

Wieman,Dir., Deanna

Wilkinson, Scott A.

Williams, Patrick

Williams, Earl

Williams, Troy

Williams, Ron

Williams, Jim/Norma

Williams, Herber

Williams, Stan

Williams, Sarah

Wills, Jim D.

Willsie, Phillip

Wilson, Robert C.

Wilson, Harry E.

Windman, Russell

Wing, Robert

Winslow, Paul H.

Winton, J. Martin

Wolden, David

Wolkow, Steve

Woll, Michael

Woltz, Raymond

Wood, Tim L.

Wood, Vernon

Wood, Dave

Woods, Stan

Woodward, Ray

Woolman, Bill

Woolworth, Robert

Workman, Dennis

Wosick, Larry

Wright, David Alan

Wright, Grahm J.

Wright, Stephanie

Wright, David

Wyels, Wendy

Yarnell, Kevin

Yosemite, Institute

Young, James

Young, Vernon B.

Yuill, Thomas

Zane, Burke

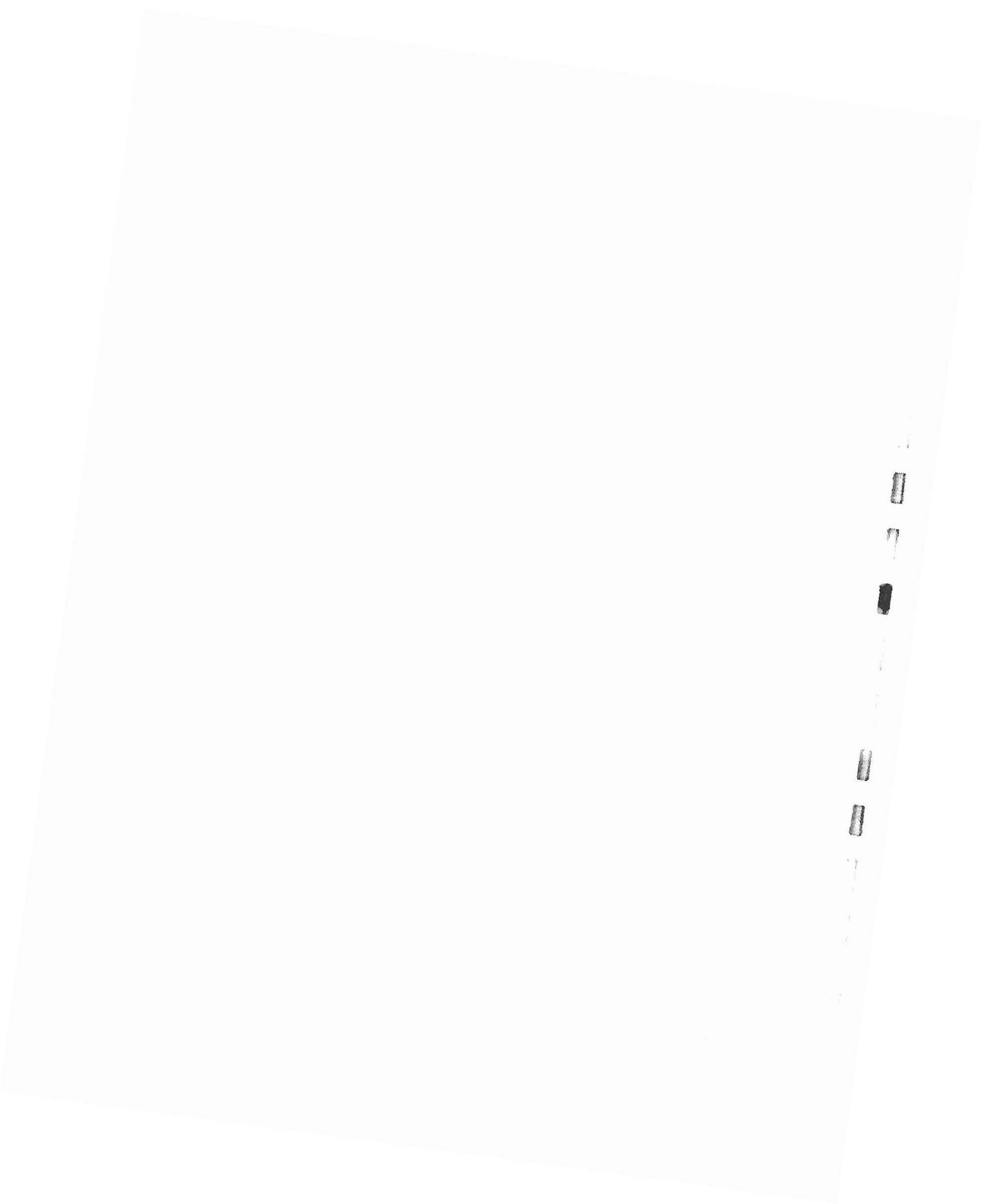
Zetterquist, Glen

Zoom Cycle, Accessories

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## **7.0 APPENDIX**

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## Appendix A

### EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE MANAGEMENT PLAN BY ALTERNATIVES, SUMMARY

TABLE 2 compares the alternatives in their ability to meet project objectives and resolve key issues. A more detailed analysis, including concerns identified in the scoping process, is found in Section 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

RESOURCE.....	ALT A.....	ALT B.....	ALT C.....	ALT D
Cultural Resources	MOD	MIN	MOD	MAX
Fire	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN
Fisheries	MOD	MIN	MOD	MAX
Geology	MIN	MIN	MIN	MAX
Grazing	MOD	MIN	MIN	MOD
Land Ownership	MIN	MIN	MIN	MAX
Minerals	MOD	MIN	MOD	MOD
Recreation	MOD	MIN	MOD	MAX
Socio-economics	MIN	MIN	MIN	MOD



T & E species	MIN	MIN	MOD	MOD
Vegetation	MIN	MIN	MIN	MOD
Visual Resources	MIN	MIN	MIN	MOD
Water Resources	MIN	MIN	MIN	MOD
Wildlife	MOD	MIN	MOD	MAX

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS TO CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES**



## EXTERNAL PUBLIC COMMENTS TO CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES

A public meeting was held on September 21, 1989 at the Mariposa High School Auditorium, Mariposa, California. The Forest Service and BLM goal was to present alternative ideas. The public issues were recorded about the designated portions of the Merced and South Fork Wild and Scenic Rivers. Approximately 75 people were present. The agencies have also received approximately 600 letters concerning the Wild and Scenic River idea alternatives and the Hite Cove historic proposals.

Approximately 200 comments have been recorded from these public meetings and letters. The statements are shown by numbers which correspond to letters that are kept on file. The comments or issues were considered when writing the draft environmental consequences section. Included in this environmental analysis document are the agency answers.

The BLM also presented their recreation plan recommendations for the non-designated portions of the Merced River from Briceburg to Lake McClure at the September 21, 1989 public meeting. The questions and BLM agency draft replies are available from the BLM Folsom office for review. This environmental document deals only with the Merced River from El Portal to Briceburg.

A second phase of public letters (1,017 letters and 174 comments or issues) have been received as a result of the published September 1990 draft EIS/Plan. These public issues have also been recorded, answered and are located in appendix G of these environmental documents.

The first phase public letters (approximately 600 letters and with 200 statements) are shown in the following concern and reply statements. All public issues and agency replies are subdivided into issue questions. Samples of the issue subjects are: recreation use, cultural and historical resources, trail use and wildlife resources.

### ISSUE: WHAT TYPE OF FORMAT ARE THE AGENCIES USING TO EXCEPT PUBLIC COMMENTS?

131.1, 426 (pm)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The format of the public meeting does not answer questions. I especially objected to the Forest Service's format of noting comments and concerns but refusing to respond to them. That is not a useful approach for running a public meeting. There should be designated hither, a person that is capable of answering questions and responding to concerns. Perhaps comments could be recorded and transcribed later back at the office.

**REPLY:** The goal of public meetings at this early scoping stage is to present preliminary ideas for a project and then find out what the public issues and concerns are. At this stage we do not know all the answers. The meetings help us record the public ideas, concerns and issues. Many people also send letters with their thoughts. After reviewing and analyzing all the comments, we have a better idea what the issues are and

what the public needs. We then try to incorporate these public ideas into draft, planning alternatives and environmental analysis documents. The general goal is to publish the draft EIS with most of the public's concerns being addressed in the planning process.

### ISSUE: LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE: WILL THE CONCERN OF MOTORIZED OR NON-MOTORIZED USE ON SPECIFIC TRAILS AND ROADS BE RESOLVED THROUGH THIS PLAN; IF SO WHAT WILL BE THE STRATEGY FOR OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE IN TERMS OF AMOUNT, SEASONS AND LOCATION AROUND THE HITE COVE SOUTH FORK MERCED RIVER CORRIDOR AREA?

101

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I recommend an unimproved, not paved road on the North Side of the Hite Cove that connects with the South end of Hite Cove road. This road would coincide with the statewide motorized trail system and benefit the equestrian and OHV users. Construction and operation monies could come from the State OHV Grant-Funds. The trail could be under adopt a trail program.

**REPLY:** There is an existing unimproved road on the North side of Hite Cove. This road is being considered for possible OHV use as shown in Alternative D. There are approximately four possible North South State OHV routes in this area that are now being considered. This Hite Cove route is one of them. Concerns about the effects on existing fishing, archaeology, historical mining, wildflowers, resources and private ownership an OHV trail would have around the Hite Cove area river crossing would have to be analyzed. The effect of what happens to the OHV users at the end of this north road to Briceburg must be coordinated with the BLM, Stanislaus NF and Cal-Tran. We will address these potential OHV effects in this environmental document as they relate to the Hite Cove Area. The other possible route locations will be considered within the Forest OHV plan that is scheduled to be completed in June of 1992.

102

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Modesto 4-Wheeler Club is opposed to all closures that have been previously open to OHV use. We are aware that the major use in this area at this time is predominately OHV. We recommend both the North and South access routes to Hite Cove Area be designated as a 4WD route. This positive action will preserve the connection link for the North-South OHV tract through the Sierra National Forest.

**REPLY:** The South Hite Cove route from Jerseydale is presently open to OHV use. There is limited OHV use in this Hite Cove area because the North side route has gates with private ownership. Both the North and South access routes have been recommended in Alternative D. The South side has been recommended in Alternative C. Please refer to 101.

103

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Merced River has been long used by 4WD and motorcycle enthusiasts. The California Association of 4WD Clubs Inc. believe that the OHV users

are major recreation users in this designated Scenic River Area. It is important that continued OHV access is permitted. The right of way problem on the North 4WD road to Hite Cove could be resolved with the purchase of a right of way using state OHV Grant Funds. We recommend both the North and South access routes to Hite Cove be designated as 4WD routes. Such action would help link the North South OHV trail through Sierra National Forest under the Statewide motorized system.

REPLY: The Forest Service recognizes that OHV users are major recreational users throughout the National Forests. The "scenic" classification within the Hite Cove area allows for Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) use within a Wild and Scenic River corridor. This area is now a SPM within the Sierra Draft LMP. Your suggestion to purchase a right of way to improve the North route using State OHV grant Funds are feasible. The Sierra National Forest will provide an access route to link the North South OHV trail under the statewide motorized system. Still, the Hite Cove area is just one of three presently being considered. Please refer to 101, which suggests the decision document that will decide the final OHV statewide location through the Sierra National Forest will be completed in 1991.

108

PUBLIC CONCERN: Please consider Alternative B, limited development. This Alternative eliminates the 4 wheel drive threat from the South and North side by downgrading the access to Hite Cove.

REPLY: The Forest Service will consider Alternative B as it relates to the Hite Cove motorized issue. The environmental consequences and the affected environment sections will be analyzed and written up in this Environmental Analysis document. This document will help us make the decision concerning whether the Hite Cove area will have motorized OHV use on both the North and South sides.

112

PUBLIC CONCERN: We favor Alternative B. This alternative eliminates the 4 wheel drive access and represents a significant improvement over the current level of management. We thank you for making this limited alternative available.

REPLY: Thank you for your comments. Please see reply 108 and 101.

116

PUBLIC CONCERN: I believe Hite Cove is a natural wonder with great value. The greatest value of the Hite Cove area is to walk up the trail from highway 140 and enjoy the wildflowers, without noise and the eyesore of motorized vehicles and pavement. I urge endowments of Alternative B. I recommend the existing trail be limited to foot travel only. Please preserve this area close to its natural state as possible.

REPLY: There is limited existing motorized vehicle use on the south side road leading to the Hite Cove area. There are no existing paved parking areas along this road or at the Hite Cove area. Yes, hikers use the existing trail coming up from highway 140 to enjoy the wildflowers around Hite Cove. This will continue to serve as a foot trail as shown on each alternative. Please also see reply 108 and 101.

110

PUBLIC CONCERN: The South Fork Merced is a good trout stream. Making Hite Cove accessible to vehicles will bring too many fishermen and deplete the fishery. Financial resources of the Forest Service would be better used to improve the main Merced River facilities. I support limited use of the South Fork Merced.

REPLY: The South Fork Merced is one of only 21 California State designated Wild Trout Streams. Hite Cove is already accessible to vehicles coming from the South side. Any decision as shown in alternative D (to have OHV users on both the south and north sides) will be analyzed as they relate to other resources and users before a final decision is made. Please also see number 101 and 108.

117.3

PUBLIC CONCERN: I am opposed to allowing motorized access on the south side to continue.

REPLY: Motorized use on the south is existing. Many folks want access on both sides. We have to study all options to find a solution that all user groups can live with. See numbers 101, 108.

117.3.1

PUBLIC CONCERN: I agree (Plan for no public motorized access on the north side or South side of the Hite Cove area.)

REPLY: There are two primary use groups who want different solutions. One wants no motorized access and another wants motorized access. As partners we can work out a solution. Please refer to numbers 101, 108 and 117.3.

119

PUBLIC CONCERN: In 1970, 5 men and I met in Merced and started the Midvalley Four wheelers. In June of 1970 our goal was to clear the Hite Cove 4x4 road. It took us two weekends to do the job. This was done with the help of Chuck at Jerseydale Ranger Station. At this time we tried to get the north end of the trail open. I still want to see the north end of the trail open to Highway 140. I hope the Hite Cove 4x4 trail will be put on a State long trail. We don't need more wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers.

REPLY Please refer to 101, 102 and 103. The South Fork of the Merced River has already been designated as a Wild and Scenic River by a Congressional Act. The Hite Cove area is within a semi-primitive motorized (SPM) area as specified in the draft Land and Resource Management Plan for the forest. The Hite Cove area has already been classified as "scenic" shown in the approved Classification and Boundary Environmental Assessment (EA). A decision whether this Hite Cove area should remain a motorized area will be made with this document. A decision about where the North South State OHV route will be located will be made with another document scheduled to be completed in 1992.

120,123,124,125

PUBLIC CONCERN: We urge the Forest to adopt alternative B for the South Fork Merced. We feel that access to the South Fork and Hite Cove should be limited to hikers and horse riders. The cove should not be turned into a tourist attraction. We think this beautiful area would be damaged by access roads for automobiles.

REPLY: None of the alternatives is considering two wheel automobile access to Hite Cove. Alternative D is considering OHV vehicle use, hikers and horse riders. Please also refer to 101, 110.1 and many other trail issue answers.

121

PUBLIC CONCERN: I urge that these rivers be managed to assure that they remain essentially primitive in character with limited use.

REPLY: The rivers are already protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This Management Plan will provide guidelines on how to manage it under already established river classification.

122.1

PUBLIC CONCERN: I urge you to keep the South Fork of the Merced River the magnificent, remote place that it is by allowing access only by trail. Prohibit all motorized vehicles and mountain bikes. Do not permit any kind of tourist development at Hite Cove and do not construct bridges upstream of Hite Cove and keep the trails narrow and inconspicuous a foot or two in width.

REPLY: We are considering these recommendations in alternative B. Please refer to the rest of the trail questions and answers.

126.1

PUBLIC CONCERN: I recommend Alternative B. I support the proposal to close the two roads to the Hite Cove. I support the closing of areas with "wild" designation (classification) to motorized traffic. As one who has hiked many times along the South Fork and the lower Merced River, I wish to express my appreciation to the USFS and BLM for this opportunity to comment on their management proposals and for having an Alternative B that I can enthusiastically endorse.

REPLY: Thank you for your comments. None of the alternatives are recommending motorized traffic in the "wild" classification river areas along the South Fork Merced. Alternative D is recommending motorized traffic in the "scenic" classification river area. All alternatives are showing motorized traffic in the "recreational" classification river areas on the Merced River. Please refer to many other questions and answers concerning the Hite Cove area.

127

PUBLIC CONCERN: I find Alternatives C and D for the South Fork Merced unrealistic and undesirable. My personal preference is Alternative B. I believe this alternative would make the Hite Cove area more attractive to hikers and backpackers.

REPLY: Many folks agree with you. Please refer to many of the other questions and answers concerning this Hite Cove issue.

129

PUBLIC CONCERN: I can live with Alternative B. I don't want off road bikes in the plan or bridge crossings over the river. Keep the wild and scenic concept. Also, to take care of problem in the future, have the owner of the mining equipment remove it. If he won't, the Forest Service should do it. There is a saying, "If it works don't fix it." The Hite Cove

and the South Fork of the Merced river don't need to be fixed.

REPLY: We are considering alternative B. The mining equipment has been removed as necessary. Maybe we don't need to fix it, but the area should be monitored and managed when any type of public use is concerned.

131, 133, 134, 137, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 151, 152, 153

PUBLIC CONCERN:

The Hite Cove 4x4 road is within the corridor of the South Fork of the Merced River. OHV grant monies have been used to repair road damage in the past and could be available in the future to take care of any impacts caused by the use of this road. This road has been used for more than twenty-years. This route will provide access into the wild and scenic corridor for those people who are physically unable to hike into the area. One of the main purposes for keeping this road open, is it would provide access for elderly people, wheelchair bound people and small children who would like to see the Merced River along the scenic corridor but who are unable to hike into this area due to their age or physical ability. To restrict vehicle access on the Hite Cove Road would indeed deny these persons any opportunity to enjoy the beauty of this area. I urge you to keep this route open to four wheel drive use. We believe in protecting the environment for everyone to use and enjoy and not just for a few people who want to hike and keep everyone else out. We have adopted this as one of the areas we clean up. We could use the road without interfering with nature or hikers.

REPLY: The south side Hite Cove Road is presently being used by four-wheel drive enthusiasts. We are considering keeping this open in Alternative C and D. Please refer to the questions and answers found in 101, 102, 103, 136 and 119.

132

PUBLIC CONCERN:

It has been brought to my attention that the Hite Cove Road is under consideration for closure. I am opposed to any such action. This road offers access to the river at this point for people who would not otherwise be able to travel this extremely rugged terrain. As a physically handicapped user of the National Forest system of four-wheel drive trails, I am increasingly disturbed by the movement of a group of fanatical extremist elitists to close more and more of the lands that we all own, to all but the young and wealthy. Leave Hite Cove trail open to four-wheel drive vehicles, there are plenty of other areas the hikers can use.

REPLY: Thank you for reminding us that access to Federal lands by people with disabilities must be considered. Because of an Act both facilities and programs must be available to people with disabilities within Federal agencies. We will analyze types and levels of access for people with disabilities in each alternative. Four-wheel drive access around the Hite Cove area will be considered in Alternative C and D. Please refer to 101, 102, 103, 119, 136 and 131.

136

PUBLIC CONCERN:

It has been brought to the Modesto 4 Wheelers Club's attention that the Hite Cove 4x4 road is possibly being

included in the proposal to designate this area into the Merced Wild and Scenic River. Our club would like to register our complaint against this part of the designation. We also understand that OHV Green Sticker Funds have been used for road repair and maintenance. As such we feel this is contrary to the future use of said road.

REPLY: The river designation and classifications have already been established by a Wild and Scenic River Act and a Classification and Boundary Environmental Assessments. These approved documents are not subject to discussions with this phase of planning. This phase of planning does deal with what types of use will be permitted within the Hite Cove river area. All uses must be consistent with these existing WSR Act and EA documents. Alternative C shows 4 wheel drive use on the south side Hite Cove road from Jerseydale would be acceptable. Alternative D shows both the south side and north side from Hite Cove to Indian Flat would be acceptable. Alternative B shows no 4 wheel drive use on either the south or north side would be acceptable. Green Sticker grants have been authorized for the South side Hite Cove Road in 1983 and 1987. The north road to Hite Cove from Indian Flat is a special use and administrative use road that is closed to public motorized use. We are presently analyzing the consequences of all resource recommendations including 4 wheel drive access to the Hite Cove area within each alternative. The draft EIS will show our preferred alternative and use for this area. You will have another chance to review this draft planning document.

137

PUBLIC CONCERN: The Hite Cove road passes through a scenic portion of the Merced River area that is now designated wild and scenic by an act of Congress. Vehicle travel in such areas is allowable through the Wild and Scenic Laws. State OHV monies have also been used to repair and maintain this road in the past years. We all have to collectively learn how to work together to provide a balanced plan to provide for all users of our forests.

REPLY: The Hite Cove road passes through a portion of the South Fork Merced River that has been designated as a Wild and Scenic River. The Hite Cove area is within "scenic" classification. Please refer to the questions and answers found in 101, 102, 103, 133 and 136 etc.

138

PUBLIC CONCERN: I believe a possible north/south ORV route as proposed in alternative D around Hite Cove area will cause a number of major problems. You would have to bridge or ford the river at Hite Cove. This will dramatically increase use of both access roads and present a threat to archaeological sites and historic remains on both sides of the river. ORV folks have a hard time staying on roads and archaeological sites should not be marked or flagged. A road would have to be built down to the river on the north side to the crossing point. The river is primarily a wild river in this zone and should remain as such. Any new crossing or bridge would diminish that precious wildness by bringing motorized vehicles closer to the wild areas. Wildness is going to be worth even more in ten years. What kind of statement would this make for the Forest Service to allow a bridge or ford cross this river within a Wild and Scenic River area? I doubt that the public relations aspect of this decision would be

positive in the balance. The increasing use of the north side by foot traffic would probably quickly produce conflicts with ORV people. I am concerned about the revision of alternative B in the revised WSR plan. Having received much public comment against the history center and against ORVs, you have just rewritten Alternative B to include ORV. I think that this negates your scoping process. I actively campaigned for Alternative B as a way to say no to ORV and the history center. I do not plan to simply accept a rewriting of the alternative B after the fact. The Hite's Cove Road needs to be closed to ORV traffic.

REPLY: Thank you for your comments concerning possible effects of OHV use within the Hite Cove area. We will use your comments in writing the environmental consequences section of the draft environmental analysis. Each alternative's consequence will be analyzed in relation to the previously presented alternatives. The alternatives which relate to the motorized issue are: A (existing), Alternative B (no motorized use), Alternative C (motorized use on south side from Jerseydale to the Hite Cove area) and Alternative D (motorized use on both the south and north side from Jerseydale to Hite Cove to Indian Flat). These alternatives have not changed in principle from the public meetings. However, as a result of scoping, we have edited the wording from the original drafts. You will also have another chance to review the draft environmental analysis documents before the final decision documents are published.

139

PUBLIC CONCERN: The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors is opposed to a North-South ORV route through Mariposa County which crosses the South Fork of the Merced River.

REPLY: Thank you for taking a stand on this issue. However this Wild and Scenic River implementation plan will only analyze whether this Hite Cove area should be within a motorized or non-motorized area. A North-South ORV route determination will be made through another plan to be completed at a later date. Please refer to many other questions and answers concerning this subject.

140, 141

PUBLIC CONCERN: The Fresno Mountain Toppers would like you to keep the Hite Cove road open. There are few alternate routes in this area. We enjoy the 4x4 route.

REPLY: Keeping the south side Hite Cove road open within the 1/4 mile Wild and Scenic River corridor is being considered.

142

PUBLIC CONCERN: CORVA (California off road vehicle Association inc.) is concerned that you are considering closing a long established OHV route, due to Wild and Scenic River status of the Merced River. It is our understanding that this road is within a segment that has been designated "scenic" by your planning process. As you might know a "scenic" designation allows for OHV routes, since these routes do not impair the rivers's Outstanding Remarkable Values. If however, this route is having an unacceptable impact on the river's fisheries, it is our desire that your Forest consider an alternative of applying for State OHV grants to correct any unacceptable impact this road is causing.

REPLY: We are considering a range of alternatives for this area, from motorized to non-motorized. This road is within a South Fork Merced river segment that this agency has "classified" as "scenic." Congress has "designated" the Wild and Scenic River. The environmental consequences section of this EIS will determine what impact a motorized access would have to the fisheries and other natural and cultural resources. Please refer to other questions and answers concerning this issue found in this section.

146, 150

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am a member of United Four Wheel Drive Association. In the January 1989 issue of Backpackers magazine an article appeared that states the number of back country users has been declining. Is the closure around Hite Cove planned to benefit a smaller and smaller number of people? What about the elderly, the people that are not able physically to hike or walk into the wilderness areas? I hope you will reconsider and keep this road open if not return the funds taken from the California OHV fund so the off highway vehicle users will not lose funds that they have paid for. I have seen many people in the prime of their life effected by major disabilities. They still want to visit areas such as the National Forest, yet they are not able physically to walk and bike for prolonged times or distances. Instead of providing more public land for the exclusive use of a smaller and smaller number of people, please reconsider the Hite Cove area for four-wheel drive access.

REPLY: The Hite Cove area is presently reached by day use trail users that take approximately an hour to walk in from the Merced River Canyon areas. This type of trail use has been increasing each year. A range of alternatives are being considered which range from no motorized (Alternative B), motorized from Jerseydale to Hite Cove (Alternative C), and motorized from Jerseydale to the Merced River Canyon. Please refer to #136 regarding the OHV funds. Regarding people with disabilities, refer to #132.

154, 155, 156, 158-163, 166-507, 509-602

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The possibility of closing the Hite Cove road must be avoided as the road serves a valuable access route across the South Fork of the Merced for disabled and elderly citizens that rely on off highway vehicles for their mobility. It has been in public use for over 20 years and is a viable option for the off highway vehicle north-south route. Please keep this excellent multiple use area open for me and my family. Please lend your support to this responsible multiple use project. Wilderness hiking areas are constantly being added while the number of backpackers decreased. Please support and properly manage the OHV use in recreation areas for all Americans to enjoy. California off highway vehicle green sticker funds have been used to repair and maintain the Hite Cove Road in the past. Further Green sticker grants of Off Highway Vehicle funds can be used to mitigate any impacts caused through the use of off highway vehicles on this route. Give serious thought to the concerns on the off highway vehicles access in this area. Merced River has an important off highway vehicle route that goes from Snyder Place through Hite Cove to Highway 140. The Hite Cove road can very well serve as an off highway vehicle north-south route and the scenic rivers designation provides for such use. The Hite Cove road is a most logical

route for the statewide off highway vehicle motorized trail system. This route is the only available quality off highway route through this section of the Sierra Nevada Range.

REPLY: The existing south side access route to Hite Cove does provide motorized access for those people with disabilities. This south side access route has been used for over 20 years and has been supported with green sticker funds in the past. There are existing impacts caused through the use of OHV. These impacts could be mitigated with OHV funds. There is presently no public use across the South Fork Merced river through Hite Cove area to the North side to highway 140. There is no existing motorized ford or bridge crossing at the Hite Cove South Fork River area. This north route was built in the fifties for mining purposes; a gate was installed early; the route has not been used by the public in the past; presently is partly within private lands and presently is used for administrative purposes only. Please review 101, 102, 103, 136, 119, 139 and other answers in this section.

508

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am writing on behalf of the Merced Canyon Committee requesting that you adopt Alternative B. This alternative appears to best protect the values for which the rivers were designated. In particular, I urge you to reject any alternatives which would permit motorized access to the Hite Cove area. The reasons for this are as follows: The use of motor vehicles on the access roads is incompatible with other uses such as hiking and horseback riding. The dust and risks to hikers are unacceptable and the close proximity of vehicles would frighten horses. It is estimated that a motorcycle traveling one and one half miles displaces one ton of soil. In contrast, a horse displaces only 20 pounds. One need only observe the TV commercials for Off-Road Vehicles to understand the motivations of their users. The name "ORV" implies that they are intended for use on the roadless landscape. The damage that can result to flora and fauna is well understood and has led to restrictions on the areas where such vehicles can be used. My son has camped in the Hite Cove area and reports having observed 4WD campers shooting with handguns at bottles. This practice is not only dangerous, but also produces litter. There is not enough manpower available to effectively police such activities. It is often said that it is unfair to judge the behavior of a large group by the irresponsible behavior of a few individuals. I would contend that it is the responsibility of the majority to police the behavior of their members to avoid being tarred with the same brush. There is also the question of responsibility for injuries to the users of ORVs. In the May issue, of the publication "Newsbeat," the BLM reports three serious accidents to ORV users, which required assistance, on the Saint Patrick's Day weekend alone. The Forest Service would need additional manpower to handle such contingencies. For all the above reasons, I urge that you prohibit motorized access to the South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic corridor.

REPLY: The use of motor vehicles on the access roads could be incompatible with uses such as hiking and horseback. Presently most of the hikers coming into the Hite Cove area use the existing designated hiking trails. A few equestrian riders do use the existing Hite Cove south side route. The present OHV users do use the existing south side



OHV designated route. Because of the topography, we do not have significant impact problems with users going off trails or routes. Shooting at bottles has been a problem in the past with all user groups because the litter is not removed. There is not enough manpower available to effectively police such activities. Still, shooting is an acceptable use on most National Forest Service lands. Our goal will be to educate the public concerning these issues. We would like the public to understand that this is their forest and they are responsible to help the agencies with the maintenance and litter clean-up. We will do this through pack-it-in-pack-it-out and tread lightly programs. Through education, we hope to have more public groups use portable communications systems to transfer safety messages to their groups and to agencies. We are considering all alternatives.

200

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We strongly support Alternative B for the South Fork. Tourism would ruin this pristine area and we do not need to encourage 4-wheel drive vehicles into this region. Let's keep Hite Cove pretty much as it has been and keep the motivated tourists out.

**REPLY:** Thank you for your comments. Please refer to 101, 108 and others concerning this issue.

205,503

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I endorse Alternative B (limited use) for the South Fork. This plan eliminates the four-wheel drive threat by downgrading Jerseydale access road to Hite Cove to a trail. Plan B further limits motorized access on the North side of the river.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 101, and 110 and others concerning this issue.

211

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I generally support your alternative B. The closure of roads to the Hite Cove area is sorely needed. Within the Sierra National Forest there are hundreds of miles of dirt roads for 4-wheel drive recreation users, but very few trails that follow a river through miles of undeveloped river canyon. Motorized traffic conflicts with trail use and should be eliminated to Hite Cove, unless needed by your agency.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 101 and others in this document.

418 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** the last 5 miles of the South Fork Merced Trail is non-existent now from Devil's Gulch. What are your plans?

**REPLY:** All alternatives show this trail access system within this area. This year we have had a trail crew open a few miles of the trail.

419 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We favor a parking area and foot trail from Jerseydale area.

**REPLY:** Alternative B favors a trail from the south side to Hite Cove. Alternative C and D favors the existing motorized use. We will consider all options.

420 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** How far does the Incline road extend? Does it cross private property?

**REPLY:** Yes, the Incline road extends across private property. Scenic easements would have to be obtained to protect private land if a trail is accepted by all the agencies.

421 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Development of trails exposes private land owners to vandalism and liability.

**REPLY:** If the Incline trail is developed, mitigation measures like scenic easements, fences, gates, visual and physical barriers would have to be considered and agreed upon by the private owners before trail access is obtained. If scenic easements are obtained, the cost and liability could be the responsibility of the Government.

422 (PM), 423 (PM), 434 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We are in favor of a bike, horse and foot trail on the north side of the Merced River on the old railroad grade. We support rough trails, and no off road vehicles along the river, What context would ORV be prohibited?

**REPLY:** There are currently proposals for mountain bike, racing bikes, horse, foot and a train on the old railroad trail. Rough trails would be compatible with mountain bikes, horse and foot. No one has recommended ORV use to date, we understand that the highway would be used for this type of use if there was access on both the north and south Hite Cove road. Maybe the two wheel vehicles, off highway vehicle, racing bikes, and motor bikes etc. should stay on the main road and be prohibited on the North Incline Road. We also have to analyze the train proposal.

435 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We support the Iron Creek Trail for non-motorized use. Does this conflict with the Forest's Draft LMP?

**REPLY:** The Forest Draft and Land and Resource Management Plan shows this area as semi-primitive motorized (SPM). However, the approved Wild and Scenic Boundary and Classification Environmental Assessment has designated this a "wild" classification river segment. All alternatives will therefore show that this area will be semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) and that the Iron Creek trail within the river corridor will be for non-motorized use. This is consistent with the "wild" classification.

436 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Under alternatives A, B and C would there be no new trails? Is alternative D the only one with new trails?

**REPLY:** This was our intention. No new trails except in alternative D, the maximum use alternative. We do show trail access on the existing South Fork Merced trail in alternative B and C. Right now the trail needs heavy maintenance because of lack of use.

511.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I agree in some areas with alternative A but want to add my own ideas. Have no public motorized access on north side of Hite Cove. Have no 4wd

access into Hite Cove. Develop a trail in place of the existing 4wd road.

REPLY: These suggestions are similar to the ones shown in alternative B. Please refer to the other trail questions and answers.

804.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The National Park Service (Yosemite) is concerned with the accessibility to the Hite Cove Area. Safety improvements to the existing trail may be necessary, but the steepness of the canyon and fragile wild flower environment would place limitations on substantial renovation or disabled access. The large privately owned parcel of land at the trail head may also preclude improvements to the trail. Increased visitation would also pose a higher fire danger in the hot summer months when current use of the area is minimal.

REPLY: Limited safety improvements may have to be made if alternative D and OHV motor vehicle access is allowed on the north side of Hite Cove. Two wheel drive access is not being considered in any of the alternatives. Providing four wheel access for people with disabilities to the Hite Cove area might provide these user groups with opportunities to see this area which they could not have with only foot trails. The fire resource issue will be studied for each alternative. Please refer to a few of the other questions and answers concerning the Hite Cove access issue.

**ISSUE: CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES: WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE NECESSARY TO MEET THE CRITERIA OF THE CULTURAL RESOURCES ACCORDING TO SECTION 106 OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT? WHAT KIND OF INTERPRETATION AND WHAT KIND OF HISTORICAL STRUCTURES WILL BE ALLOWED WITHIN THE HITE COVE AREA THAT WILL MEET THIS CRITERIA?**

104

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Because the Hite Cove proposed mine development would involve a great deal of money, I would hesitate to commit to this project.

REPLY: Alternative A and B are recommending no mine development but suggesting that rehabilitation to existing improvements be maintained. Alternative C and D are recommending minimal amounts of mining equipment be placed on existing old mining foundations, not developing a mine. The issue of money was not discussed but should have been and will be addressed in the this Environmental Analysis.

108.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Please consider Alternative B. It represents a significant improvement over the current level of management found in alternative A. It limits tourism at Hites Cove and the proposed mining historical center.

REPLY: The Forest Service is considering alternative B. This alternative would designate the Hite Cove area as a Historical/Cultural area and provide minimal interpretation

and rehabilitation of the existing historical mining resources of the area.

110.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We are sorely dismayed over the efforts to develop Hite Cove as a tourist attraction. Hite Cove should be left alone as it is and improvements should be limited to minor trail work. There is no need to build roads, bridges, displays, and information centers. Mountain bikes should be excluded.

REPLY: The Forest Service has no intent to develop Hite Cove area as a tourist attraction. In each alternative the intent is to preserve, operate and maintain the historical/cultural resources of the area. Leaving the Hite Cove alone has already resulted in problems. Initial analysis shows that the existing historical/cultural resources are being molested by visitors. More education and interpretation of the area is necessary for better public understanding. Alternatives A and B are recommending minimal interpretation and rehabilitation while alternatives C and D are recommending moderate to maximum interpretation and rehabilitation. This is all according to the State's archaeological guidelines.

117.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Existing structures should be managed using benign neglect guidelines.

REPLY: The Plan will provide guidelines for the operation and maintenance of the historic/cultural structures.

117.2.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** What does this mean? (Complete existing site rehabilitation as necessary for safety and public need requirements?). Which existing sites? What public need?

REPLY: The existing campgrounds, picnicking sites, boat put-in and take out sites and parking areas along the wild and scenic corridor should be rehabilitated if sanitation facilities, and parking are not acceptable with 1990 safety, public health and use requirements. The public should be protected from the existing mine structures and old mining caves and holes

117.2.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Where would the Visitor Information Services occur?

REPLY: On site visitor information would be provided at the developed sites located within the river corridors. Visitor information also could be provided at local restaurants and with other partners interested in sharing the WSR information with the public.

117.2.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I prefer item 1 in alternative A. (allow for existing historical structures to remain but no rehabilitation of these improvements at the Hite Cove site will occur).

REPLY: Our initial historical/cultural research has indicated that this area is rich in cultural resources. Specific items should be protected and rehabilitated according to the State archaeological guidelines and laws.

117.2.4

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Does this (Alternative C, provide minimal historical structural renovations within the area according to archaeological guidelines) mean importing structures to the site? If so, register my adamant opposition.

**REPLY:** Yes, our intent with alternative C wording was that the Forest Service could import minimal historical structures and place these elements at the site if all conditions of the archaeological State laws and guidelines were met. For example, any imported buildings with historical significance would have to be placed on existing foundations that were constructed during the early 1900. This is the time when possibly 800 folks lived and worked the early the Hite Cove mines.

128

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I feel that Hites Cove should be left alone. This area is ideal for wild flowers, possibly the best left in central California. Also a bridge will bring motorized vehicles and more trash. This area can allow nature studies and teach about the environment simultaneously.

**REPLY:** We will consider these suggestions. Please refer to other questions and answers shown in this document concerning this issue.

130.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Merced Canyon Committee endorses alternative B. The Committee worked for passage of national legislation to protect this river from major development. It came as a shock that the Forest Service was considering developing Hite Cove as a tourist attraction. The value of alternative B is that it remedies current abuses and prevents such an unfavorable development. The current abuses it remedies stem from the private vehicles on both a access roads. It is to be hoped that some signs and markers will be placed at the site to help preserve public awareness of the historic significance of the area. These should be of wood to discourage vandalism. Congress has given the Forest Service a mandate to protect a very special area. I commend you for your preparation of alternatives and particularly for presenting us Option B.

**REPLY:** You have reached your goal. The South Fork Merced river is protected from major development with the Act. Concerning Hite Cove, the intent in each alternative was to rehabilitate the area as a historical/cultural area. The goal is to preserve, operate and maintain the area for the public. The three alternatives shows different levels of potential use and management. Please refer to 110.1. We are considering the alternative which will meet these resource goals of preservation. Your excellent suggestions for sign location will be considered in the Plan.

131.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** As a land owner on the Merced, I fully support the Wild and Scenic River designation. I co-chaired the Merced Canyon Committee. I support however, a management approach which assimilates current use: no visitor center, no bathroom facilities, no put-in areas, no designated trails at least for now. Twenty years from now there may be a need for all the these. Putting them in now however, creates greater visitor use and assures their use and needs. It is a cycle. If your primary objective is to protect the

river ecosystem, the best thing that you can do is to not attract more people to it.

**REPLY:** Thank you for supporting the Forest's recommendations for the Wild and Scenic river designations. Because the Merced and South Fork Merced are now designated, they may attract more people to this great Merced river system. Others will now market the rivers as "Wild and Scenic." The goal is let people use and preserve a free flowing river that has existing outstanding recreational, geologic, historic and other outstanding values. Each alternative has this goal. None of the alternatives is suggesting a visitor center. There are existing bathrooms facilities, put-in areas and designated trails within the river corridors. Alternative A and B are recommending no or limited additions. Alternatives C and D are recommending moderate and maximum additions.

208

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** This is to express our support for alternative B for the South Fork. As for the Hite Cove area, this nation's goal for such historical attractions should be to facilitate the natural reclamation process that is slowly occurring. For those who visit Hite Cove, as well as those who could learn of it through written material, slides and filmed or video produced descriptions could be made available, say, by the Forest Service. The message would then be commercial and industrial destruction, once started, does not have to continue eternally. Restoration and reclamation, by human effort in concert with natural forces, can be accomplished. The final phase should be to leave the area largely alone.

**REPLY:** Thank you for these positive ideas. We will consider them in the Plan.

211.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I have not seen any mention in your planning about the desires of the Mariposa Indian Council to have a primitive camp, for the teaching of Indian values and old ways at Hite Cove. It is a plan that has been discussed for years and is a valid one, since the local Indian people had their land taken away without any treaty and Hite Cove has special religious significance, I would like to see this plan addressed by the Forest Service.

**REPLY:** The Mariposa Indian Council has not made a formal request to date. Yet, the Forest Service has indicated a willingness to discuss and implement such a plan. We have just completed a comprehensive historical/cultural inventory of the Hite Cove area. The area will be managed according to the State's archaeological standards and the alternative selected.

300

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Alternative C would ruin Hite Cove and vicinity. It and surrounding area would become crowded. Hite Cove had a wild feeling before the recent accumulation of junk. Haul out modern junk and it would return to the wild.

**REPLY:** Much of the modern "junk" that has accumulated in recent years has been removed. Care will be taken to ensure that historic and prehistoric artifacts and values are not disturbed in the process. Hite Cove and the immediate area has a "scenic" classification while the remaining

segments of the South Fork of the Merced have a "wild" classification. Increased crowding of the area may or may not occur under all alternatives.

303

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Alternatives C and D are not affordable. Even donated equipment must be protected and maintained.

**REPLY:** No equipment under any alternative will be imported without an assurance of having funds available from appropriate organizations, monies, grants or partnerships.

501

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I want to urge you to endorse Alternative B for the South Fork of the Merced River, I do not want a mining history center at Hite Cove. I do not want the development of tourism at Hite Cove. Let Hite Cove remain as it is, one of the few spots in California not yet destroyed by overdevelopment.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 108.1 AND 110.1

505

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We prefer alternative B. We wish to express our opposition to the proposal to develop the Hite Cove site with the installation of additional mining equipment and buildings. This project will create almost irresistible pressure to provide vehicle access. The project will require a full time caretaker. You cannot depend on volunteer help. A host at the site will require water and waste disposal facilities which must meet County Building Code. This conflicts with the criterion that watershed and shoreline must be primitive. The present trail traverses private property. Access may be revoked by property owner. The proposal to have the mill actually operate would require a source of power. A stationary internal combustion engine would violate the wild and scenic criteria that watershed shoreline be largely primitive and largely undeveloped. Proposed use of a Pelton wheel as a power source would require diversion of water from the river at some upstream point. This is prohibited by the wild and scenic River Act. Any diversion would require permits from SWRCB and if power is generated from the FERC. This would lead to interventions by the environmental community like the Sierra Club, American Rivers, FOR and MCC. The idea that water could activate a hydraulic ram, then be returned to the river at the point of removal, violates the first law of thermodynamics.

**REPLY:** When we write the environmental consequences for alternative C and D, we will be able to use your good thoughts concerning this issue. None of the alternative had any recommendations that would violate the wild and scenic criteria for this river's two mile "scenic" classification. A minor diversion within a "scenic" classification could be acceptable with conditions. Comments from the environmental groups are welcome. Direct communications between us and all interest groups have been going on concerning this project for the past 5 years.

511.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Allow existing historical structures to remain. No development or rehab at Hite Cove.

**REPLY:** Your recommendations are found in alternative B.

600, 607, 608, 617, 625, 627, 628, 630, 636, 639, 646, 653, 673, 674, 675, 681, 687, 695, 696, 739, 743, 757, 758, 768, 798, 801

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We want to preserve what remains at Hite Cove. Some modest interpretation is acceptable, but we want no additional structures added that would require added interpretive programs and invite more people. Keep the area a natural museum. There are other appropriate locations for mining displays

**REPLY:** We have considered preserving what remains in alternative A and B. Reviewing other possible locations for interpretation of mining activities is outside the terms of reference of this project.

602, 622, 631, 632, 635, 656, 659, 660, 661, 662, 665, 666, 668, 669, 676, 677, 683, 684, 685, 689, 690, 691, 692, 697, 699, 706, 708, 709, 710, 712, 713, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 726, 729, 730, 734, 738, 758, 766, 767, 791, 792, 793, 800, 803, 810

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Mariposa County Chamber of Commerce, the Mariposa Resource Conservation district and other private citizens support minimum interpretive historical displays at Hite Cove with a condition that it be environmentally acceptable. Hite Cove offers a unique opportunity to preserve the historical and cultural and archeological values of the site. Visitors would have an opportunity to visit a unique site. It would be good for the economy of the area.

**REPLY:** The Forest Service is considering alternative C. This alternative would designate the Hite Cove area as a Historical/Cultural area and provide moderate interpretation and rehabilitation to the existing mining structures and a minimal of added structures according to the State archaeological guidelines and laws.

601, 604

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We own property on Hite Mine Road. We do not want people to reach the Hite Cove area through our property because of potential dust, trash, vandalism, trespass, insurance rates increases and potential fire hazard problems.

**REPLY:** Only alternative D is suggesting motor vehicle (OHV) public access on the north side of Hite Cove. If this is the preferred alternative, acceptable easement rights and mitigation measures to protect your private property would have to be completed on your behalf and according to existing federal and county guidelines. Please see 410, 411, 416.

613, 621, 623, 624, 658, 664, 678, 679

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Lets go ahead and put a historical mining area back where one has been for almost a century. No vehicle access should be allowed. This idea would provide superior educational potential in Mariposa County.

**REPLY:** We are considering this in Alternative C and D. Any proposals would have to meet the state archaeological guidelines and laws.

603, 606, 609, 610, 611, 612, 614, 615, 616, 618, 619, 633, 634, 637, 638, 640, 641, 642, 644, 645, 646, 650, 651, 652, 654, 655, 657, 663, 667, 672, 680, 682, 686, 688, 693, 694, 698, 700, 701, 702, 703, 705, 707, 711, 725, 727, 728, 731, 732, 733, 735, 736, 737, 740, 741, 742, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 753, 754, 755, 756, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 794, 795, 795, 797, 799, 802, 806, 807, 811, 812, 813

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** WE are concerned about any proposed additions to the Hite Cove Area. The area's charm and meaning is related to its difficult accessibility. Keep it as it is.

**REPLY:** We are considering none to limited additions in alternative A and B. The preferred alternative will be selected that considers all the environmental concerns for each resource and proposed management activity.

605

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** As a professional oceanographer, I recognize the South Fork Merced has characteristics in common with some national marine sanctuaries areas. The area has high diversity over only a small spacial area, the whole being extremely sensitive to human impacts. Don't put public exhibits in the middle of a sensitive ecological area.

**REPLY:** Thank you for this specific concern. This will help us write the environmental consequences section of the analysis. We will consider the level of public exhibit within each classification of river. This wild and scenic river has been classified "scenic." The level of experience for the public and the type of exhibit will be consistent with these values.

620

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** At a Department of Interior hearing the Mariposa Indian Council has asked for the right to have a camp to educate children about traditional Indians ways and beliefs at Hite Cove. I agreed to a scenic classification for Hite Cove to make it possible for the Indian Council's camp. The Forest Service should preserve this historical and cultural resource not fabricate with mining structures.

**REPLY:** The Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture has not been approached by the Council with this suggestion for the Hite Cove Area. Yet, the Forest Service has studied this area for the existing cultural and historical values. Any proposal for this area will meet the criteria according to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the American Indian religious freedom Act.

757

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We attended the 1/10/89 public meeting concerning Hite Cove and have a few concerns. We have a residence on the Hite Cove road. Should not a potential history area at Hite Cove be deferred until the whole WSR plan is completed? What significance does the offered mining equipment have to the actual history of the Hite mine? What is the history of the Garogian equipment itself? Is the presence of a potential history interpretive area at Hite Cove a growth inducement for increased development later? What will the source of drinking water, display

water, and structure fire fighting water be under each alternative? How will the sewage treatment and disposal be handled from increasing use. How will effluent disposal impact the area and river? What is the Board of Supervisors opinion of the proposed alternatives? What is the impact on current native California Indian cultural and religious uses of the area? What is the impact of increased human presence of each alternative on the habitat and range of animals such as the mountain lion and bear?

**REPLY:** Yes, the Hite Cove interpretive analysis will be completed within this WSR EIS and Implementation Plan. The offered mining equipment is dated around the 1900, the same time that the Hite Cove mining activities were operating. Alternative C and D would induce more visitors than alternatives A and B. Drinking, demonstration, and fire water would be managed according to the preferred alternative and Implementation Plan. Sanitation would be managed to normal Forest Service and County standards. The Board of Supervisors have expressed their opinion. We have completed archaeological and cultural studies. The preferred alternative and Plan would be completed according to the State archaeological Act for Native Indian Cultural. The effects of human and wildlife impacts with all proposed management activities will be addressed in the environmental consequences section of this Environmental Impact Statement.

798

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc. requests that no excavating be done at Hite Cove, so as not to disturb the final resting place of our revered Headman and Spiritual leader, Chief Teneya. Chief Teneya, was Chief of our Miwok people who lived in the Yosemite-Mariposa area. Most of the Indian Community, here, in Mariposa County, today can show direct ties to him.

**REPLY:** We will respect Section 106 and that concerns the criteria for the American Indian religious freedom Act.

629

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We are concerned with the existing treatment of Hite Cove artifacts and features by the unconcerned public. If allowed to continue all historic and archaeological sites will be vandalized to the point of destroying their integrity. An interpretive exhibit with minimal impact on the existing state of the canyon would be appropriate to manage and control this problem.

**REPLY:** We agree, the existing cultural and historical resources of the area should be protected. Educating the public to the values of these resources is an excellent tool to help with the preservation. Under each alternative this strategy of educating the public will be considered. The levels of experience and interpretation and education methods will change with the alternatives.

643

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** As a professional biologist, I think the major attraction of this area is the outstanding richness and diversity of flora, especially wild flowers which are outstanding in the central Sierra Nevada. "No point source"

attractions should be developed. Public access would impact this unique natural resource.

REPLY: Thank you for your specific comments. Alternative B should meet your goals.

649, 670

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The South Fork Merced is a high fire zone. Increased visitation, especially vehicle access, should not be encouraged without an EIS. The appreciation of wild flowers and solitude should be preserved.

REPLY: We will complete this environmental analysis document according to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and will consider a range of opportunities that encourage all level of use. The fire resources within this area will be analyzed along with the other resources.

804.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The potential donation of the historic mining equipment and artifacts offers several exciting interpretive possibilities. However the National Park Service (Yosemite) would urge you to not lose sight of the significant natural resource features of the South Fork of the Merced River. The Hite Cove development plans will need to be consistent with your management strategies for the area, as required in Section 10 (a) of the Wild and Scenic River Act.

REPLY: Each alternative's cultural, historical and interpretive recommendation for the Hite Cove area will be consistent with the Wild and Scenic River Act, the "scenic" classification as approved in the 1989 Environmental Assessment and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the American Indian religious Freedom Act.

814

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Merced Canyon Committee has a few questions concerning the Hite Cove proposed Interpretive historic area. Will the USFS acquire the Hite Mine? Can the equipment given to California Mineral Exhibit? Who will pay for patrolling, training, supervising and monitoring of a person/patrolman. How will interpreters get to the mine site? Will a bridge be built? How will the site impact the wilderness of the region? Is it contradictory to place \$1.5 million worth of machinery for public education and enjoyment in such an out of the way area?

REPLY: The Forest Service's goal is to acquire the private land from a willing seller. The donor does not want to give the equipment to the California Mineral Exhibit. Congress allocates monies for the Forest Service to manage their administered lands. It would be a goal to get on the ground work done through volunteers and partnership groups. All persons will get to the site through existing access systems, none will be built. A bridge is being considered in Alternative C and D. The area is "scenic" as established by the wild and scenic river classification system. It is not considered a wilderness area. In fact it is within a semi-primitive motorized area according to the existing Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

**ISSUE: LANDOWNERSHIP AND USE: IS THE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (TRAILS) WITHIN THE CORRIDOR ADEQUATE? WHAT IS**

## THE PLAN FOR ALL THE EXISTING TRAILS WITHIN THE WILD AND SCENIC CORRIDORS?

100

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I have strong concerns about bridges, motor bikes, and the maximum width of the trails.

REPLY: All your concerns will be addressed. You will have another chance to check whether your values have been met when the Draft is published.

105

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I've been hiking the South Fork Trail for 36 years. Please leave this south fork hiking trail as it is. Have folks pick up the trash and haul it out would be the only improvement suggestion. Please consider alternative B.

REPLY: We will consider alternative B. In each alternative, the intent is to leave the South Fork Trail as it is. We will be recommending an operation and maintenance schedule in the Wild and Scenic River Plan that should help to eliminate the trash problem.

106

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** By all means improve the South Fork Merced trail and cut back the poison oak, pack out old miners trash, leave the rivers crossing as they are and please no bridges. A better trail from Hite Cove to Alder Creek will let more people enjoy it.

REPLY: When one person says to leave the trail as it is and then another person shows support to improve the trail system, often both these goals can be accomplished through a proper maintenance system. This is our intent along these trails, to operate and maintain them to the "wild" or "scenic" level of experience indicated by their river classifications.

107

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Please leave the area as primitive as possible. Yosemite Trails Pack Station Inc. endorses foot and horse trails but would like to keep out motor vehicles traffic, logging and mining. Limiting development on the South Fork Merced river would be a good opportunity to curb the development trend on Forest lands. This limited development would help curb costs to the Forest and taxpayer. We think the bridges can be left out.

REPLY: The trail along the South Fork Merced River will be operated according to the "wild" and "scenic" classifications. Naturally, the "wild" sections along the South Fork will be "primitive." No logging is permitted along "wild" classifications. Mining will be permitted according to existing wild and scenic river laws and regulations within the river corridor. No new mining claims will be considered within the "wild" areas. Please review reply 101 for the motor vehicle issue. Alternative B is recommending limited development.

111

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I endorse alternative B. Please leave it in its natural state.

REPLY: The South Fork wild and scenic corridor would be left as it is now with alternative A. Alternative B suggest limited management to the existing resources. Health and safety improvements may be made depending on the approved alternative chose.

113

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I think alternative B should be used for the South Fork Merced.

**REPLY:** We will consider alternative B for the preferred alternative.

114

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am in favor of river trails for bicyclist, boaters, hikers, horseback riders. Gold mining should be discouraged. The river can serve as a recreational jewel in a State that has few good rafting rivers. The antique train idea of carrying tourist is outdated. A high speed connecting rail system to Amtrak carrying large numbers in an unpolluted train vehicle should be studied.

**REPLY:** The Forest Service and BLM favors all types of trails. The goal is to have trail users share access systems that are located on federal lands. The type of train system is outside the terms of reference for this project. Still, we will analyze the proposed antique train system that is planned along the Merced River corridor that is within the Forest Service and BLM administered lands. We need to figure out the environmental effects this management activity would have on all other planned resource users like hiking and bicycling.

115

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I hope that the South Fork Merced River can remain Wild and Scenic. The animals at Hite Cove should be removed. Their activity is damaging the flora. Otherwise leave the area as it is. You can hardly improve it by management, unless management means protection from road builders, miners and developers.

**REPLY:** The South Fork Merced River will remain Wild and Scenic by Congressional Act and by an approved Environmental Assessment concerning the boundary and classifications. The domestic animals at Hite Cove have been removed. If Alternative A is accepted the area would lose out from uncontrolled use. The environment is ever changing and it is our intent to manage by education and interpretation. We want to share with the public a partnership of preservation and use. Please see reply 110.

117.6

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Be specific (obtain easements for public non-motorized access across private lands) Where will you need these easements?

**REPLY:** There are approximately three landowners within the South Fork Merced corridor where a purchase or scenic easement could be completed. Scenic easements are where the landowner retains full title to the land, with the rights to sell, rent, leave to heirs. The private land around Savage Trading Post and a small parcel around Hite Cove are specific locations where trail easements could be completed within the river corridor. There are also approximately six landowners within the Merced corridor located close to the Incline road which may be subject to easement requests. This depends on the type of trail proposed.

117.6.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Act specifies that condemnation can't occur if over 50 percent of the land is in federal

ownership, as is the case with the Merced. Are you talking about a willing buyer-willing seller policy? Where will you need scenic easements?

**REPLY:** Yes a willing buyer-willing seller policy for the BLM and Forest Service. The Forest Service will try to get scenic easements at the locations shown in the above reply and as documented in the first phase Environmental Assessment (5.7.3).

117.6.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** This is my preferred alternative (B). Although the introduction states that existing trails will be maintained, I feel that the trail system should be expanded to include a link with the trails in Yosemite National Park and connecting Hite Cove with Peachtree Bar.

**REPLY:** Alternative B is minimum development. Still, we will consider these proposals in the preferred alternative and Plan.

117.6.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I agree with this (allow the potential multi-agency Incline Road/trail development on the old incline railroad grade to be implemented on FS and BLM lands) although my wife disagrees.

**REPLY:** Shows why there are times when the Forest Service and BLM managers have trouble knowing what the public wants. Since we have been charged with administering the land, a decision will be made concerning this and all the other issues. We will base the decisions on the environmental consequences analysis and show them in the draft environmental analysis documents and plan.

118.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Existing and proposed trails should be constructed and maintained at a standard that provides for minimum maintenance needs, maximum longevity, and minimum adverse sediment and erosion impacts, while having absolute minimum intrusion on the wild and scenic nature of the river corridors. Existing trail maintenance guidelines should be acknowledged and followed. Many existing guidelines may be acknowledged but, they are being increasingly ignored through use of non-skilled trail crews, lack of funding, or visitor over-use. Trail restoration and mitigation must be a detailed and clear part of the Management Plan.

**REPLY:** The disposition or management of trails will be described within the Implementation Plan. The kinds and amounts of use these trails can sustain without unacceptable effects to the values for which they were designated will be carried out through the limits of acceptable change (LAC) process.

126.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am in favor of the proposal to develop and maintain a trail following the old incline railroad grade. This trail should be suitable for hikers, horse riders, and perhaps bicyclists but not for ORV's. I am not in favor of utilizing this section for any new train access to Yosemite National Park. It seems to me that the initiative for such a train access should originate with the NPS in conjunction with their Master Plan. No such proposal is currently being considered by the NPS. Instead the idea for such a

train seems to have risen in the brains of those who would like to promote a new tourist attraction for Mariposa County. There is no demonstrated need for such a train.

REPLY: Each alternative shows that a trail on the old railroad grade on Incline road would be acceptable with the BLM and Forest Service. Different levels of improvements along the trail will be considered for each alternative. Since there are private lands holding along the proposed trail corridor, certain scenic/trail easements would have to be obtained that would meet the owners conditions for safety, protection of their lands, and control of public use. We have to consider a range of proposals within the NEPA process. Under the Recreational classification for Wild and Scenic rivers a train would be an acceptable alternative. We will consider the train proposal consequences under the alternative D.

130.2

PUBLIC CONCERN: I urge you to discourage use of mountain bikes on the South Fork trail system. These do not appear to be compatible with established uses such as hikers and equestrians. I am strongly opposed to any bridges on the South Fork between Wawona and the river confluence. Construction of a bridge on the South Fork would have far ranging consequences for the entire river.

REPLY: Thank you for your specific suggestions. We will consider them when writing the consequences of each alternative.

157

PUBLIC CONCERN: Through negotiations we have attained the original name of Yosemite Valley Railroad Co. I am writing in regard to our proposed rail-line on the Merced River. We have most of the financing in place and strongly plead to your Agency to recommend the Train concept as the most viable of all alternatives in your Master Plan for the future. We further request your guidance with the N.P.S. procedure to formulate a contract, whereas, the Yosemite Valley Railroad Co. would have a first option to construct the rail service, if this alternative is approved. In light of our efforts, money spent and to be spent, hopefully such a contract is a appropriate request. We are prepared to construct and start operations from Briceburg to El Portal when all permits are approved. We will work from Bagby to Briceburg on Phase 2. and of course, the real environmental benefits will be realized when the line is completed to Merced, which could include a light-rail in the Park itself. I look forward to the day when a person can leave his car at any Train Station in these United States and ride a train to Yosemite Park

REPLY: As indicated in #500, this area's river classification is "recreational" and a rail-train would be an acceptable use. Our preferred alternative recommendation will be made through this document. However, we believe you will need contract, permits with all government affected agencies..the BLM, the Forest Service, the Parks Service and the County of Mariposa before you can get started. Rights of way from private individuals who own land along way will have to be determined. A rail/train use on this alignment would have to be coordinated with the other already planned horse riding, mountain biking and hiking uses on this same alignment.

308

PUBLIC CONCERN: I'm happy with the trails as they are but I like some features of Alternative B. No public motorized access to Hite Cove. Maintained trails. Minimal information services in Hite Cove with historic pictures and signs and archaeological information. I would like rest rooms in Hite Cove and improve rest rooms at the Savage's trail-head.

REPLY: Thank you for your reply. All of your suggestions were included in one of the alternatives, and may be included in the final Management Plan.

401 (PM)

PUBLIC CONCERN: What will the use and maintenance of the trails be concerning horse vs. bikes?

REPLY: Bike and horse use is compatible. The maintenance of these trails will be shown in the Implementation Plan.

402 (PM)

PUBLIC CONCERN: Where does money come from for the construction or operation of proposed new trail on Incline Road within the WSR corridor?

REPLY: The money for this trail could come from State bonds, prop.70 and other partnerships.

403 (PM)

PUBLIC CONCERN: How is the river designated Wild and Scenic with a Railroad on one side and road on the other side?

REPLY: The Merced river has been designated as a Wild and Scenic River by a Congressional Act. The river segments from El Portal to Briceburg have been given a classification of "recreational" by both federal agencies responsible for this portion. This decision has been recorded in a Boundary and Classification Environmental Assessment. Roads and old railroad trails are allowed within recreational wild and scenic river corridors.

404 (PM)

PUBLIC CONCERN: Will railroad tresses be left alone.

REPLY: There is a proposal for a bike, foot and horse trail and also a proposal for a train to be placed on the old railroad alignment path. If either of these recommendations are implemented, there would have to be some rehabilitation measures taken concerning these tresses under the State's archaeological guidelines.

201

PUBLIC CONCERN: I want to endorse alternative B for the South Fork. We appreciate your making this acceptable choice available.

REPLY: Thank you for your comment. Please refer to 111.

203

PUBLIC CONCERN: I urge the adoption of plan B. We need to keep the cultural and natural resources at Hite Cove.

REPLY: Thank you for your comment. Please refer to 115.



204.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Access to the far side of the river, especially by foot or mountain bike would improve not only accessibility but also use of the river. I would recommend that a couple of walking bridges be allowed over the river to create better access. I would further recommend that vehicles be prohibited except Forest Service vehicles. These comments concern the Main Merced River.

**REPLY:** Thank you for your comments. Access is being studied for the Merced.

210

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Due to the increasing number of automobiles traveling to Yosemite each year, air pollution is a serious environmental cancer. We feel that a rail system from Merced to El Portal could offer a positive solution in reducing the number of cars, truck and busses going into the Park.

**REPLY:** Thank you for your comment. This analysis only deals with the federal administrative lands from Briceburg to El Portal within the WSR corridor. The effects of a train system outside this area will not be considered within this document. Please also see 114.

211.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Everything must be done to maintain the wild nature of the South Fork Canyon. It is one of the last wild canyons left in California. The primitive trail conditions should be maintained. Except for brush clearing and stabilization and prevention of erosion, no additional trail development should be completed. I strongly oppose the building of bridges and any upgrading of the trail for horse traffic.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 100, 105, and 106.

211.4

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** What is desperately needed whether the north side Merced Canyon trail is built or not is management of camping on the north side of the river. The fire and sanitation hazard is a major one (issue). Only closure to camping or development of a campground will solve this problem. Either way, more Forest Service and BLM patrolling of the area is necessary.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 117.7. Additional facilities are needed and, depending on the alternative selected, will be planned.

211.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am intrigued by the idea of the trail on the railroad grade. I have concern about the liability, vandalism, littering, illegal camping and continued funding for future maintenance and patrols. I would not like to see a trail developed and then not managed.

**REPLY:** The Forest Service has plans in place to patrol and maintain the trails in both the Merced River Canyon and the South Fork. Agreements are in place or planned with several outside groups to accomplish these goals. Of course all the planning is subject to available funding. If the railroad trail is implemented each agency would be responsible for the maintenance of their sections. Maintenance funds could be coordinated through agencies.

500

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We (Mariposa-Yosemite Railroad Co) request that your agencies implement the plan that includes the train concept as the most viable. Composite parts of alternative C and D is recommended by our group with provisions for the train as the only motorized form of transportation. We are in final negotiations with a company to merge as a stronger company in our pursuit of rebuilding the track into El Portal. I urge your agencies support in this worthy and viable train concept as an alternative in your implementation plans. We request that this letter be on record as the date our company applied for a permit to operate a passenger train on the old Yosemite Valley Railroad bed right-of-way through Forest Service land. This could include leased land to facilitate any related activities to operate the trail line and could include a short line into Hite Cove. Considering the States current activities related to rail lines, assemblyman Jim Costa's Bill #973 and coauthor to Senate Bill #1562, how can we not consider this project as a alternative.

**REPLY:** The agencies will consider your request to build and operate a train on the old Incline/Merced River rail site. We will only consider the 14 miles from Briceburg to El Portal within the designated river corridor. Your proposal is within a "recreational" classification and is considered as an acceptable use within a wild and scenic river corridor with this classification. We will not consider your request for a short line into the Hite Cove area along the South Fork Merced River. The rail line would have to go through a "wild" classification and a train service would be unacceptable within this classification. We will complete the written effects of this proposed project within the environmental consequences section of this environmental analysis document as they relate to alternative D. No use permit will be considered until after the implementation plan is completed after November 1990. A draft showing the Forest Services and BLM preferred alternative will be available in May 1990.

503.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I urge the Forest Service to limit access to the South Fork and Hite Cove to hiking and horsebacking.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 108, 116.

504

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I recommend and urge support of Alternative B for the South Fork. Also I am opposed to the trail improvement up river from Hite Cove to the Park boundary.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 117.6, 106 and 105. The levels of maintenance for the trail will be considered in the Implementation Plan. this level will suggest the "improvement" levels.

506

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I would like to see the Merced River maintained in as wild a state as possible. Please emphasize use by non-motorized vehicles, bicycles, rafting, kayaking and by hikers, and not use by motorized vehicles.

REPLY: Please refer to 107, 111, 114, 115, 211.1. The rivers will be maintained and managed according to the river's approved classifications. The Merced river's classification is "recreational." This means it will be managed to keep the existing motorized vehicles, roads trails and commercial development. Still, the South Fork is classified "wild and "scenic" and will be managed according to these more natural values. We also have to follow guidelines under our Forest Resource and Land Management Plan. For example the plan indicates that the 2 mile Hite Cove "scenic" section is also within a SPM (semi-primitive motorized) area. This means that existing motorized vehicles are presently allowed.

507

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I have been a resident of the El Portal area for 15 years and have worked as a naturalist in Yosemite for most of those years. I remember when only locals hiked the lower section of the trail to Hite Cove and when the Alder Creek trail was nearly impassable. The lower South Fork Canyon is one of the most unique wild areas in California. Even though it is adjacent to a heavily visited National Park, it is seldom visited. Over time that will change and it is important that we keep the distant future in mind. Since there are few low elevation wilderness areas in California, places such as the lower canyon of the South Fork could be damaged by overuse during the spring and fall when the high country is less accessible. Each time I stay at Bishop Creek camp I see new piles of non-backpacker type garbage left by what I assume, are stock users that come down the Iron Creek Trail in autumn on hunting or fishing excursions. Each year I clean up as much as I can, but the following year there are new bottles, beer cans, pots and gun shells. If bridges are built across the South Fork at Devils Gulch and Hite Cove, I fear that this would make the trail more accessible to stock use and damage will increase. This year the back country staff in Yosemite was cut. Will the Forest Service have the staff to patrol the South Fork especially during the hunting season? Will you have the personnel to maintain the trail in the future from the damage incurred by stock? Will, you be able to haul out the trash, regulate the numbers of visitor and protect the water supply?

**REPLY:** One of the good things about the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is that it gives direction to the agencies to complete a management plan for the areas within the designated river corridor. With comments like yours, we can determine the issues and problems. We can then complete these environmental analysis documents using this input. We can then select a preferred alternative and complete an Implementation Plan that includes these kinds of concerns. The Implementation Plan will give direction as to the staff or partners needed to operate and maintain the South Fork Trail. Please review these documents when they come out and let us know if the draft solutions answer your questions.

511.8

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** If the other side (Merced, old Incline road) is developed as a trail, gates or posts will be needed occasionally to discourage 4wd vehicles.

**REPLY:** Types of traffic control devices used will be based on the the alternative selected. This is a good idea

assuming the 4WD vehicles will be using the Merced road and not the old Incline road.

**ISSUE: MINERALS: WHERE AND WHAT KINDS OF MINING ACTIVITIES ARE APPROPRIATE WITHIN THE RIVER CORRIDOR. SHOULD THERE BE SEASONS FOR RECREATIONAL MINING? WHAT KINDS OF REHABILITATION TO EXISTING MINES IS APPROPRIATE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY?**

109

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** All residents of this community should be given a written notice of intent and deadlines of appeal. The LOR-E-6 mining and supply commends the Forest Service for their September 21 1989 presentation. We should remember the role mining had in the development of California. the individual miner originally found, explored and developed the Merced River Canyon. Do not condemn their way of life. We support Alternative D, excluding #17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 but including #17 and 18 of Alternative C.

**REPLY:** Thank you for your specific suggestions. We will consider them in the preferred alternative. You will be kept informed of the planning and appeal process.

117.5.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** This is a great idea to prepare a withdrawal from mineral entry proposal.

**REPLY:** The purpose would be to allow recreation type mining activities under short term special use permits in areas that do not already have valid mining claims.

117.5.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** This (materials excavated during road construction or recreational rehabilitation) must apply to Caltrans as well since they routinely dump materials into the river.

**REPLY:** Agree, the guideline is directed to all agencies concerned with this issue that may have projects within the wild and scenic corridor. We will coordinate your concern with Caltrans and try to resolve this issue by suggesting specific guidelines in this Environmental Analysis document.

406 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** We have a concern over the occupancy in relation to mining claims.

**REPLY:** Occupancy of mining claims will be handled on a case by case basis. If necessary an operating plan will be completed which suggests the occupancy rate.

407 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Do wild and scenic river rules superceded current federal (1872) regulations?

**REPLY:** New mining claims and mineral leases are prohibited within the "wild" South Fork Merced River segments. This is according to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Existing valid claims would not be abrogated with these "wild" segments. Mining activities within the "scenic" and "recreational" classified are subject to regulations (36 CER 228). In these portions the Secretaries of Agriculture and

Interior may prescribe to protect the values of rivers. Mineral activities must be conducted in a manner that minimizes surface disturbance, sedimentation, pollution and visual impairment.

408 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Would like to see mining litter picked up.

**REPLY:** It is the responsibility of the owners to remove "litter." Owners could be cited if the guidelines for removal are not followed. Some of the "litter" may have historic value. Removing historic mining litter around the Hite Cove area will be done after the Forest Service determines the cultural value of the mining elements.

211.5

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am also concerned about the waste generated by the long term camps of dredgers. Do you check them to see if they are using proper methods of containing and disposing of their sewage? We need a river that is sanitary, as well as scenic.

**REPLY:** Monitoring and enforcement is certainly necessary. The Implementation Plan will address these issues.

511.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I think you should not allow dredgers, but panning is ok.

**REPLY:** Please refer to 407 (PM) and 117.5.1

**ISSUE: FIRE: WHAT MEASURES ARE NEEDED TO KEEP FIRE POTENTIAL AT ACCEPTABLE LEVELS IN THE RIVER CANYON? DO THE TWO NATIONAL FORESTS AND THE BLM HAVE A COORDINATED FIRE PLAN OR POLICY WITHIN THE WSR CORRIDOR?: WHAT WILL THE FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY BE WITHIN THE WSR CORRIDOR AND HOW WILL THIS COMPLEMENT OTHER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?**

117.7.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am in agreement with all of the items (in 3.1 management direction common to all alternatives) except for the requirement that prescribed burns meet the VQO (Visual Quality Objectives) within two years. I happen to believe that prescribed burns are not ugly even days after they burn.

**REPLY:** This is a subjective value. Research has indicated that some folks think fire is ugly to the landscape and others feel like you that the effects of fire is not ugly. We will reconsider the wording of this objective.

117.7.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I support this item. (Complete a fire management plan for the designated corridor).

**REPLY:** Yes a joint fire plan between agencies is needed.

117.7.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The dispersed camping along the Incline Road is creating fire problems. Keeping campers between the river and the road does not keep fires from escaping across the road and up the hill. I have personally

stopped two fires from crossing the road. As further evidence of the fire danger, one needs only to look at what happened to the Clearing House Fire in 1988. Since the values for which this segment of the Merced River are being degraded, dispersed camping along incline road must be eliminated regardless of which alternative is chose.

**REPLY:** Alternative C and D recommends to construct "developed" sites at selected existing (dispersed) use areas. For fire protection, safety, sanitation reasons and for the protection of the resources, Alternative B will also recommend low density "developed" sites.

409 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Would fire management needs be addressed on the north side (the main Merced) of the river?

**REPLY:** Yes, on the north side with approximately 4 miles of lands administered by the BLM, fire management will be controlled by the California Division of Forestry. There are also approximately 10 miles of lands administered by the National Forests which will be managed through agreements with the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forest Fire Control Crews.

211.6

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** A fire management plan for the corridor should be developed based on ecosystem management, not fire suppression. As you probably know the main canyon was burned annually by a railroad company as long as the railroad ran. Much of the canyon has not had a fire for years and needs it. I support plans to carry on extensive prescribed burns in both river canyons. This should eliminate future problems. with root rot and bark beetles.

**REPLY:** Thank you for these good ideas. We will try to use these ideas in the fire management plan for the area. Please refer to 117.1, and others.

**ISSUE: LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE: HOW WILL SCENIC EASEMENTS EFFECT THE PRIVATE LAND OWNERS? ARE THE FEDERAL OR COUNTY AGENCIES GOING TO DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE LAND OWNERS SO THAT THEY CAN MEET THE WSR ACT INTENT? HOW WILL THE PRIVATE LAND OWNERS INTERESTS BE ADDRESSED?**

117.0

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I would like to comment on the Draft Alternatives for the management of the Merced River as a component of the Wild and Scenic River system. I am a landowner in the river corridor on Incline Road and own a commercial quality whitewater raft. My comments reflect this ownership as well as a deep concern for the protection of the river.

**REPLY:** Your comments were excellent. Thank you for taking the time to review the draft alternatives in a detailed manner. Please refer to your 117 numbers found in this document to review your comments with our answers.

118.4

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** After "woodlands" along the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers have been identified

117.1.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** What do "retention" and "partial retention" mean?

**REPLY:** These scenic or visual resource terms are standards used throughout the Forest Service and BLM within the United States. They refer to the visual quality objectives (VQO) that each acre of forest or BLM land has been assigned. Both agencies document these objectives in their Land and Resource Management Plans. Partial Retention (PR) means that any planned management activity (facility developments) should be visually subordinate (after it has been completed) to the characteristic landscape.

**ISSUE: RECREATION: WHAT TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF RECREATION USE ARE APPROPRIATE WITHIN THE DESIGNATED CORRIDOR OR ON SPECIFIC SEGMENTS? WHAT STRATEGY OF RECREATION OPPORTUNITY UTILIZATION WILL BE EMPHASIZED AND WHERE WILL THEY BE LOCATED?**

117.10

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I support this (Establish limits of acceptable change-LAC) and look forward to participating in the process.

**REPLY:** You are already by sharing your values at this early stage before a draft is written. The LAC system gets the public involved at an early EIS or EA stage and then sets indicators for field managers within the Plan stage. The LAC system is a guideline system not policy like NEPA. The agencies are using NEPA and this LAC system together. The LAC indicators are recorded within the Plan after a preferred alternative is selected and this package is presented in the draft EIS.

117.10.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** No mention was made in this alternative (A, existing) of the present policy of allowing dispersed camping use to occur along Incline Road. I am adamantly opposed to this policy for the following reasons: traffic congestion. At times it is difficult to drive down the road because of the cars that are parked on both sides and in the middle. Sanitation. Although a few chemical toilets have been placed along the river, most people do not use them as evidence by the deposits behind nearly every rock and tree. Fire. Keeping campers between the river and the road does not keep fires from escaping across the road and up the hill.

**REPLY:** We will address this issue in the final Environmental Analysis documents. In alternative C and D we recommended these areas become "developed" so that the traffic, fire and sanitation issues could be mitigated. We will also consider this in Alternative B.

117.10.2

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I am not opposed to the addition (alternative B suggested no new recreation facilities will be added to developed sites within the designated river corridor boundaries) of a developed campground on the south side of the river, say at the PG&E substation.

**REPLY:** Yes, this is possible for a small campground. It has been planned in the past. Under alternative B, it would not be planned. However, a LAC "indicator" could change this position in the future.

117.10.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Does this (alternative B, maintain the number of whitewater allocations) mean lower quotas for commercial and private rafts? How does alternative C differ from alternative B? I agree with not requiring permits for private boats especially locals.

**REPLY:** No, means to maintain the same amount to the Merced River and add no new commercial whitewater permits to the South Fork Merced for alternative B. Alternative C is suggesting to establish whitewater allocations based on the existing carrying capacity of the river. This means that commercial permits could be increased based on indicators and carrying capacities. Alternative B, does not offer this opportunity. In no alternative are we suggesting to limit private rafters.

117.10.4

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** You don't show parking at the end of Incline Road. (Develop trailhead and parking at the road access points as necessary). This will be necessary if the planned trail becomes a reality. Just pave it. (Reconstruct Incline road with turnouts and shouldering).

**REPLY:** Agree, we should also show in the maps and this will be done in the next draft. The goal will be to improve the road to the minimum safety standards. Depending on the alternative selected, this could mean paving, with turnouts and shouldering as indicated in Alternative C.

117.10.5

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Ok, but not below Dry Gulch, as indicated on the map. (Develop primitive walk-in camping sites where necessary along the river corridor).

**REPLY:** Ok, we will reconsider where these walk-in camping sites should be located. These locations on the maps are concepts location at this level of planning.

118.3

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Non-motorized river running should continue on the Merced River. Put-in and take-out spots should be "hardened" to minimize adverse impacts to soils, vegetation, and water quality. Commercial river runners should not adversely impact private parties.

**REPLY:** Non-motorized river running will continue on the Merced. The put-in and take-out spots will be reanalyzed for location, traffic circulation sanitation facilities and public access. Commercial river runners will continue. The Implementation Plan will use indicators under the LAC system to help both agencies monitor the commercial and private use of the waters.

303

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** In the description of alternative B, it states "that commercial rafting use remains at the same levels." But, in section 3.5 it says "whitewater use would decrease from current levels." Which is it?

following current USDI-Fish and Wildlife Service and USDD-Army Corps of Engineers criteria, any private inholding should be identified for easement or acquisition under Land and Water Conservation Fund Act monies. A "land Acquisition" plan should be an integral part of the Management Plan.

REPLY: No "woodlands" have been identified within the Merced Wild and Scenic River systems that are administered by the USDA Forest Service or the USDI BLM. All private inholding within the river corridors have been identified. The Forest Service's goal is to acquire scenic easements with private land holdings or purchase these lands from willing-sellers. (see 117.6). The BLM will ask for land acquisitions from willing sellers.

154

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** As private land owners within the Merced River Corridor, we have the following concerns regarding the potential Incline Road trail proposal. We want to keep people off the walking bridge and keep people on the trail. We want no overnight camping on our land. The bridge needs to be accessible to emergency personnel. We need to have a telephone in case of emergencies. Would signing up as volunteers release us from liability. We do not want to be liable if people are allowed to walk on our land and then hurt themselves. We want to protect the potential hikers from our guard dogs and old private mine shafts within the area. We desire through trail access only. We want central signing, gates to protect our lands and improvements. We want the rafting lunch stops to be on government lands not our private lands. We want vehicle access to private property, fire access in case of emergencies. Need information stations which indicate that folks should not drink the water, show them the history of the area, indicate to them the parking restrictions, the hunting restrictions on private lands, the wildlife regulations, no firearms regulations that must be accordance with county and state regulations. We want to retain our junk piles without negative comments from the public. We want our lands posted so folks know it is private lands within a wild and scenic river corridor. We want no vandalism to our improvements, posted litter controls, and trash removals. Consider closing trail during high fire danger times. Who enforces the laws of the county? We want no motorized bikes along the proposed trail. Bike lane on Highway 140 is ok. A railroad would eliminate horses and be a major impact on our private access. We want no permanent toilets on private lands, but would like them left year around and be kept on north side of the road. We want the visitors to stay on the trail until they get to BLM or FS lands. We want informal trail agreements not formal scenic easements. Need official trail signs, bulletin boards at beginning of trail, removal of the old existing signs.

REPLY: We hear you and will make every effort to accommodate your private land desires within the laws of the Wild and Scenic rivers Act.

410 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Why is the Forest Service acquiring easements, and the BLM acquiring property?"

REPLY: The BLM is considering purchase of private lands through a willing seller-willing buyer agreement and possibly by fee title purchase, exchange or donation. The

Forest Service is considering scenic easements which also can be purchased, whereby the landowner maintains ownership, but agrees to limit the type of use or development that can occur on his or her land. The Forest Service is also considering acquiring property from willing sellers. The BLM feels acquiring property is more economical than acquiring scenic easements.

411 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Concern over liability issues on the trail passing through private property.

REPLY: If an easement is in place through private property the government is responsible for any liability. The private property owners are also protected by California statute.

416 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** How do agencies acquire private land. How is it paid for? Do counties care that it is removed from tax roles?

REPLY: Private land is acquired through exchanges, purchasing, donations and as a last resort condemnation. It is paid for in numerous ways like bonds, trades and Congressionally appropriated monies. Lands removed from the tax base are usually nonrevenue producing lands, and the counties can be reimbursed for lands removed.

417 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Under what circumstances would condemnation be used?

REPLY: Federal agencies only use condemnation as a last resort. The reasons to use would be to prevent existing or potential land use or developments from degrading the outstanding values of the wild and scenic river corridor.

**ISSUE: VISUAL RESOURCES: HOW CAN THE NATURALLY APPEARING LANDSCAPE VIEWED FROM WITHIN THE RIVER CORRIDOR BE MAINTAINED OR IMPROVED? WILL ALL THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS MEET THE CRITERIA OF VISUALLY NOT EVIDENT OR VISUALLY SUBORDINATE WHEN Implemented? HOW WILL THE SCENIC OR VISUAL QUALITY OF THE WSR AREA BE MAINTAINED?**

117.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** What action will triggered by a degradation of quality and what standards will be used? (Prepare a visual resource monitoring plan and establish photo points).

REPLY: The Forest Service and BLM will follow the LAC (Limits of acceptable change) system to monitor actions. This system will be used for the preferred alternative and put in the Implementation Plan. Indicators like "occurrence of litter" will be identified with a standard like "no more than an average of 4 occurrences of litter visible from watercraft or trails." We will then assign an inventory method, in this case it would be a "visual count" by a river manager on patrol trips. He/she would do this a "minimum of 4 times per year."

REPLY: Thank you for bringing this conflict to our attention. White water uses include commercial rafting, noncommercial rafting and kyaking. White water uses, including commercial rafting, would not decrease under Alternative B.

304

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors request that current policy of restricting motorized public access on Indian Flat road (North Side Hite Cove) remain.

REPLY: This policy is retained in all alternatives except alternative D.

305

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Mariposa County Board of Supervisors does not feel dispersed camping along the Merced River is appropriate, but a staffed campground might be.

REPLY: Alternative D emphasizes and converts dispersed camping along the Merced to developed sites. Perhaps the "dispersed" camp sites suggested in alternative B or C should become controlled by zoning with appropriate facilities for safety and health reasons. With "developed" sites, campground hosts could be used for staffing. Staffing requirements will be addressed in the draft Implementation Plan.

412 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Concerned that rafting put-in areas be placed in the best areas for water.

REPLY: Yes put-in areas will be placed to maximize easy entry into water. The location of parking, sanitation, traffic circulation, safety and existing resources will also be considered.

413 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Above Briceburg increased use is not being managed.

REPLY: Increased use is being managed, and will continue to be managed both on the lands administered by the Forest Service and the BLM through the wild and scenic river Implementation Plan.

414 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Commercial rafting should be controlled so that private access is not impacted.

REPLY: Commercial rafting is controlled and limited. BLM has plans to address private vis. commercial effects. Both the Forest Service and BLM will also address this issue thorough the wild and scenic river Environmental Analysis and Implementation Plan. Private lands within the corridor may be the issue. Commercial rafting "lunch" stops will be controlled through the Implementation Plan.

415 (PM)

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Is the proposed railroad private or public. Will it be addressed in the EA.

REPLY: The railroad proposal is private. It will be addressed in this environmental analysis only for the proposed 14 miles from Briceburg to El Portal.

204.1

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Concerning the Main Fork Merced. I find that there is an excessive amount of litter and garbage along the banks and in the shallow portions of the river. Trash cans in heavily used areas are strongly recommended.

REPLY: Please see 105. Trash in this country is a big issue. Trash along the Merced is an issue also. Who is responsible. The user or the public agency who does not always get funding to operate and maintain these problems. The Implementation Plan will provide the criteria for operation and maintenance of this area through the LAC system. We will consider the types of trash management. The Pack-it-in-out policy seems to be working in many of our areas. Education might be the key.

206

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I recommend that you adopt alternative B. This alternative appears to be more consistent with the Wild and Scenic designation.

REPLY: We will consider this alternative. Please refer to 111 and 118.1.

207

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** I urge you to adopt alternative B. We need to learn from our past practices that everyone's desires can't be met at the expense of the environment. Desires are fleeting thing, the environment must sustain not only us, but our future generations. Thank you for providing alternative B. It is nice to see alternatives that provide a broad range of options.

REPLY: Thank you for your positive comments. Please refer to 113 and 117.6.3.

211.8

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** More management of rafter, both commercial and private, is vital to the protection of the river. Whitewater recreation users need more designated pull outs and maps of where private property boundaries exist. Commercial boats should be checked to make sure they are carrying porta potties. Several pullouts used by commercial rafters smell like an outhouse after a full season of use.

REPLY: The joint Implementation Plan between the BLM and the Forest Service will provide us with the management guidelines to mitigate any rafting problems. At present the BLM manages the commercial rafters both on their 4 miles and the Forest Service's 10 miles of administered lands. Both agencies have "Memorandum of Understanding." Each agency is responsible for the private rafters within the agencies administered land boundaries. These policies may continue. Still, the policies will be monitored to see if changes will be necessary. Both put-in and pull-out locations will be upgraded with proper sanitation and parking improvements as necessary. Making more maps available is a good idea and will be considered.

508

**PUBLIC CONCERN:** Many Mariposans worked long and hard to preserve the South Fork of the Merced River. I choose alternative B. This will be the better management plan for keeping this natural area for all to appreciate and enjoy. Would a rest room facility be possible within this are?

REPLY: We will consider alternative B and the location and installations of rest rooms at selected locations.

509, 510, 502, 521, 513

PUBLIC CONCERN: I favor alternative B. Thank you for all your hard work. I would support management such as this for the South Fork. Thanks for offering a choice such as alternative B. The Northside Senior Citizens of Mariposa County prefer alternative B. The Heritage Trails Fund prefers alternative B. Plan B is the most realistic. To minimize impact, trails need to be maintained and improvements such as rest rooms at Hite Cove would benefit the environment.

REPLY: Thank you for your comments concerning alternative B.

511.4

PUBLIC CONCERN: Rafting on Merced River, charge for permits to pay for policing, limit number of commercial rafters allowed per day and number of boats commercially, but allow for private boats, kayaks, don't fill quota with commercial. In general keep lower numbers than current number, they distract from scenic beauty. Decrease current usage. No new permits on South Fork. Need more trash cans and porta-chem toilets at Red Bud put-in, seed with native grasses, clovers for erosion control.

REPLY: The BLM has a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Forest Service that shows that charges for permits already exist. The agencies already limit the number of commercial rafters allowed per day. We already allow for unlimited number of private boats. The Merced river is classified as "recreational." Existing amounts of use should not distract from the scenic beauty. None of the alternatives show commercial use on the South Fork. We will provide more sanitation and facilities at the boating put-ins.

511.5

PUBLIC CONCERN: No parking at suspension bridge, other than residents. No trail down to river. No porta pottie at Ned's Gulch, put downstream to encourage rafters to stop away from residential area at Neds or parking upstream. Police road on other side of river from highway (you refer to as Incline Road) for garbage. Place porta potties for swimmers, picnickers, rafters. Be careful, put them in area where they are not visible from the river and highway, but where any using a particular beach will see them.

REPLY: Thank you for these site location suggestions. The Implementation Plan will indicate approximate locations for toilets and other improvements. Recommendations for the operation and maintenance of river corridor will also be included in the Plan. Actual site locations of improvements and maintenance will be completed by both agencies using this Plan as a guide.

511.6

PUBLIC CONCERN: How about use of solar composting toilets like USPS is using in Yosemite? No motorized craft on river except for search and rescue.

REPLY: Yes, this type of toilet works well in specific locations. Believe the USPS got the toilet design from the

USFS. The Forest Service uses these toilets at selected locations. Alternative B and C indicate no motorized craft.

511.9

PUBLIC CONCERN: Do a rehabilitation survey for peregrine falcon habitats and protect them. Do not make Incline road larger, repair the grade south of Briceburg as needed, no new construction of roads.

REPLY: None of the alternatives are suggesting to make the Incline road larger. All alternatives are recommending minimal to maximum maintenance levels on existing roads. We are proposing no new roads in any alternative. We will protect the falcons.

ISSUE; LANDOWNERSHIP AND USE; ARE THE THREE FEDERAL AGENCIES GOING TO HAVE COORDINATED REGULATIONS FOR CAMPING, RAFTING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ALONG THE CORRIDOR? WHAT LEVEL OF STAFFING, SKILL, AND PLANNING WILL BE NEEDED TO ADMINISTER THE RIVER AREA?

118.1

PUBLIC CONCERN: The proposed Management Plan for the Merced River and South Fork Merced River should adhere to the intent and spirit of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542). The management Plan should serve as a clarifying amendment to the Forest Resource and Land Management Plan. The goal of the legislation is to provide an ongoing mechanism to perpetuate the Merced River and South Fork Merced River in a near natural condition.

REPLY: This Environmental Impact Statement and Implementation Plan for both of the Merced Rivers will adhere to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts (P.L. 90-542, P.L. 99-590, P.L. 100-149 and P.L. 100-534). The Implementation Plan will be a companion document to the first phase Boundary and Classification 1989 Environmental Assessment and the draft 1986 Forest Resource and Land Management Plan.

118.1.1

PUBLIC CONCERN: As defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers are to be maintained in a free-flowing condition. To the greatest extent possible, undeveloped portions for the rivers should be designated "wild." Vehicular access and development should be kept to an absolute minimum.

REPLY: The portions of the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers that were designated by a Congressional Act (P.L. 100-149) will be maintained in a free-flowing condition. Portions of the South Fork Merced have been classified as "wild" and have been documented in an Environmental Assessment (federal Register Vol 54, No. 152 of August 9, 1989). Vehicular access and development will be consistent with Department standards for the rivers Classifications of "recreational," "scenic," and "wild."

118.1.2

PUBLIC CONCERN: Law enforcement and resource management responsibility should be clearly identified. The USDI-National Park Service, USDI-Bureau of Land

Management, California Department of Forestry, and Mariposa County Sheriff should be included as cooperating agencies.

REPLY: Resource management responsibilities will be documented in the Plan. This Environmental Analysis document is already jointly being done by the BLM and Forest Service. The Plan will address guidelines for the administration of law enforcement within the USDI-Bureau of Land Management and the USDA-Forest Service administered lands. The other agencies responsibilities will be in accordance with the existing agreements between the agencies and the Forest Service or BLM.

118.1.3

PUBLIC CONCERN: To the extent possible, GIS programs such as Map Grafix or ARC/INF should be used to identify and quantify river resources. Unless current GIS methods are used as an integral part of the Management Plan the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forest may overlook critical resources, be subject to public criticism and possibly adversely impact the river corridors.

REPLY: The forest may have a GIS (geographic information system) on line by 1992. The existing geographic information concerning the wild and scenic river resources values are presently stored on standard overlay maps. All existing known resource data has been documented in the Boundary and Classification Environmental Assessment. This existing information data will be used to complete this phase of planning by the November 1990 deadline in accordance with 100-149 Act.

202

PUBLIC CONCERN: Save what is left of our rivers by including them in the Wild and Scenic River system.

REPLY: The Merced and South Fork Merced will be saved and are already included in the wild and scenic river system. This Environmental Analysis document will provide guidelines on how they will be used and managed. Please refer to 118.1 and 118.1.1.

300

PUBLIC CONCERN: Alternative D would negate Wild and Scenic status and may invite lawsuits.

REPLY: Alternative D does not negate Wild and Scenic river status. Congress designates the wild and scenic rivers. By law each alternative must meet the criteria that relates to the WSR laws and agency classification criteria. Under alternative D, the use and development allowed within each river segment approaches, but does not exceed the upper limit of the criteria for each river classification. Under NEPA, we must examine a full range of alternatives. Alternative D gives us this opportunity to analyze a maximum development range alternative.

306

PUBLIC CONCERN: The Mariposa County Board of supervisors thanks the BLM and FS for providing law enforcement coverage in the Merced River Canyon. Please continue.

REPLY: Thank you for your comment. Although not addressed in the alternatives, law enforcement will continue at a level that is consistent with need and funding. We will

address the skills, personnel and partnership requirements in the Implementation Plan.

307

PUBLIC CONCERN: The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors requests that USFS have an increased awareness of emergency medical services.

REPLY: The level of emergency medical services provided by USFS is not addressed in the alternatives but is assumed to remain constant. If current or future services are not adequate, USFS is willing to work with other agencies and individuals to improve those services. We will be indicating the staffing and skill needs for administration of the river areas within the Implementation Plan after a preferred alternative is selected.

511.7

PUBLIC CONCERN: Involve the USPS now in plan and opinions submitted. How will sewage, development of El Portal, by Park Service affect the river. Population will increase and so park service should be involved now as they own most of the land in El Portal area. The BLM and Forest Service are not seeking comments on this issue. How will their new apartments, proposed in view of the river, warehouses etc. be affected by and affect the wild and scenic river status.

REPLY: The Park Service has been involved with BLM and the Forest Service in the planning of the Merced and South Fork Merced River for the past five years. When Congress designated both these rivers the Act specified a specific date (Nov 1990) that the BLM and Forest Service should have their implementation plan completed for their administered portions of the river. The Park Service has deferred their implementation planning for their portions of the wild and scenic river to relate to their Master Park Planning.

ISSUE; FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE; WHAT WILL THE IMPACTS BE ON WILDLIFE FROM RECREATION ACTIVITIES, MOTORIZED USES, MINING, AND FUELS MANAGEMENT? WHAT KINDS AND AMOUNTS OF WILDLIFE HABITAT WILL BE PROVIDED AND WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT ON HABITATS?

118.5

PUBLIC CONCERNS: Mitigation and mitigation monitoring must be an integral part of the Management Plan. Craig Johnson, of the Environmental Field Service Program, Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, has prepared a detailed manual for mitigating development-wildlife conflicts.

REPLY: Thank you for this information. To date there have been six professional biologists involved from two Federal agencies in the monitoring of this phase of planning. We will rely on their judgement to determine if other systems can be helpful.

209



**PUBLIC CONCERN:** It is imperative that these wild and scenic river segments be fully protected, to maintain their natural integrity and support diverse and abundant indigenous wildlife populations. The management plan for these river segments should reflect these positions and should give the benefit of any doubt to resource preservation. No logging, mining, livestock grazing, off-road vehicle recreation, or other potentially disruptive human activities should be allowed. We recommend that the Forest Service work to avoid habitat fragmentation and to implement landscape linkages to help mitigate for already fragmented habitats.

**REPLY:** All wild and scenic river segments will be protected to maintain existing resource, wildlife and public use activities. This will be according to the wild and scenic laws and regulations that relate to the approved river classifications of "wild," "scenic," and "recreational." A Implementation Plan will reflect these positions. A wide range of silvicultural practices could be allowed, mining could continue, livestock grazing could continue and off-road vehicle recreation could continue depending on the designated classifications. These classifications have been established for the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers with an approved classification and boundary EA completed in 1989. The wildlife management within the river corridor will be coordinated with other responsible agencies as shown in the Plan. Please refer to 118.1.1

## APPENDIX C,

### INTERNAL SCOPING MEETINGS

#### RESULTS OF WSR INTERNAL SCOPING MEETING HELD 06/01/89, MARIPOSA RANGER DISTRICT, OAKHURST, CALIFORNIA

##### PRESENT:

Tom Efird, District Ranger, MRD  
Brian Curtis, Resource Officer, MRD  
Nick Nixon, Special Uses Officer, MRD  
Fred Robberson, Transportation Engineer, MRD  
Gary Thompson, District Timber Officer, MRD  
Maria Nelson, Administrating Officer, MRS  
Mary Keith, District Archeologist, MRD  
Wallace McCray, ID Team Leader, SO  
Nancy Fleenor, Recorder, MRD  
Bonnie Musick, Facilitator, MRD

##### MEETING OBJECTIVE

Scope the possible issues, concerns, and opportunities for this project, identify the possible key issues and concerns, select potential I.D. team and formulate public involvement plan.

##### Questions....(I) = Issue, (C) = Concern, (O) = Opportunity

- (C) Will activities effect SOHA? (seg 2,6 SFM)
- (O) There are Recreation opportunities in River Canyon. (all)
- (C) Will Visual Quality Objectives affect management activities outside the river boundaries? (all)
- (I/C) Will additional transportation access be required? (all)
- (C) Will there be new mix of traffic using existing systems? (all)
- (C) Will all trails and trailheads have increased use? (all)
- (I/C/O) What kind of trails, foot, horse, motor vehicle/non-motorized will be allowed? (all)

(I/C) Will activity use have direct or indirect impact on cultural resources? (all)

(C) Are all political entities involved? (all)

(I/C) Will this affect private landownership adjacent and within WSR corridors? (all)

(C) Will other management activities require access? (all)

(I/C) What effect will WSR have on Hite's Cove OHV route? (seg 7 SFM)

(C) Will there be a consistency of management plans across agency boundaries? (all)

(C) What effect will WSR have on wildlife project in Merced River drainage areas? (seg 6,7,8, 8A)

(C) What effect will there be on fisheries? (all)

(I/C) What effect will there be on permitted commercial use?(all)

(C) What effect will there be on T.E resource protection? (all)

(I/C) Are there identified American Indian religious sites, current gathering use areas? (all)

(I/C) What will be the impact of mining activities within permitted areas including access? (all)

(I/C) What opportunities will there be for interpretation of cultural resources and protective signing? (all)

(I/C) What limitations on camping, overnight use will there be? (all)

(O) There is an opportunity to incorporate the existing public input already gathered. (seg 7 SFM)

(C) What impact on threatened and endangered and sensitive plants will there be? (all)

(C) What impact will there be on Stanislaus grazing permits? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C) What impact will there be on timber sale quantities and effect on county funds (seg 6)

(I) Are Friends of Merced River Canyon involved? (all)

(O) What happens with Yosemite R.R. bed? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C) What will be the impact on rafting? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) What are the fire management impacts? (all)

(I/C) What will be the right of way access through to private lands problems? (all)

(C) Are there adequate sanitation facilities? (all)

(C) What is the recreation carrying capacity? (all)

(I/C) Will there be coordination with Cal Trns, Mariposa Co. traffic, safety and facilities? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

- (C) What will be the impact on the district staffing for regulating and administrating the river? (all)
- (I) Will this impact domestic water supplies or irrigation? (all)
- (C) What will be the point and non-point pollution problems? (all)
- (C/O) Will there be a need for emergency access, medical aid, heliport? (all)
- (C) What will the effect of commercial activities on the WSR (all)
- (I) Will permits for photography be allowed? (all)
- (O) Are there any opportunities for long term recreation facility developments like new trails etc? (all)
- (C) Are new bridges permissible? (all)
- (C) Who will do the appropriate signing? (all)
- (C) What structures for administration facility will be allowed? (all)
- (I/C) There is a need to remove personal property for safety and health reasons at the Hite Cove area. (seg 7 SFM)
- (C) Will there be a system to monitor the public use and impact of resources? (all)
- (C) There is a concern for public safety regarding use of stock. (all)
- (I) Will any community be affected? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) What effect on Wildlife will there be on the Yosemite deer herd migration corridor? (all)
- (C) Will there be an affect on fuels management activity? (all)
- (C) What is the impact of proposed Saxon Creek Project on the WSR? (all)
- (I) What is the effect on existing permitted uses? (all)
- (I) What additional OHV use will be requested? (all)
- (I) What impact on bear hunter access will there be? (all)
- (I) What effects of designation on motorized use on or adjacent will be allowed? (all)
- (C) What impact will there be on Ponderosa Pine Research Area? (seg 6 SFM)
- (C) Have all impacted persons been notified? (all)
- (I) Will permits be required for access or use to the area? (all)
- (I) What effects will there be on SF Merced activities on Savages Trading Post? (seg 8A SFM)
- (O) What opportunities will there be for Natural Resource Interpretation? (all)

(C) How will we manage existing facility along 1/4 mile corridor?  
(all)

(C) How will the funds to support needed management activity be allocated? (all)

(I) What will be the effects regarding other agency Law Enforcement policies? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) What effect will the administration of the WSR have on other District activities? (all)

#### MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

To be completed at later date

#### SUGGESTIVE I.D. TEAM MEMBERS

Nick Nixon (proposed)

Wally McCray (already appointed by FS)

Brian Curtis (proposed)

Dave Harris (already appointed by Area Manager BLM)

#### POSSIBLE I.D. MEMBERS

Sarah Johnston (arch)

Mary Keith (arch)

Tom Lowe (transportation)

Ed James (transportation)

#### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

To be completed by 1 Sept 1989

Expect to have 2 or 3 public meetings

Acquire existing FS lists from Stanislaus and Sierra

Acquire existing Hite Cove list

Acquire Indian Groups lists

Acquire Political Groups lists

Put public meeting announcements in local newspapers like the Sierra Star, Mariposa Gazette, Merced Sun Star, and Madera Tribune and Fresno Bee

#### **RESULTS OF INTERNAL SCOPING MEETING HELD 07/07/89 FOREST SUPERVISORS OFFICE, FRESNO CALIFORNIA**

#### **PRESENT:**

Brian Curtis, Resource Officer, MRD

Joanna Clines, Botanist, SO  
John Lorenzoni, Range and Wildlife, SO  
Donna Heagy, Fisheries Biologist, SO  
Gary Schmitt, Soil Scientist, SO  
Tom Baxter, Recreation Officer, SO  
Marc Anderson, Assistant Forest Engineer, SO  
Sarah Johnston, Forest Archeologist, SO  
Wallace McCray, Forest Landscape Architect, SO

**MEETING OBJECTIVE,**

Scope the possible issues, concerns and opportunities and identify the top three issues, concerns and opportunities from this list.

**Question.....(I) = Issue, (C) = Concern, (O) = Opportunity**

- (I) What will be done with Hite Cove Interpretive Site? (seg 7 SFM)
- (O) Are we going to develop private lands regulations? (all)
- (I) What effects will the forest OHV Plan have on Hite Cove Area? (seg 7 SFM)
- (C) What types and levels of use traffic will be allowed? (all)
- (C) How will WSR affect general forest management areas outside the corridor? (all)
- (O) We can inventory the existing transportation system and mitigate as necessary. (all)
- (O) What type of road surfacing is appropriate for all road access systems? (all)
- (O) What will the opportunities for handicap access to recreation activities be? (all)
- (C) Will WSR designation impact Bishop Creek RNA? (seg 6 SFM)
- (O) What opportunities for interpretation will there be? (all)
- (O) What opportunities for signing of the fisheries will there be along the SFM? (seg 6,7,8 SFM)
- (O) Identification of transportation system expansions and improvements including rafting. (all)
- (C) What is the sanitary plan for rafting? (7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) What are the air quality controls on the WSR? (all)
- (C) How much will WSR designation increase use? (all)
- (C) How will bus stops be mitigated? (7,8,9 Merced)

(O) A transportation plan should be implemented with the management plan. (all)

(C) What impacts will new and existing mining activity have on all resources? (all)

(C) Who controls the law enforcement along the corridors? (all)

(C) What level of monitoring will there be on mining activities and will it increase? (all)

(C) Who enforces monitoring of mining activities? (all)

(C) What level of rehabilitation will be completed on all resource activities? (all)

(C) Are there sensitive plants in the WSR corridors and if so what effect will side casting spraying have on these species? (all)

(O/C) Are you going to coordinate information gathering meetings with Cal trans, PG # E, County and BLM? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) What effect will the proposed rails to trails have on the arch? (7,8,9 Merced)

(O/C) Have we identified species to be used to rehabilitate? (all)

(I/C) What is future of " Yosemite Playland" sign? (seg 7,8 Merced)

(I) Will the Hite Cove Cultural Resources Plan be implemented? (seg 7 SFM)

(C) What impact will the Hite Cove plan have on the S.F. trail bridges? (seg 6,SFM)

(O) There is an opportunity to include the historical RR system in the existing trail. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) What will be the impact on rehabilitating, constructing trails on all resources like fisheries, cultural? (all)

(C) How will bussing to Yosemite National Park affect the WSR (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Are the sanitary facilities far enough back from the river to prevent water pollution? (all)

(O) We can protect the water quality from sanitation problems with proper placement of facilities. (all)

(C) Are quotas appropriate for camping, rafting etc? (all)

(C) Are we going to determine the appropriate ethnography level? (all)

(I) What controls on private expansion and development will there be and how and who will do the monitoring? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I) What commercial resort activities should occur on federal lands? (seg 7,8,9 Merced and 7 SFM)

(C) Is expansion of semi-primitive opportunities permissible?  
(all)

(C) What are the levels of acceptable change along the river corridor? (all)

(C) Will future deer herd management projects impact the WSR? (seg 6,7 SFM)

(C) What are the acceptable levels of domestic pack and stock livestock grazing within the WSR corridor? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

#### MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

1. Transportation, access points, trail heads
2. Lands allocation and minerals use along the corridor
3. Arch. and mitigated

#### SUGGESTIVE I.D. TEAM MEMBERS

Tom Lowe, Transportation, SO  
Marcus Anderson, Transportation, SO  
Fred Robberson, Transportation, MRD  
Sarah Johnston, Forest Archaeologist, SO  
John Maschi, landscape architect, Stanislaus, SO  
Brian Curtis, Recreation, MRD  
Nick Nixon, Lands and Recreation, MRD  
Dave Harris, BLM

#### RESULTS OF WSR INTERNAL SCOPING MEETING HELD 07/11/89 MEETING HELD AT THE STANISLAUS NF, GROVELAND RD, GROVELAND, CALIFORNIA

#### PRESENT:

Kit Perlee, District Ranger, GRD, STNF  
John Maschi, Landscape Architect, SO, STNF  
Nick Nixon, Special Use Officer, MRD, SNF  
Brian Curtis, Resource Officer, MRD, SNF  
Dave Harris, Assistant Area Manager, BLM  
Wallace McCray, Landscape Architect, SO SNF

Question.....(I) = Issue, (C) = Concern, (O) = Opportunity



(C) What will the skills and staffing needs be to manage the river corridor? (all)

(C/O) What will the fire protection be for wildlife and prescribed burns? (all)

(C) What effect will the current grazing allotment and associated facilities have on the WSR? (all)

(C) Will the whitewater rafting permits continue to be coordinated by the BLM on behalf of the FS and Parks Service? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Who will be taking care of the monitoring of the special use and mineral management along the river corridor? (all)

(O) Monitoring with the LAC system (levels of acceptable change) is a good system to get things done through the management plan.(all)

(O) The LAC system allows the management plan to be a living document which gives managers a chance to try it and fix it if its wrong without a management plan change. (all)

(C) What is the administration agreement between the Stanislaus and the Sierra with grazing within the corridor? (seg 7,8 Merced)

(I/C) What will the old railroad trail become between the BLM and FS administered lands? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C) How will the private land within the BLM and FS be jointly addressed in the management plan? (all)

(I/C) What easements will be necessary in the management plan? (all)

(I/C) What recreation opportunities will there be within the recreational classifications? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(O) Are there opportunities to create new campgrounds through partnerships? (all)

(C/O) What cultural, interpretive opportunities will there be. (all)

(C) Should water rights issues be addressed in this plan? (all)

(C) Will the T and E concerns be addressed? (all)

(C) What will the dredging and mining policies be within the WSR corridors? (all)

(C/O) How will the plan protect the outstanding remarkable values of the river corridor? (all)

(I/O) Will there be an alternative that shows the mines withdrawn for new mines within the "wild" classifications? (all)

(I) How are off highway vehicles going to be handled? (all)

(I) How are weekend suction dredging activities going to be handled? (seg 7,8,9 Merced, seg 7 SFM)

(I) There will be no recreation dredging? (seg 7,8,9 Merced,seg 7 SFM)

(I) Is there going to be motorized use or internal combustion engines allowed on the water? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) No helicopters allowed within the corridor? (all)

(I) How will the mule or stock overnight use be handled on the river corridor? (all)

(O) There will opportunities for rescue, life, limb and property within the river corridor. (all)

(I) Will para sailing be allowed on the river? (all)

(O) There will be opportunities to improve the existing facilities and rest stops along the water edge. (all)

(I/C) Is sanitation and water quality going to be monitored? (all)

(I) How are we going to regulate the traffic on Incline road? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Does the county maintain the Incline road without an easement? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Are we going to allow dispersed camping at different levels on the BLM and the FS administered lands? Can these be coordinated to the same standards for the public's benefit? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Is the vehicle parking standards going to be different or the same with the BLM and the FS administered lands? Can these be coordinated? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Is the camping restrictions going to be the same on the BLM and FS administered lands? Can the length of stay etc be coordinated? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Is air quality standards going to effect the WSR corridor? (all)

## MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### Key Issues:

Motorized or non-motorized on trails

Mining and minerals permits

ROS values on resources

### Key Concerns:

Skills and Staffing

Coordination and agreements between agencies

Cultural and interpretation goals

Fire management between two forests, two agencies

**SUGGESTIVE ID TEAM MEMBERS**

Have three or four core ID team members with a 2nd phase specialist team who are responsible for reviews.

**RESULTS OF WSR INTERNAL SCOPING MEETING HELD  
07/14/89 AT THE BLM FOLSOM OFFICE, FOLSOM,  
CALIFORNIA**

**PRESENT:**

Tim Carroll, Geologist, BLM  
Bob Lehman, Wildlife Biologist, BLM  
Scott Murrellwright, Geologist, BLM  
David Harris, Assistant Area Manager, BLM  
Jim Eicher, Recreation Planner, BLM  
Deanne Swickard, Area Manager, BLM  
Wallace McCray, Forest Landscape Architect, SNF, FS

Meeting Objective:

Scope the possible issues, concern, and opportunities and identify the top three issues, concern and opportunities from this list.

**Question.....(I) = Issue, (C) = Concerns, (O) Opportunities**

(I/C) Can we designate a no camping at rafting put in site season like from April to July? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C) Can we designate a uniform dredging season between both agencies like from July 15 to Nov 1? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C) Can we issue uniform dredging guidelines between all agencies and the two forests? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C)

(C) This implementation plan should be consistent with the BLM study recreation plan. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) Fire restrictions should be consistent with both BLM and Forest Service and Yosemite 5 year burn plans. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(I/C) There should be no residential living on the river. (all)

(O) There should be complete salamander studies both on the FS and BLM administered lands within the river corridor. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

- (O) The spotted owl, eagle, grey owl and potential for all T and E concerns should be studied prior to major developments. (all)
- (O) There should be mutual regulations of law enforcement within the BLM and FS administered lands. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) The number of rafting days allowed should be consistent with both agency publications manuals. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) The number of recreation camping days should be the same for both agencies. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (O) Fish stocking should be consistent with both agencies. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (O) There are good opportunities for interpretive facilities of the rare and endangered plants etc. Locations should be at Briceburg, Yosemite, FS and joint interpretive locations along the river corridor. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (I/C) There should be consistent rules and regulations for the hike/bike/non-motorized planned joint agency trail. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (I) OHV use is prohibited in canyon corridor by BLM and FS. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C/O) What are the occupancy trespass rules, do the State and County laws apply for both the FS and BLM administered lands? (all)
- (O/I) Land acquisition of private property should be consistent between both agencies. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) Both agency LAC indicators should be the same. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) Both agencies should be consistent on issuing commercial permits within the WSR corridor. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) Will there be motorized use allowed on the river? (all)
- (C) BLM is allowing recreation dredging activity on the river. Is this consistent with the Forest Service Policy? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) BLM is allowing dispersed camping any where along the river. Is this consistent with the Forest Service Policy? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (C) There should be no overnight camping at the commercial launch sites. Is this consistent with both agencies? (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (O) There should be an increase of launch sites along the river with the necessary parking provided by both agencies. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)
- (O) There should be joint funds for operation and maintenance and cost for improvements of launch sites. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) What are the camp fire permits policies for both agencies?  
(seg 7,8,9 Merced)

(C) The grazing permits should be consistent between both agencies and both forests. (seg 7,8,9 Merced)

#### MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

##### Key issues:

Consistent management of dredging between agencies

Withdrawal of stream side mining claims

Off road vehicles and motorized equipment

Residential occupancy

##### Key concerns:

Consistent management direction between three federal agencies

Recreation management between agencies

##### Key opportunities:

Rehabilitated or new recreation and interpretive facilities

Management Agreements between agencies, state and counties

Mutual regulations between agencies, state and counties

#### SUGGESTION I.D.TEAM MEMBERS

Dave Harris will represent BLM values

Wallace McCray is acceptable to BLM as team leader for this 2nd phase of planning

## APPENDIX D

### MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The items listed below are management actions that should be carried out within the first year after the EIS and Implementation Plans are completed. They will all be coordinated by the Project River Manager and completed by the responsible specialist or manager responsible for the resource. Other Management Actions as listed in the Implementation Plan for each river zone and common to all management zones are to be scheduled by the designated Wild and Scenic River Project Manager or assigned responsible officer. There are no required actions to mitigate potential significant environmental effects (mitigating measures).

#### COMMON TO ALL RIVER ZONES (RECREATION, SCENIC, WILD I & WILD II)

##### ADMINISTRATION:

- \*Approve annual budgeting and work planning processes through the District Ranger for the Forest Service and Area Manager for the Bureau of Land Management.

- \*Acquire appropriate funding through the agency budget process for the planning, design and construction of recreation development within the river corridor.

- \*Appoint a designated Wild and Scenic project manager or designated officer from each agency to implement W&SR planning.

##### AIR AND WATER QUALITY:

- \*Respond to local planning authorities when development outside forest jurisdiction may impact forest resources.

##### CULTURAL RESOURCES:

- \*Complete a cultural resource inventory around the Hite Cove area before any permitted action, activity, or program is implemented.

- \*Identify all potentially eligible cultural properties that may be effected around the potential developed camping or hiking trail planned along the Merced Canyon.

\*Consult with Native Americans as interested parties on proposed undertakings.

**FACILITIES:**

\*Provide sanitation facilities in the areas of or during periods of concentrated use, where either increased management presence is necessary and or potential development exists for which a specific site plan is prepared.

**FISHERIES:**

\*Design management activities compatible with the State of California guidelines for this resource.

**FIRE MANAGEMENT:**

\*Use prescribed fire to enhance wild-values in all wild and scenic locations and under conditions described in the current forest management plans.

**GEOLOGY:**

\*Avoid activities on selected geologic sensitive areas.

**LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE:**

\*Pursue the acquisition of private lands or acquire scenic easements on private lands as necessary for project implementation.

**MINERALS:**

\*Manage commercial minerals according to current direction, and any new provisions that may be established in the pending Merced River Act that is presently under consideration by Congress.

**NOISE:**

\*Enforce state laws for noise control, including designating no shooting areas within the Recreation and Scenic Zones.

**PLANNING DIRECTION:**

\*Implement management directions as described in the Sierra and the Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans and the BLM Merced River Management Plan when these plans become approved.

\*Develop individual project plans and appropriate NEPA analysis documents for site specific management actions that may be necessary or as identified in this planning documents.

\*Contact neighbor public land agencies to coordinate planned management activities within the W&SR corridors.

#### **PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION:**

\*Provide Visitor Information Services materials at all designated developed recreation sites, and all trail heads.

\*Provide Identification, regulatory, warning, guide and information signs within the WSR corridors as appropriate.

\*Maintain present facilities and programs at a high level emphasizing self-service.

#### **RECREATION:**

\*Use the most recent accessible facility and program laws and guidelines when designing, rehabilitating, constructing or reconstructing facilities for people with disabilities. Determine the ROS classification then design the facility or program for all user groups including people with hearing, sight, or physical disabilities to meet these levels.

#### **SOCIAL:**

\*Fit the needs and expectations of the user groups where consistent with the emphasis values. Impose additional regulations to the extent necessary to manage the emphasis values.

#### **SOILS:**

\*Protect water quality and soil productivity through the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Make sure these BMP are in accordance with the most current version of "Water Quality Management for National Forest System Lands in California."

#### **THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES:**

\*Identify the species, location and habitat requirements of T&E species within the W&SR corridors.

#### **VEGETATION:**

\*Identify riparian zones and evaluate for compliance with Riparian Standards and Guidelines as indicated in current forest management practice documents.



\*Design management actions to maintain maximum biological diversity within the W&SR.

#### VISUAL RESOURCES:

\*Make sure that all constructed or rehabilitated facilities within the area will be visually not evident or visually subordinate to the existing characteristic landscape when completed.

\*Consider visual concerns of individual landowners and county and other agencies with and adjacent to National Forest and BLM system lands when planning management activities.

#### WATER QUALITY:

\*Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality and maintain soil stability.

\*Restrict vehicle access in stream-side management and riparian zones, except at designated put-ins and take-outs for water craft. (BMP 7-5, Control of Activities Under Special Use Permits.)

\*Locate new facilities and services, such as toilets and signs, outside the riparian zones. Relocate existing facilities as practical. (BMP 4-5: Control of Sanitation Facilities; BMP 4-6: Control of Refuse Disposal).

#### WILDLIFE:

\*Maintain habitat to insure all native fish, wildlife, and plant species will have adequate populations levels and distribution to provide for their continued existence throughout their current range.

## APPENDIX E

### REFERENCE MATERIAL AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following documents were used in the preparation of this Environmental Impact Statement:

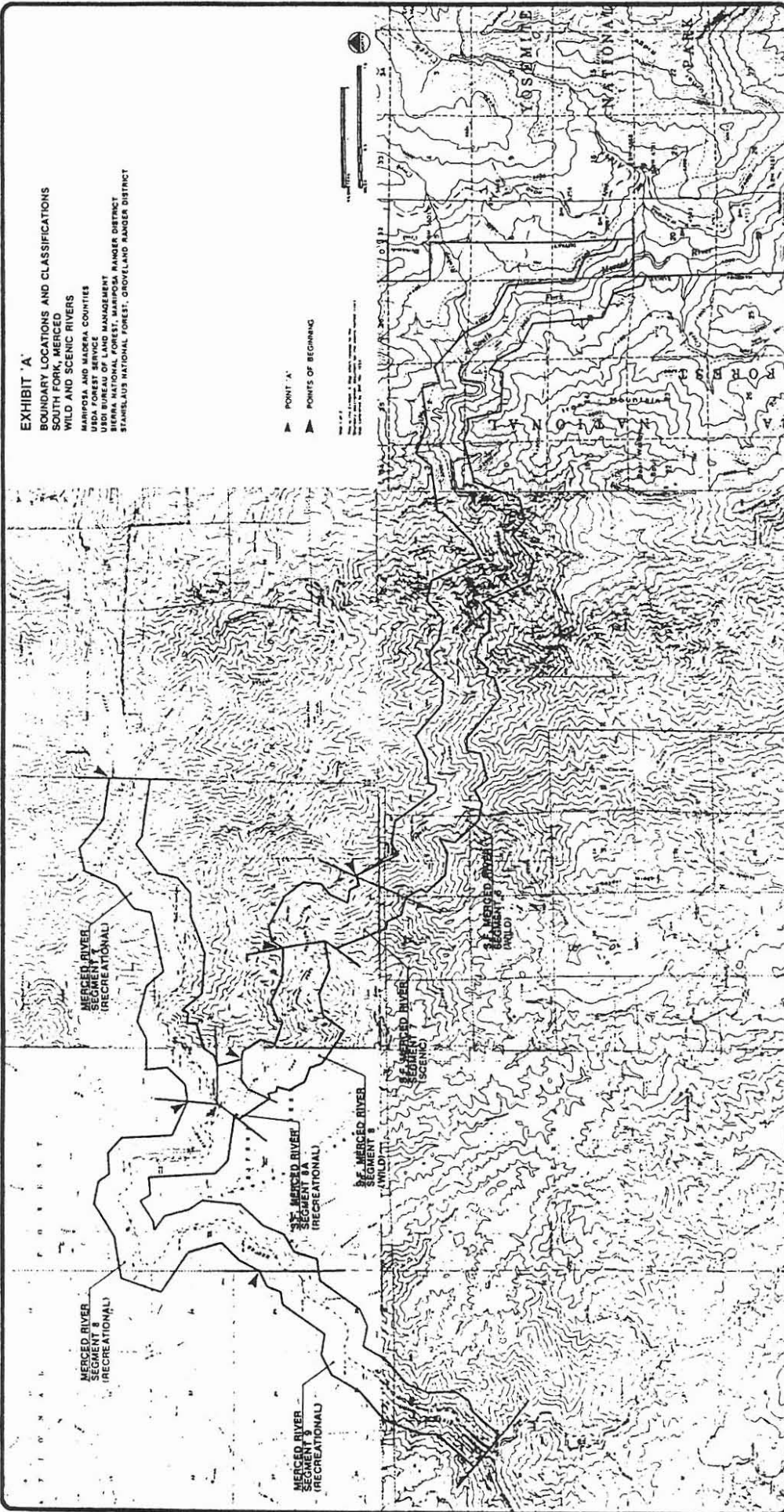
1. PUBLIC LAW, Wild and Scenic River Act (P.L. 90-542) Oct 1968
2. PUBLIC LAW, Wild and Scenic River Act (amended by P.L. 99-590), Oct 1986
3. PUBLIC LAW, Wild and Scenic River Act (amended by P.L. 100-149), Nov 1987
4. PUBLIC LAW, Wild and Scenic River Act (amended by P.L. 100-534), Oct 1988
5. DEPARTMENT STANDARD, Wild and Scenic River Federal Register Vol 47,173, Sept 1982
6. AGENCY STANDARD, Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 8), Jul 1987
7. AGENCY STANDARD, Forest Service Manual (FSM 1924), Jul 1988
8. AGENCY STANDARD, Forest Service Manual (FSM 2354), Feb 1987
9. AGENCY LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN, Sierra National Forest Draft Land and Resource Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement and the Forest Plan, Sep 1986

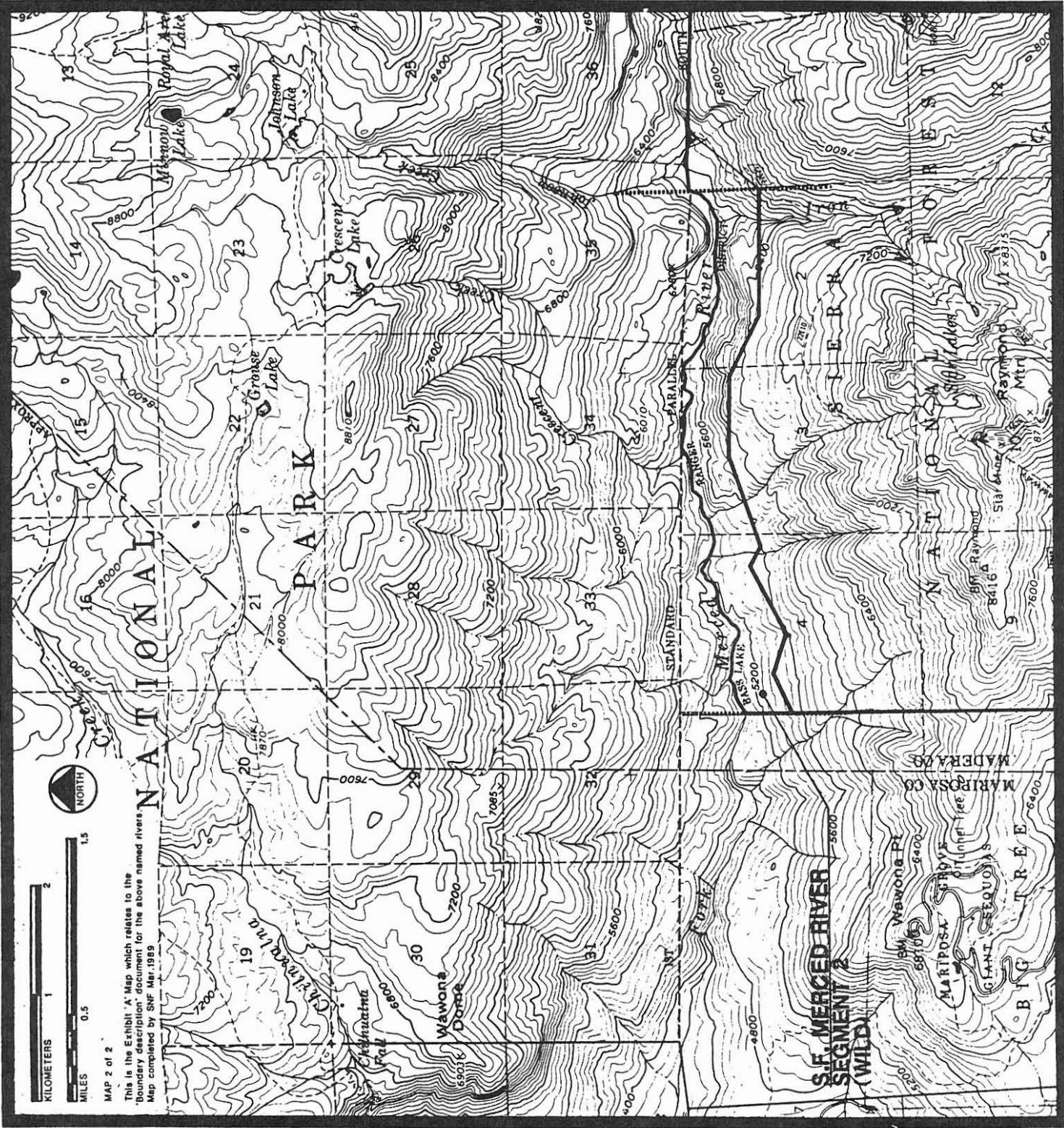
10. NATIONAL FOREST GUIDELINE, A Work Plan for the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers, Mar 1988
11. MERCED CANYON COMMITTEE, comments to Sierra National Forest (DEIS and PLAN), Jan 1987
12. RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN, Merced River Recreation Area, Sierra and Stanislaus National Forest, Apr 1964
13. AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, (Boundary and Classifications) Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers, USDA Forest Service, Sierra and Stanislaus National Forest & USDI Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Resource Area, 1988
14. USDI BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, Geographic Index of all Claims, Administrative State: California, 1989
15. MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN, USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Final, Mar 1991
16. MERCED RIVER TRAIL, N.P. Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance, Western Region, Draft, Aug 1989
17. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, Sierra and Stanislaus National Forest, Merced WSR Administrative agreements, Dec 1989
18. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, BLM and U.S. Forest Service, Commercial rafting on Merced River administrative agreements, Jan 1981
19. COUNTY LAND USE GUIDELINES, Mariposa County on private lands along WSR corridor, Chapter 17.2 etc, not dated

## APPENDIX F

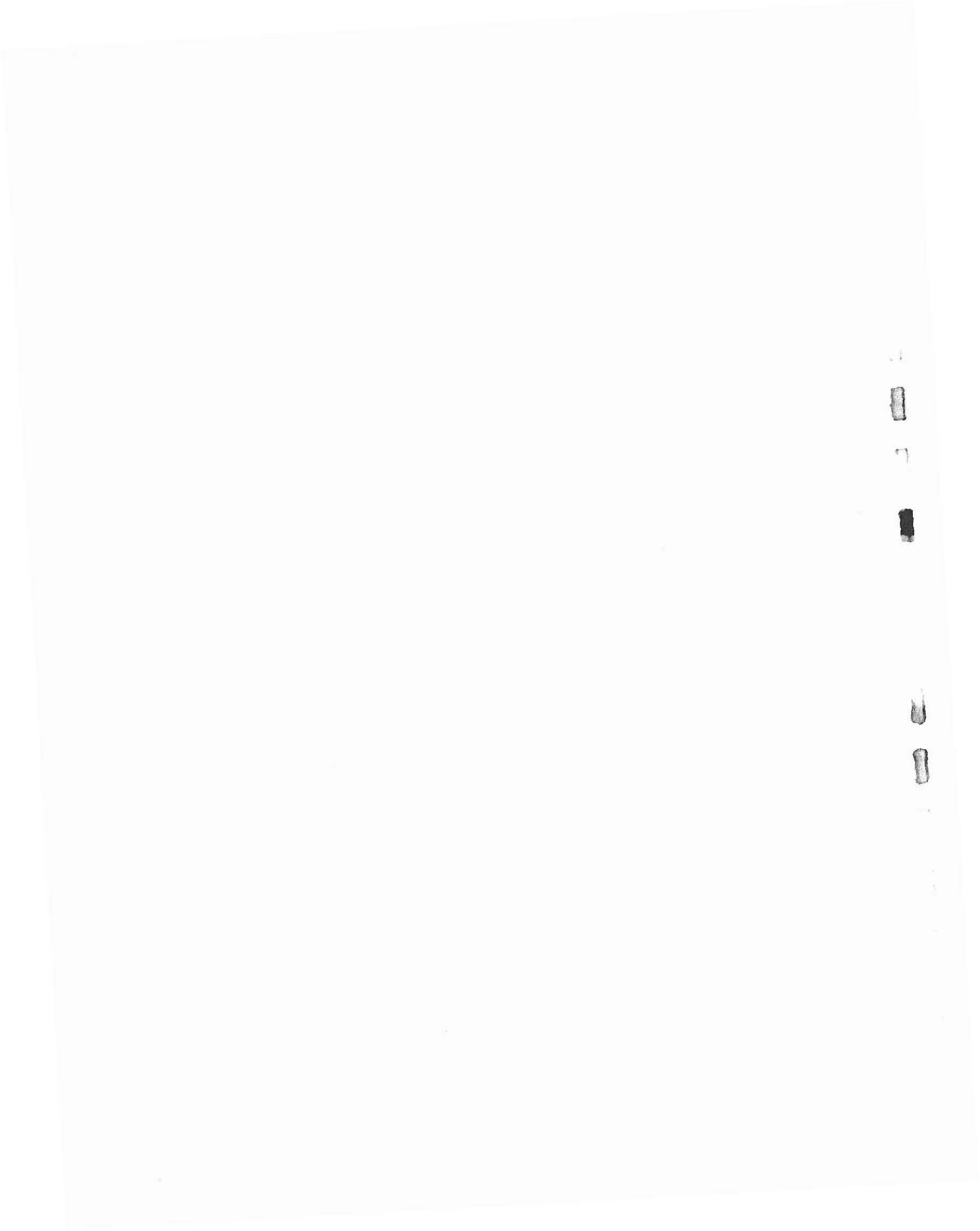
### BOUNDARY AND CLASSIFICATION DESCRIPTIONS

The 33 miles of designated Wild and Scenic Rivers administered by the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA Forest Service with 29 miles) and the Secretary of the Interior (USDI Bureau of Land Management with 4 miles) boundary location is shown on the enclosed maps and boundary description documents. An additional 3 miles jointly administered by the Forest Service and National Park Service is also shown on the enclosed maps and boundary description documents. There are approximately 9,943 acres within the 33 miles. This averages 301.3 acres per mile and meets the intent of Public Law 100-534, which indicates that the boundaries of designated rivers shall include an average of not more than 320 acres per mile. There are approximately 452 acres administered by the Forest Service within the 3 mile river corridor shared with the National Park Service (Yosemite). Approximately 8,738 (29 miles) acres are administered by the Sierra National Forest and approximately 1,205 (4 miles) acres are administered by the BLM. The 8,738 and 452 acres equals approximately 9,190 total Wild and Scenic River acres administered by the Forest Service within the Merced and South Fork Merced River corridors.





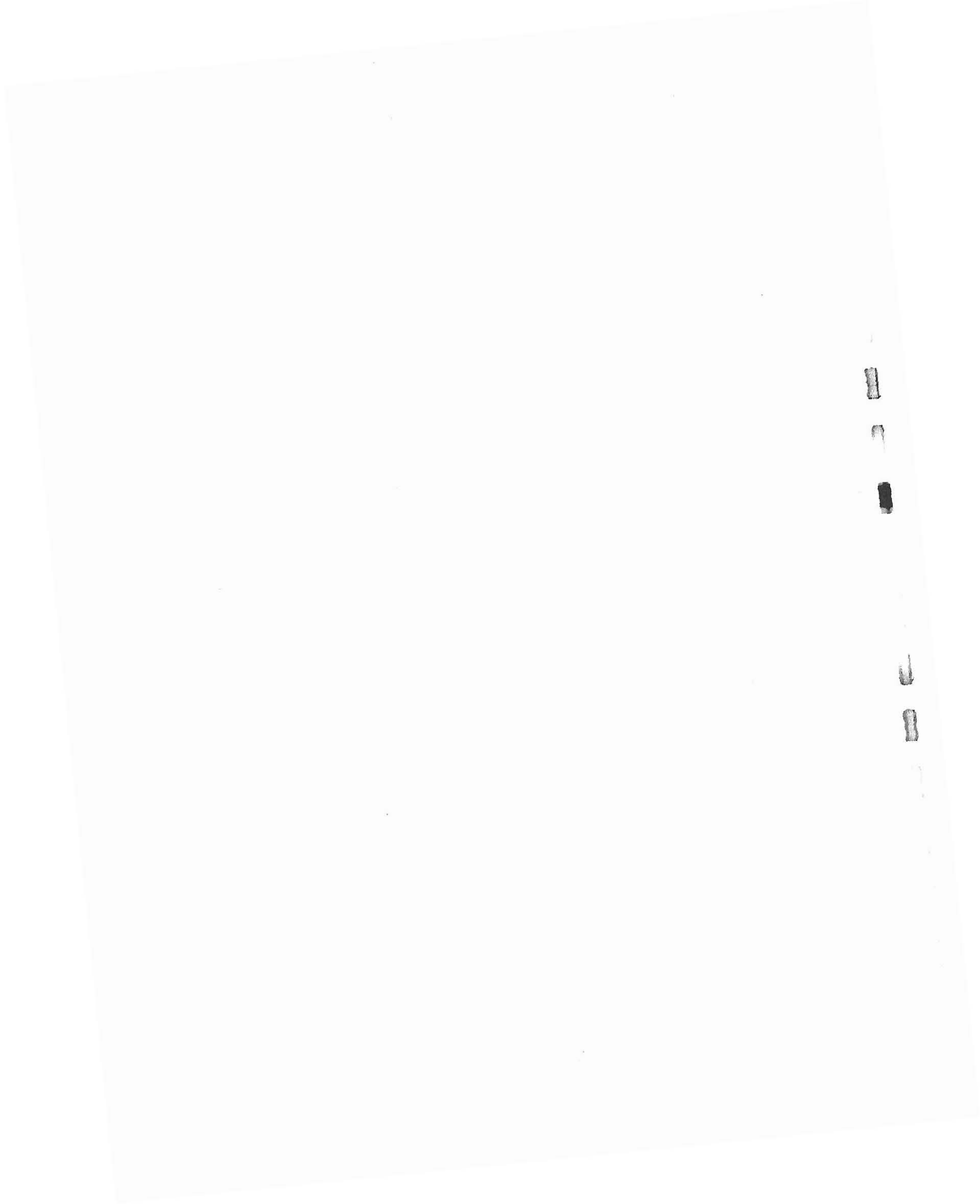
MAP 2 of 2  
This is the Exhibit 'A' Map which relates to the 'Boundary description' document for the above named rivers. Map completed by SNF Mar. 1989



**APPENDIX G,**

**DRAFT DEIS/PLAN WRITTEN COMMENTS AND  
AGENCY ANSWERS**





## DRAFT EIS/PLAN WRITTEN COMMENTS

THESE ARE "GENERAL" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN. EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

1.1, 2.1, 11.1, 15.1, 16.1

COMMENT I was appalled to learn that the Forest Service Management Team had changed the preferred alternative for the Merced and South Fork Merced WSR from B to C. Most of us who had worked tirelessly to obtain Wild and Scenic designation for the Rivers had indicated our preference for Alternative B. As the DEIS points out, "This alternative offers the greatest protection of Wild and Scenic River values of any alternative." The most immediate change occurs in the Hite Cove Scenic segment. Alternative C permits many activities which have the potential to degrade the values for which the river was designated. I hope this decision will be reconsidered. The DEIS also shows the cost of Alternative C to be 2.5 times the cost for B. In these days of impending budget cuts for domestic programs, it is difficult to comprehend the reasoning that would lead to the choice of the more expensive alternative.

ANSWER The first time the Forest Service recommended Alternative C as the preferred alternative was in the Draft EIS. Prior to this time potential alternatives were presented with no recommended alternative. All who worked tirelessly did an excellent job and obtained Wild and Scenic Designation for 114 miles. You are concerned with a 2 mile portion of the South Fork Merced River (approximately 1.7% of the 114 miles of designated WSR) where the Forest Service is recommending the retention of the existing OHV access system from Jerseydale on the South Side of Hite Cove. This recommendation in Alternative C is no change from the existing alternative A. We could find no existing degrading of existing values from over 20 years of this type of access use in our analysis. We therefore chose not to close the four wheel motorized road as proposed in alternative B. Alternative C permits no activities which have the potential to degrade the river's WSR values.

4.1

COMMENT I am writing to express my approval of alternative D for the draft plan for the Merced and South Fork Merced River. I think this is the best plan for the recreation my friends and I enjoy in the Sierra National Forest.

ANSWER Thank you for your comments. Alternative C is the preferred alternative. It seems to best reflect the issues.

9.1

COMMENT Encourage you to support Alternative B. 1. Cost to taxpayers in C is 250% of the cost to B. 2. Significant greater potential for fire with C. 3. B offers the greatest protection of wild and scenic river values. 4. Please support what you had originally chosen.

ANSWER 1. Cost to implement Alternative C is \$ 500,000, Alternative B is \$200,000. The \$300,000 additional cost of C is the developed sites on the Incline Road and the pedestrian bridges on the South Fork. 2. There will remain an equal chance for potential fire problems within the 2 mile Hite Cove segment on the South Fork because Alternative C retains the existing OHV and hiking use. There will be a decrease in potential for fire along the 10 mile Merced segment because of developed/type camping requirements from existing dispersed use. 3. Alternative B around the Hite Cove area offers the greatest protection for this segment. Alternative C around the Merced area offers the greatest protection for this segment. 4. The Forest Service recommended Alternative C in the Draft EIS/Plan. Prior to this published document, only a range of alternatives were presented with no official positions.

10.1

COMMENT I am writing in support of Alternative B. The Jerseydale road should be closed to enhance the wild and scenic aspects of the Merced. I oppose alternative C. Please implement alternative B.

ANSWER The Jerseydale road to the South Fork of the Merced River has been open for the last 20 years. There has been no major damage from motorized vehicles using this road in the past. It is difficult for two wheel drive vehicles and not recommended for their use. The route is subject to closures to all motorized vehicles during high fire and wet weather seasons.

12.1

COMMENT I agree with alternative B. As far as existing facilities are concerned I'm convinced that adding extra campsites, trash receptacles, or parking spaces is counter productive. The USFS could provide those items, however there would never be enough. The demand always exceeds the facility. Same visitors will simply have to stay away, a very undemocratic notion.

ANSWER There are no plans to add extra campsites in alternative B or C. In Alternative C, the preferred alternative, the plans are to provide designated camping zones to the existing dispersed camping zones on the north side of the Merced to help regulate the potential fire dangers. Yes, demand exceeds the available spaces on high use weekends for Yosemite Valley and the Merced Valley. Similar to motels, when there is no more room, people will have to find another place to camp.

12.3

COMMENT After years of telling the public "only you can prevent forest fires, pack it in, pack it out," the messages have worked. The new message needs to be "lakes and rivers are not toilets." The same people who wonder what the world has come to when they are forced to buy bottled drinking water use riverbanks and rivers for toilets, never making the connection. When only the MiWok used the river it had a chance of healing itself. Three million people a year overtax it. It is crisis time for water quality.

ANSWER Better communicating these values to the public will be attempted through public information guides. Using your or similar wording is an excellent approach. We

will do this in partnership with other State and Federal agencies who have the similar resource problems.

12.6

COMMENT The BLM project at Briceburg is to be commended as the most improved site in several adjoining counties. The Briceburg approaches are in more need of speed controls than the area at the Hite Cove Trailhead. Downhill speed, reduced visibility and narrow approaches are deadly. This is one thing that needs to be fixed before it breaks.

ANSWER BLM will work with CalTrans and try to improve the warning signing in this area.

12.7

COMMENT I wish to thank the Forest Service for being the best of neighbors, its staff good friends. The fire fighters, archaeologists, botanists, office staff, all have done great jobs. Every year the trend to improved positive public relations is excellent. I don't believe any tourist to our area will ever realize the amount of dedication that facilitates their visits here.

ANSWER Thank you for these words. Our staff enjoy their work. Partners like you private owners along the Merced canyon, help make the resource management job worthwhile.

13.1

COMMENT I would like to propose Alternative D for the Merced river plan. Hite Cove is used by 4 wheelers most of the year. It is one of four 4x4 trails in the area. It is also maintained by 4 wheelers. This trail should be kept open.

ANSWER Alternative C, the preferred alternative, is recommending to keep the south side trail open to motorized OHV use. The route is not recommended for two wheel drive vehicles because of existing safety and maintenance standards. The trail is subject to be closed to all motorized vehicles during high fire and wet weather seasons. Currently partners are maintaining the 4x4 route.

18.1

COMMENT I want to thank you and your colleagues for speaking to the Sugar Pine Sierra Club Group. Those of us who were members of the Merced Canyon Committee spent much time and money in order to make the Merced River Wild and Scenic. The fact that we care deeply about the river should be considered when weighing opinions and making decisions regarding its future. I value the quiet natural walk along the river canyon especially the trail to Hite Cove. It is a place to get away from all the noise and materialism of life elsewhere. I especially enjoy the wildflowers each year. Since it is one of the best wildflower areas in the state it is also valuable as a tourist attraction. For these reasons I would like the South Fork of the Merced River and Hite Cove left as it is. Alternatives A or B are my preferences.

ANSWER It was a pleasure speaking at your Sierra Club meeting. Your Merced Canyon Committee reached it's goal. All or 43 miles of the South Fork has been designated a Wild and Scenic River. Of the total miles, 41 miles or approximately 95% have been classified as "Wild." The foot trail to Hite Cove is within a "Wild" segment which means wildflowers will always be available with no development

competition. Note how Alternative A and C are now similar within the Hite Cove area. The existing OHV motorized trail in Alternative A is retained within the 2 mile "scenic" segment in Alternative C. Only 5% of the total South Fork Merced WSR area will continue to have motorized OHV access. Alternative C is proposing no commercial facilities. Both groups can use this area as partners and share in the environmental wonders of the river canyon.

18.4

COMMENT In these days of financial stress due to the high national deficit, the savings and loan debt, and the Middle East crisis I do not understand a plan to spend money for unnecessary development. Building a bridge is costly in itself but it could invite overnights with alcohol, cigarettes, and guns to the cove, creating a potential forest fire. Fires are not only costly, but could destroy the forest and all we value on the trail.

ANSWER An equestrian and foot-bridge is permitted under Alternative C to span the South Fork. This will permit hikers to travel the entire SF trail system from Yosemite National Park to Savages Trading Post without dangerous high water fording. Equestrian use of the 3 mile Hites Cove trail section is dangerous and therefore not recommended or permitted.

20.1

COMMENT I urge you to change the Forest Service choices for development of the South Fork Merced River and Hites Cove to Plan B rather than Plan C. You have heard the arguments why plan C is potentially too destructive to the environment, which is too precious to be pillaged by "development." Please reconsider.

ANSWER Alternative C is now similar to the existing Alternative A in regards to the Hite Cove area. No "development" is planned. Things will stay about the same. Only a toilet, a pedestrian bridge and interpretive facilities are planned. These facilities can only be implemented after detailed analysis of the pre-historic and historical archeological resources are completed.

21.2

COMMENT If money is burning a hole in your pocket, perhaps you should develop a bike trail along the main Merced-Briceburg to El Portal or some other useful project that most people want.

ANSWER A mountain bike, horse, walking trail along Merced's canyon old train bed is being recommended under Alternative C.

22.1

COMMENT The management plan for the Merced Canyon is a tribute to the mountain of bureaucracy that the FS creates. It is impossible to understand what is really being recommended. I will state my position and you can try to figure out how my comments relate to your proposals. The Merced Canyon is spectacular because its character is WILD. It is attractive to visitors because of the absence of development; the absence of services. You can pull out on any wide section of road and scramble down to the river and sit on a rock and contemplate an environment which is seemingly untouched by man. The FS has a Congressional

mandate to develop a plan. You do not have a Congressional mandate to put in bathrooms. You do not have a Congressional mandate to put in raft launching areas. You do not have a Congressional mandate to develop a trail. So please, why don't you simply do what is right; Leave the canyon alone. It has been fine for several million years without the Forest Service or BLM. It will survive without you.

ANSWER The EIS/Plan's recommendation along the Merced Canyon is to create developed campsites. These will replace the existing dispersed campsites along the north, Incline road side of the Merced Canyon. This proposal is endorsed by representatives of the Mariposa Board of Supervisors and private owners along the canyon. One of the goals is to regulate the wild fire potential. The preferred alternative and plan shows no further recommendations. This Merced WSR 14 mile section has been classified "recreational" because of an already developed major State Highway which include a few existing motel and store facilities all leading to Yosemite National Park. The Forest Service, BLM and Park Service will continue to be partners and administrators of these public lands along this Merced Canyon. We will continue to make operation and maintenance decisions within our areas of responsibilities.

#### 23.2

COMMENT As I understand the situation Alternative C increases Forest Service administrative costs over Alternative B and it creates a major staffing requirement to police use of the 4 WD access road and riverbank activities. I am ready to sacrifice the 4 wd access in tradeoff for proper protection of this area to a standard compatible with a wilderness area. I urge your support of Alternative B.

ANSWER Alternative C may be approximately 33% more expensive to administer than alternative B. There is no staffing problem identified in Alternative C. The OHV community is already sponsoring and maintaining this Hite Cove route. The tradeoff is that you now have access to 95% or 41 miles of the river which is Classified "Wild" within the South Fork Merced WSR system. While the OHV community has access to 5% or 2 miles of the river which is Classified "Scenic" within this same WSR system. Both user groups can share in the use of the area.

#### 24.1

COMMENT After talking to you on the telephone yesterday, and inquiring about your intentions to publicize in local newspapers the November 5 public meeting concerning the Hite Cove EIS, I found myself more and more curious about the USFS policy if there is one having to do with the announcement of public meetings. Perhaps you can enlighten me about this, is it not standard procedure to announce public meetings in the local press? Or is this done at the whim of the person in charge? If not standard procedure, why not? As a Federal agency working for the people, are you not required to conduct public Forest Service meetings, those that call for public input with the most widespread publicity possible? This seems logical to me. Am I being too logical?

ANSWER The Forest Service and BLM has a public information policy. This is how we have carried out the Merced WSR information and input operation. 1. March 1, 1988 Public information plan completed. 2. Sept 5, 1989

Press Release announcing public meeting was sent to all local papers. 3. Sept 5, 1989 flyers announcing public meeting were sent to 1,450 people and agencies. This list came from the most updated mailing list of the Stanislaus N.F., the Sierra N.F and the BLM. 4. Sept 18, 1989 public meeting held in Mariposa, California. Preliminary Alternatives were presented. 75 people were in attendance. 5. Nov 10, 1989 flyers sent to approximately 350 people who expressed a desire to participate in the planning process. 6. Dec 10, 1989 Flyers sent to approximately another 200 people who expressed a desire to participate in the process. 7. Jan-Sept 1989 meetings held as requested with individuals, miners, Sierra Club groups, Mariposa Board representatives, owners of property within the WSR. 8. July 31, 1990 Federal Register published announcement of draft EIS/Plan. This is a national announcement seen by all groups throughout the United States. 9. Aug 01, 1990 flyers sent to approximately 750 people, who by returned mailings or attendance at the public meeting indicated they wished to be involved in the planning process. 10. Aug 28, 1990 Letter with copies of the draft EIS/Plan sent to all people who requested a copy. A preferred alternative was recommended. Approximately 400 public comments with agency answers were published in the draft EIS. 11. Sept 21, 1990 Federal Register published due date of Nov 5 for public comments draft EIS. The due date was amended in a Sept 28 announcement and amended to Nov 30, 1990. 12. Oct 16, 1990, flyer #5 sent to approximately 750 people on current mailing list announcing the next public meeting will be held Nov 5, 1990 at the VFW Mariposa Hall. 13. Oct 24, 1990 Press release announcement sent to the Fresno Bee and other local Mariposa papers indicating an information meeting will be held Nov 4, 1990. 14. Feb 1991, flyer #6 sent to 1,017 people who made comments to the draft EIS/Plan. The flyer indicated that the final is scheduled to be published by April 1991 and to expect a Record of Decision (ROD) document.

#### 34.2

COMMENT The BLM reports frequent accidents involving OHV which require assistance for the vehicle and often emergency treatment to the persons involved. Is there funding available for the Forest Service to provide this assistance and are there personnel available who have the necessary training? If not, who becomes responsible? Review of the DEIS shows that approximately 700 letters of comment were received. Perusal of these letters indicates that about 195 were from individuals familiar with the Hite Cove area and expressed a preference for Alternative B, or closure of the OHV access road. Approximately 450 letters originated from OHV users expressing a desire to see the Jerseydale road remain open to OHVs. About 300 of these were from letters which were simply signed and sent in. These are not indicative of serious efforts to review the Plan and DEIS. The decision to close the Jerseydale road or allow it to be accessible for OHV use should be based on a qualitative evaluation of the comments, not on a one-letter-one-vote evaluation. In general, except for the Hite Cove Scenic Segment proposals, Alternative C appears to be a satisfactory Management Plan. The proposed improvement to the Recreational zone are good and should provide excellent opportunities for the people who use the facilities.

ANSWER If there are accidents on the Jerseydale road to Hite Cove by recreation users, medical personnel will respond, as they do within all Forest Service administered lands. The Forest Service pays for law enforcement under a coop agreement. Any medical response is paid by individual receiving aid. It is desirable to help visitors feel that they are responsible for their own actions. Your right, 28% of the letters were personally hand written or typed and preferred alternative B. 43% were form letters signed by different people indicating the same issue comments. We analyze the letters based on specific issue statements or comments. For example, after publishing the Draft EIS/Plan, 1017 letters were received. From this number, we have found approximately 180 comments which are specific issues and that we are addressing in this comment/answer format. Letters from organized groups, or other government agencies like the EPA, may or may not, depending on the issue, carry more weight in the analysis process.

35.1

COMMENT As a farmer in the Merced County area, and a recent joining member of the Sierra Club, Tehipite Chapter, I urge you to please return to Alternative B which, according to the DEIS, has the greatest potential for protecting the values for which Merced River was designed. Hite Cove needs to be preserved as it now is. Thank you for your courtesy.

ANSWER Alternative C is still the preferred alternative. However note that Alternative C is now similar to alternative A in this final EIS/Plan.

44.1

COMMENT The Department of the Interior (DOI) appreciates the opportunity to review the Merced and South Fork Wild and Scenic river EIS/Plan. The EIS lacks an identified proposed action for the public and other reviewing agency's to evaluate and analyze. Such an omission hinders informed public participation regarding the draft document (DES). In addition, without a properly defined proposal presented for agency review in the DES, effective and complete evaluation of potential impacts to Department of the Interior (DOI) lands and authorities cannot occur. No explanation is provided of issues and alternatives identified in scoping, but not considered significant enough for analysis. No analysis is provided for adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided, the relationship between short term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long term productivity, and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. It is essential that there be a Wild and Scenic Values topic for analysis in the environmental consequences chapter. Without such a topic, as the document now exist, neither the public nor the decision maker can succinctly understand potential impacts to wild and scenic river values.

ANSWER Thank you for reviewing this Draft EIS/Plan. The DEIS identified a proposed action. The preferred alternative C was identified in a cover letter and flyer to the public and other agencies. Alternative C and the related defined actions were also shown in the Plan for the preferred alternative. However, the final EIS/Plan will improve the proposal wording within the document. The explanation of alternatives identified in scoping is included in the final. The

analysis for adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided is included in the final. The Wild and Scenic rivers have already been designated and classified with boundaries. There is no need for a Wild and Scenic Values topic at this phase of planning.

44.2

COMMENT Management actions for each alternative are unclear, particularly in regard to public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Such planned or potential actions as mineral activity and/or development, timber harvesting, road building, prescribed burning, etc., should be clearly described. There is no analysis of identified threatened or endangered species of plants and/or animals. The impact analysis discussion would be greatly improved if the relative magnitude of impacts was projected and analysis was provided to support the conclusions made. For example, user estimates, present and projected, would facilitate determining the potential magnitude of visitor impacts. "Available mitigation" measures are mentioned but a thorough discussion explaining their effectiveness is not provided.

ANSWER Management actions identified in FEIS 3.1 are clear. Specific management actions identified in the Plan 6.4, 7.4, 8.4 and 9.4 are clear. Management actions in regard to public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (4 miles along the Merced River) are now improved in the FEIS and Plan 9.4. The analysis for identified threatened or endangered species of plants and/or animals were completed in the DEIS 4.11 and 4.14 and are included in the FEIS. The impact analysis discussions are improved in the FEIS.

46.1

COMMENT I am extremely upset at the recent decision of the Forest Service management team regarding the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers. Why and based on whose authority and/or opinion, was the preferred alternative for the WSR changed from B to C? Members of the Merced Canyon Committee worked tirelessly and long to get Wild and Scenic designation for the rivers and have stated preference for Alternative B. The above steps were taken on the basis of a great deal of study personal experience and love for the rivers. The Forest Service did not receive 400 or so xeroxed copies of letters from us as you did from the OHV groups. I would wager that most of those signatures did not bother to read those supplied pre-written statements. Duplicated messages certainly should not be given the same consideration than separate personally stated opinions from the general public. In regard to the team decision, I would be most gratified to receive copies of the input on which said decision was based and a tally of how each member of the interdisciplinary team management team voted and why.

ANSWER The Forest Service and BLM recommended a preferred alternative C when the DEIS was published. There was no commitment to any alternative before this publication date. The quantity of letters is given less importance than specific issues raised. Specific issue comments are important. We analyze each different comment, not how many times it is stated in the letters. For example we received 1017 letters after the draft but found approximately 180 different comments which were analyzed. A recommenda-

tion for a preferred alternative was made at the DEIS stage. However, this FEIS includes a Record of Decision (ROD). The Regional Forester for the Forest Service's administered segments will make the decision and will state why the decision was made in this ROD document. The BLM will also make their decision on their administered segment through their responsible officer.

49.5

COMMENT I would like to make some comments about the process followed by the USFS in drawing up the DEIS document. How does it happen that 300 form letters mailed into the USFS as a consequence of a Dirt Alert publication to OHV enthusiasts outweighs the 400 plus individually worded letters sent in by actual users of the Hite Cove trail? Can the USFS really believe that they have to make a political gesture to the OHV industry? Is the USFS that desperate for Green Sticker Money? Those of us who intimately know the area and who have devoted years of effort to gaining some kind of protection for the Merced River Canyons cannot help but feel somewhat betrayed by this casual caving in by the USFS to OHV pressure. The recommendations by the USFS seem especially timid in this respect when contrasted with recommendations proposed by the BLM for managing their segments of the river canyons. I urge you to return to the management principles outlined in your Alternative B proposal.

ANSWER A quantity of letters from one group does not outweigh a quantity of letters from another group. Specific issues/comments within these letters are extracted and analyzed. This question and answer format shows an example of where approximately 180 separate comments were found in 1017 letters. Your conservation groups have done a good job helping to get the Merced and South Fork Merced protected within the WSR Act. The Act protects the river. However, the Act does not specify to eliminate all existing uses. This EIS/Plan is recommending Alternative C. Since OHV people have been using the south Hite Cove for over 20 years this use should continue within 5 % of this "Scenic" South Fork Merced segment. The remaining 95% of the South Fork will remain within the "wild" segments.

50.1

COMMENT We have attended four meetings at which your staff received citizen input and made an effort to explain the steps leading up to completion of your Draft Environmental Impact Study and Management Plan for the Merced and South Fork Wild and Scenic Rivers. To date we have found no reason to change our selection of Alternative B. Nor have we found any reason to seriously consider your selection of Alternative C. as a better decision. In our review of your Draft EIR and Management Plan, we could not find a brief, clear summary of your reasons for selecting Alternative C. On page 44 of one of your management Plan editions you make reference to the variety of reasons for your choice of Alternative C., but do not explain them, which you could have done in a few sentences. Why Not? Through an intensive, lengthy review of the Draft EIR and Plan, we might have been able to infer your reasons for choosing Alternative C. On the presumption, however, that it is your responsibility to make your reasoning and process relatively easy to under-

stand in your documentation, we were not inclined to take on that task.

ANSWER This final document includes three documents. The Record of Decision (ROD), the Final EIS and the Plan. The ROD gives an outline why various decisions were made.

51.1

COMMENT I was disappointed to learn that Alternate C was chosen for the Merced South Fork-Hite Cove area. Whereas Alternative B offered the greatest protection for the wild and scenic designation by limiting use, Alternate C instead provides for increased use, development and detriment of the area. This increase in use by those hiking or riding mountain bikes, horses or especially off road vehicles cannot help but adversely affect what makes this area special, the wildflowers, wildlife, pure water and relative isolation. Why risk increased erosion and fire danger just to make Hite Cove another playground.

ANSWER Alternative C around the Hite Cove area provides for the same existing use as noted in Alternative A. There is minimal increase in development recommended for this area. Increases in facility signing and interpretation to educate users about the valuable resources within the area, a non-water type vault toilet and a pedestrian bridge is all that is planned.

52.1

COMMENT You may wonder why a response came from a Florida address. I have hiked the South Fork (something that I would guess over 90% of the OHV responses to your previous draft can not say) and consider it one of the most beautiful canyons in the country. This river richly deserves the designation of wild and scenic over it's full length up to the spot you classify as recreational. Actually I recommended to you in part to delete the Scenic classification in it entirely and classify the South Fork as Wild because that is just what it is and just what it must always remain. I am aware that you recommended alternative C in your Draft Management Plan. I as a representative for my children, grandchildren, great grandchildren strongly recommend that the South Fork be governed by Alternative B. This river with its profusion of wild flowers in the spring, protected habitat for scores of hundred of species of birds and wild animals and the wild water running over random and ever changing patterns of rocks must never be subjected to the obscenity of thrill-seeking motor vehicle riders disturbing the stillness, the clean fresh smelling air and the wildness of nature. I ask that you expand, improve and add much more detail to your DEIS and to change your implementation recommendations to Alternative B from Alternative C.

ANSWER The complete 43 miles of the South Fork is a designated and protected Wild and Scenic River. Approximately 41 miles or 95% of the South Fork was eligible and is classified as "Wild." The remaining 2 mile Hite Cove segment was eligible and is classified "Scenic." Alternative C is an acceptable solution for the Hite Cove area. It allows the same uses including OHV access from the south side to take place now that have taken place over the last 20 years. If during your hiking adventures the area looked wild even with this existing OHV use, then under this alternative it should remain the same way.

54.1

COMMENT Thank you for the opportunity to review the Merced Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. Our Board (Mariposa County Board of Supervisors) agrees with the basic preferred alternative C with a few exceptions and additions as noted below. (Note see Land Use Section 54.2 where county states "we believe it is in the County's and Hites Cove's best interest to close the Hite Cove Road at the gate at Jerseydale"). Wally, Tom, Brian and Nick have done a good job dealing with tough issues and diverse interest groups.

ANSWER Thank you for taking the time to review the plan and visit us in the field to review this issue. The Forest Service and County agree on all aspects of the EIS proposals except the Hite Cove access issue. The FEIS is indicating that we keep the road open to four wheel drive OHV use only within the Wild and Scenic Boundary. This is consistent with our existing management direction for this area outside the Wild and Scenic river boundary. There will be conditions with high fire or wet weather seasons when use will be closed to motorized vehicles.

55.1

COMMENT We the Fresno Fly Fishers for Conservation support Alternative B of the management policy of the recently designated Wild and Scenic River System and strongly oppose "Off Road Vehicles" in the South Fork/Hite Cove Area of the Merced River.

ANSWER Thanks you for sharing with us your position. Alternative C is the preferred alternative. Please review the Record of Decision (ROD) to find out why the Forest Service is recommending Alternative C. In short we are recommending what is existing now at the Hite Cove area.

58.1

COMMENT As one who has been interested and active in seeking protected status for the River and its South Fork I would like to offer the following comments and suggestions. The intent of those who worked for protected status and I assume of those who passed the bill in Congress was to protect the rivers for their natural values rather than their historical or recreational values. I would hope that even through the agencies who will administer these areas give consideration to agricultural, mining and recreational interests, that the natural elements be given priority in this instance in keeping with the original intent of the action. I am speaking particularly of the South Fork and Hite Cove area. There is no doubt there is a great need for some areas to simply be left alone for their own sake rather than to be used by us for some purpose of our own. Hite Cove, though of some historical interest, has done a remarkable job of re-naturalizing after its worst recent assault by men who would use the land for profit and then go away leaving a mess behind. One can still occasionally find a mercury bottle in the South Fork.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending leaving the 2 mile segment Hite Cove area in its existing state. This includes retaining the public walking trail and the OHV route to the area. This also includes retaining and interpreting the existing historical and pre-historical archeological resources of the area.

60.1

COMMENT I believe any development of the South Fork of the Merced River is a contradiction of the Wild and Scenic status. Therefore, I must favor alternative A, which maintains present use status. I am opposed to Alternative C and D which allow motorized use and the building of bridges. These options would have a significant impact on the area, greatly disrupting and possibly destroying the flora and fauna. The South Fork is presently accessible to any persons wishing to visit it. Therefore, no further development is necessary.

ANSWER Alternative C is similar to Alternative A for the Hite Cove area. It maintains the existing uses within the area. The foot bridges are permitted under this Alternative C to span the South Fork permitting hikers to travel the entire SF trail system from Yosemite National Park to Savages Trading Post without dangerous high water fording.

61.1

COMMENT Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following comments and concerns regarding the Merced River EIS. In general, it appears a moderate approach has been made to the subject of the long range planning for this wild and scenic area. I hope you keep in mind a planning horizon of 100 years, or more, during which continuing population growth will place huge demands on the few truly wild areas of California. I know it is a difficult thing to try to balance competing goals and keep the long term in mind at the same time. Remember, once its built up, it's impossible to make it wild again. Basically, I prefer Alternative B with the exception of leaving the Hite Cove Road open during summer months as it is now.

ANSWER Congress planned for the long-term approach when Public Law 100-149 was signed in 1987 designating 114 miles of the Merced and South Fork system as a Wild and Scenic River. The Forest Service and BLM agencies considered the long-term approach when we classified 33 miles of our administered river portions in 1989 accordance with this Act. The long-term approach will be considered by implementing the Plan's monitoring every year. Alternative C meets your goal at the Hite Cove Area. It leaves the existing use, including leaving the south side Hite Cove Road open for four wheel drive OHV use.

61.3

COMMENT Indicate on the maps where Hite Cove, Devil's Gulch and the Incline Road are located. The narrative refers to these features frequently but they are not identified on the maps.

ANSWER These areas are indicated on the maps. The maps were done at a small scale so the areas are hard to find.

61.5

COMMENT I strongly oppose Alternative D. This alternative would adversely impact the Wild and Scenic nature of the two river branches. It would foster a resort atmosphere, and violate the intention of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The assessment of Alternative D does not adequately assess the impact on wildlife numbers, water quality, aesthetic values, mining and logging activities, etc.

ANSWER Alternative D is not a preferred alternative. An assessment was completed in this document for wildlife, water, aesthetics and mining. There are no logging activities within the WSR corridors.

61.10

COMMENT At the 1/10/89 information meeting, Tom Eford, District Ranger, said that a public hearing would be held. Another public information meeting was held in November this year. When is the formal public hearing?

ANSWER No formal public hearings are planned. Please refer to answer 24.1 to review the public input process for this project.

62.1

COMMENT I am sorry that I didn't have a chance to say good-bye and thank you at the end of my 3 hour visit on November second. I very much appreciated our conversation and the time to go through the letters regarding the Hite Cove Scenic area of the South Fork of the Merced River. I feel it is very important for each official who is involved in the decision making process to take some time alone to go through the letters concerning Hite Cove before any decision can be formulated for the final EIS. I understand that there are over 700 letters concerning Hite Cove, 300 of which are from OHV persons. The overwhelming majority of these OHV letters were from letters which must have been sent by an OHV representative of each town in northern and central California for their signature. Very little thought or caring about the specific plans of Hite Cove were expressed. I remember only 2 such notes, One person had enjoyed a trip to Hite Cove with his son. The other had used the south road for many years and felt it should remain open to OHV users. By contrast the other 400 plus letters were written mainly by local residents who know the value the natural experiences they have had in the Merced River Canyons in general and in the Hite Cove area in particular. These letters expressed personal caring and made specific suggestions. Most local residents prefer alternative A or B or little changes. Our concerns are fire, vandalism, shooting, motor and radio noise, and the disturbance of wildlife.

ANSWER We thank you for taking the time to come visit our office and review the letters concerning this issue. As indicated in a couple of our other answers, we are more interested in issue concerns than in the quantity of letters. Each decision official will have the opportunity to read these comments and answers. A decision will be made after this process is completed. Look for the Record of Decision (ROD) along with the final EIS/Plan. This ROD will explain decision making process. Please note that we have recommended Alternative C, and that it is similar to Alternative A. It is possible to mitigate your concerns with fire, vandalism, shooting, motor and radio noise and disturbance of wildlife and still allow four wheel drive OHV use.

62.4

COMMENT I applaud the time and effort made by the officials of the Sierra National Forest and the BLM in developing alternative plans for the Merced River and in soliciting public comment. Mariposa County depends on tourism for its fiscal well being; therefore, the river is important as a tourist attraction as well as for the enjoyment of local residents. In conclusion I urge each official involved to

go through the letters personally before any decisions are made concerning the Hite Cove area and the South Fork.

ANSWER Thank you for these words. Each decision official will have the opportunity to review these comments.

65.1

COMMENT Please allow me to express my concern over the draft EIS/Plan for the South Fork of the Merced River. I am very much opposed to Alternative C. There is no need to develop this area. It should be allowed to remain wild and scenic. All those who wish to visit this unique and special place, can do so now. There is no need to build bridges, improve roads, build campsites, and entice the multitudes. There presently are many accessible areas on the Merced River for them, if they desire easy access. Alternative A would protect the river area the flora and fauna would remain relatively undisturbed and intact not only for our generation but for those yet to be born. I urge you to reconsider your position and to choose alternative A or at the very least B, but certainly not Alternative C.

ANSWER Alternative C is our recommendation. Please note it is now similar to A for the Hite Cove Area. Things will remain about the same in this area under Alternative C. A pedestrian only bridge will be added at Hite Cove and a pedestrian/equestrian bridge will also be added at Devils Gulch so people can hike the entire SF trail system. We will install interpretive facilities and a low-maintenance vault type toilet. There will still be a public hiking trail and access from Savages Trading Post to Hite Cove. There will still be a public four wheel drive OHV route within the WSR corridor at Hite Cove.

68.1

COMMENT Responding to the DEIS for the Merced River and the South Fork, I wish to offer the following comments. 1. Public Law 90-542, Section 61c) the standards specified in such guidelines shall have the objective of A. prohibiting new commercial or industries other than commercial or industrial users which are consistent with the purpose of the Act and B. protection of land by means of acreage, frontage and set back requirement or development. In Hite Cove the stipulation has not been mentioned in the EIS and I fear will be ignored if Plan C is adopted. Mr. Starchman purchased land within the protected area, and his interest is known to be commercial in all his business manners. I have no reason to believe it is to be different, therefore I request Plan B.

ANSWER The county has jurisdiction over monitoring and issuing commercial permits concerning private land within the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Private lands within the Wild and Scenic Corridor are subject to the Act's criteria. The selection of either Alternative A, B, C, will have no affect on what happens on the private land. The Act and the county requirements will affect what happens on private lands.

69.1

COMMENT The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Implementation Plan (Plan) for the South Fork and Merced Wild and Scenic River. We have reviewed this document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the



Clean Air Act. Our detailed comments on this proposed action are enclosed. Under Public Law 100-149, signed in November 1987, Wild and Scenic River (W&SR) status was given to 114 miles of the Merced River system, including 71 miles of the Merced River and 43 miles of the South Fork Merced River. The proposed action provides management guidelines to be followed by the Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for 36 miles of W&SR corridors are managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and are not part of the proposed action described in this DEIS and Plan. The South Fork and Merced W&SR DEIS and Plan identify and analyze four management alternatives. The final Implementation Plan will be tied to the Land and Resource Management Plans for the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests, and BLM's Merced River Management Plan. These alternatives are; Alternative A, which continues present recreational use; Alternative B, which emphasizes limited and dispersed recreational facilities; Alternative C, which emphasizes moderate recreational improvements; and Alternative D, which emphasizes maximum recreational use. Alternative C is the FS' and BLM's preferred alternative and the basis for the Plan. The DEIS acknowledges that selection of Alternative B would result in the greatest protection of W&SR values of any alternative. The document also identifies that implementation of Alternative B could result in improvement of water quality; would provide the highest level of protection to bio-diversity; and would prohibit construction of bridges across the Merced River. Therefore, we recommend selection of Alternative B as the environmentally preferred alternative. We have classified this DEIS as follows: Alternative A and B as "LO-1," Lack of Objections, Adequate Information; and Alternative C (proposed action and D as "EC-2," Environmental Concerns-Insufficient Information. We support the features of the DEIS and Plan which (1) prohibit timber harvesting within all W&SR corridors; and (2) encourage acquisition of private parcels within these corridors as they become available.

ANSWER Thank you for providing our agencies with your analysis. The final EIS/Plan is showing Alternative C as the preferred alternative. This final EIS shows that the preferred alternative will result in the greatest protection of W&SR values along the Merced River Corridor with the addition of developed campsites in lieu of dispersed sites. This action will mitigate the potential environmental fire problems. The final EIS also shows that the preferred Alternative will result in the greatest protection of W&SR values along 95% of the "Wild" South Fork River segments and an acceptable protection level of W&SR values along 5% of the "Scenic" South Fork river segments. The final EIS indicates that Alternative C provides a high level of protection to the bio-diversity. It recommends two bridges (one foot only and one foot/equestrian) be permitted so that hikers can travel the entire South Fork trail system from Yosemite National Park to Savages Trading Post without dangerous high water fording. At the next design phase, another team of agency personnel, including professional civil engineers with experience in bridge design and the 404 permitting process will coordinate with other agencies, prepare necessary environmental documents, analyze the site effects, design and construct the bridges. The foot/equestrian type bridges will meet all established Federal and state regulations, including Sec-

tion 404, that pertain to facilities on Forest Service administered lands and rivers.

69.2

COMMENT We (EPA) suggest that the DEIS discuss how management of the 36 miles of W&SR under FS and BLM jurisdiction will be coordinated with management plans by the NPS for the remaining 78 miles within the Merced W&SR corridors. The pages of the DEIS and Plan were not numbered. We recommend that the pages of the FEIS and final Implementation Plan be numbered to allow ready reference to specific sections of the documents.

ANSWER The FEIS mentions how the Act specifies the Forest Service and BLM are required to complete their 36 mile W&SR planning process within three years and that the National Park Service is required to complete their 78 mile W&SR river planning process during their Master Planning process with no time period set in the Act. The FEIS/Plan pages are numbered by sections.

70.1

COMMENT Friends of the River believes that the Forest's draft Merced River Management Plan preferred alternative is generally consistent with the intent of Congress in designating the Merced River. We believe it provides a workable management and facility plan for the river.

ANSWER Thank you for being a good partner. We thank your group for providing our staff much needed help and advise during these past three years of river planning.

70.5

COMMENT Friends of the River does not favor the plans and facility developments anticipated in Alternative D. In our view, motorized access beyond the levels specified in the preferred alternative is inconsistent with Congressional intent at the time of designation and the need to protect cultural, scenic and biological resources of the South Fork canyon.

ANSWER Thank you for your opinion. The FEIS/Plan is showing Alternative C as the preferred alternative.

73.1

COMMENT Enclosed are marked up copies of the Implementation Plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I don't know if I have caught all the grammatical and typographical errors, but I would guess about 90%. I don't understand the proposal to "vacate all hydroelectric withdrawals" in the IP section 5.4 under Land Ownership and Use. Since these applications have been withdrawn: is this not similar to a withdrawal from new mineral entry? I hope this will be helpful. My specific comments on the IP and DEIS will follow shortly.

ANSWER Thank you for being a partner in editing. The final EIS/Plan includes all of your corrections. The final Plan shows the corrected wording concerning withdrawals. Thank you for finding this error in the Draft/Plan.

75.1

COMMENT I, like many others, wished to see the Merced River saved for its wild and scenic values. I, however, did not simply see protecting the river and its resources as a simple case of removing the proposed development by Keat-

ing and Associates. There are others who also cannot leave well enough alone. It apparently is impossible for the USFS and the BLM to associate themselves in land stewardship without viewing it as an opportunity for creating a greater bureaucratic and administrative role. It seems that any management plan developed by your agencies will inevitably involve some development, more administrative and agency involvement, bigger budgets, and more staff. Do agencies such as your ever decide to leave a resource as it is? The Congressional mandate to create a management plan for the Merced River Wild and Scenic area does not mandate the USFS or the BLM to develop the area; it does not mandate your agencies to put in bathrooms raft launch areas, trails, and whatever else. The Merced river corridor is spectacular and it is limited. It is spectacular because of its wild and scenic nature: because in important areas it is absent of services and development. But it is a narrow corridor and one which is already impacted by a major highway and other establishments. The aspect of the river which gives it its wild scenic qualities must therefore be carefully guarded. Any proposal for development must be viewed in light of what it will take away, rather than in what it will add. Although many of your proposals seem like small changes, they will make a significant difference. And, worse, in time they spell more impact, more use, and therefore, more changes and development to mitigate the impact on the resource. Very seldom does an agency see the wisdom of doing less; rarely do they go back and return something to its former state. We only have to look to your neighboring agency to the east to see how long of a process this can be and how expensive correcting some of these so called improvements can be. This is what I would like to see done or not done with the river; Minimized any improvements which will create more use of and therefore impact, on the river. The river was designated as wild and scenic, manage it that way.

ANSWER The final EIS/plan is indicating minimal improvements. These improvements are planned: 1. The foot/horse/bike trail along the old railroad grade (sponsored by others, and all involved agencies have endorsed) 2. Improvements to BLM's Briceburg interpretive center (recommended by agency) 3. Improvements to Forest Service's dispersed camping sites on north side of river (recommended by private land owners and endorsed by Mariposa County for fire reasons). For the Forest Service administered lands along the South Fork Merced these improvements are planned: 1. One foot bridge at Hite Cove and one foot/equestrian bridge at Devils Gulch (recommended by public and agency). Minor parking trail head, guide/interpretive signs, and sanitation improvements will be considered and installed by the agencies at a site by site basis in accordance with their land administration responsibilities. In summary, there may be an increase in public use simply because of the W&SR designation. A minimal increase in facilities is recommended in the preferred Alternative. Both agencies are recommending that things stay about the same for these 36 miles or 11,500 acres of public lands within the designated wild and scenic corridor.

THESE ARE "LAND USE/OWNERSHIP" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE

RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN. EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

1.2, 2.2, 11.2, 15.2, 16.2

COMMENT To preserve the values of the Hite Cove area, the Jerseydale road should be closed to OHV access. OHV enthusiasts have the ability to transport materials into the area that are not practical for hikers and backpackers. These materials include alcoholic beverages, weapons, ammunition and boom boxes. These give rise to activities which will disturb the peace and tranquility of the area and can also create litter and hazards for other users. At a meeting, held by the BLM on planning for the lower river, several of the miners complained about day visitors discharging automatic weapons (Uzis or AK-47s). This reckless sort of activity is totally inappropriate for the Hite Cove area. Shooting should be prohibited in the Scenic segment; both for safety reasons and to reduce litter. If closing the Jerseydale road is not an acceptable option, the road should not be maintained beyond the amount necessary for administrative purposes. It should definitely be closed during the rainy season and there should be frequent inspections to assure that it is being used in a manner that does not negatively impact the Wild and Scenic corridor. There should be no developed parking areas within the segment; nor should there be any developed campsites. There should also be a resident, uniformed Forest Service Officer, at all times during the use season, to assure that regulations are obeyed.

ANSWER Alternative C indicates that the existing four wheel drive route located within the Wild and Scenic corridor is to stay open for four wheel drive OHV use. The route will be not be recommended for two wheel drive vehicles. The use conditions may be the same or similar to your positive suggestions. OHV organized groups are planning to continue to sponsor the trail. They will operate and maintain the route. They will practice their TREAD lightly criteria when using the trail. Both the hikers and OHV users understand that there may be fire and weather reasons that the OHV route or that the hiking trail could be closed within season. The Forest Service is recommending no developed parking or campsites at the Hite Cove area. Sanitation facilities are being considered both for the hikers and OHV users. Guide, warning and interpretation signing at the Hite Cove area are to be installed. Hunting is allowed in all National Forest areas in accordance with California State Department of Fish and Game regulations for species types and seasons. We are considering using a uniformed volunteer person at the Hite Cove area.

3.1

COMMENT The preferred alternative, if we are honest and realistic, for the Forest Service management of Merced River and South Fork Merced is Alternative B. This includes Hite Cove and the Jerseydale Road. This area should be protected from off highway vehicles, which would cause increased noise, fire danger, trashing, polluting, erosion and other unsuitable results. A scenic and wild area should be free of these unsuitable and inappropriate results. Please immediately reconsider the Forest Service management

team's recommendation for the Jerseydale Road, so that "wild" doesn't mean "trashed and noisy and eroded" Alternative B is one only reasonable alternative for this "wild and scenic" area! OHV are unsuitable! Too noisy!

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending that the four wheel drive OHV use be retained. This use has created no significant environmental problems to date. Trashing, noise, shooting, erosion problems created by all user groups can be mitigated by education and a partnership of user sponsors. The hiker and OHV user groups will share in the use of the 2 mile long "Scenic" South Fork W&SR system. The hiker or equestrian user groups will be able to use the other 41 miles "Wild" South Fork W&SR system without having to share.

### 5.3

COMMENT Vehicles of any kind are inappropriate for the Hite Cove trail. For the users of this trail most often the trail itself is the purpose of their journey not simply a means to reach their real goal. They are there to see the wildflowers, to appreciate the unique environment of the trail twists and turns, to listen to the birds and the sound of the river below. Obviously these people would be disturbed by the sound of approaching motors. While they pause to enjoy the aspect about them, they stop, sit or lay on the trail, they put down their packs, their babies packs, spread out their tripod. They are difficult enough to pass on foot, a walkers pace on a faster moving and wheeled vehicle it is at least unpleasant for everyone. The hikers using this trail are not just the young ones, it is used by seniors and by families with young children. Their safety and enjoyment should not be compromised by people who feel the need for speed thrills. The Hite Cove trail is a pristine and peaceful place. Some can only manage a short distance, some easily can hike its full length but all deserve the experience undisturbed by noise, nuisance and hazard. It is a walking trail and should remain so. We have discussed the trail and its uses, needs and limitations over the years at length with numerous Forest Service representatives, especially Nick Nixon. The trail is an integral part of our lives and we take its stewardship seriously. If you have any questions please feel free to call.

ANSWER Let us define the Hite Cove trail and route. The 3 mile North side "Hite Cove Trail" from Savages Trading Post and following the South Fork Merced River to Hite Cove is to remain a walking/hiking trail. It is within a "Wild" classified section of the W&SR. No other user groups, including equestrian will be using this trail. This is the only use for this trail as noted in the preferred Alternative C. The South side "Hite Cove Route" from Jerseydale to the South Fork River is to remain a four wheel drive OHV route within the W&SR corridor. It is within a "Scenic" classified section of the W&SR. Both equestrian and OHV user groups can use this route. This is noted in the preferred Alternative C.

### 6.1

COMMENT I have gone to Hite Cove for several years in the spring and summer. The wildflowers in the spring are unique in their variety and colors. Please leave this area alone! Any mechanized vehicles will distort this area.

ANSWER The area is to be left alone. There is no change recommended in the preferred alternative C to the walking Hite Cove trail from Salvages Trading Post or to the OHV

Hite Cove route from Jerseydale. Continue to enjoy your wildflowers.

Also refer to number 5.3 answer.

### 7.1

COMMENT Please note to keep the Merced and South Fork Merced WSR a B. You see I hike the Hite Cove trail and the canyons and this is a very beautiful area. You should see it in April when the wildflowers are in bloom. I know the people who have jeeps want to drive trails in Hite Cove areas. Jeeps and the littering and guns that they bring adds nothing to the area. They will destroy this beautiful area over time. If you know of any area where jeeps have access to the back country and have caused no damage like beer cans, guns, litter, please write me so I can change my mind.

ANSWER You can continue to use the North Side Hite Cove trail and only see other hikers. OHV user groups can not use this hiking trail. OHV use is not recommended on this trail in the preferred Alternative C. This trail is within a "wild" W&SR classification segment. OHV (a jeep is considered an off highway vehicle) are however, allowed on the existing south side OHV designated Hite Cove route as recommended in Alternative C. This South route will be operated and maintained by an OHV sponsor similar to the "Ducy trail" also located on this forest. This Ducy trail is between two designated wilderness areas and is one of the best litter free, beer can free routes in California.

### 8.1

COMMENT Due to my job, I will not be able to attend the hearing in Mariposa. I am a past resident of the Merced Canyon and a property owner there. My preference in the Alternative remains for B. My main objection to C is allowing vehicle access to Hite Cove. In the Past, I have been frightened away from Hite Cove by the discharge of firearms (I am not against target practice in the proper place) and the drunken yells of people who have driven there. This is disturbing in a site which is popular to walk to.

ANSWER Shooting seems to be a problem with most user groups. One way to mitigate this problem would be have areas within the Hite Cove area where shooting could be disallowed for public safety reasons. These marked areas could be confined to the hiking and OHV route use areas close to the River and within the W&SR boundaries. This decision however, would have to be what is referred to an forest order. We will consider this problem at the next field implementation level of planning.

### 14.1

COMMENT Regarding future plans for Hite Cove, may I suggest a small sign at the end designating the place and it's significance. We hiked there last Spring, had a picnic at the end, I think and returned. It's a beautiful area. Regarding bathrooms at the end, please "no." Also, the word "commercial" in your draft needs to be redefined and tightened or it will lead to all sorts of interpretation. I am not a member of the Sierra Club, but you must give them credit for their vigilance of our wilderness area. I applaud their energy! It may be because of them that our great-grandchildren will experience undeveloped wilderness areas that you and I have come to enjoy today.

ANSWER Guide, regulatory, and interpretive signs are going to be installed at the Hite Cove area. A type of sanitation system (solar/vault/non water) is planned for the Hite Cove area because of wishes from most user groups. The word commercial is reworded in the Final documents. Many conservation groups, including the Sierra Club, are given credit for recommending this area for W&SR status.

14.2

COMMENT My bubble burst when someone told me you can get to it from Jerseydale by 4-wheel drive. It's like climbing to Half Dome then finding out later you could have driven there. It loses its appeal as a special hiking destination if you know you can drive in. I'm sure the lobby for the 4-wheel drive club is as powerful as the NRA and there's no hope to have that road closed. Probably the least that can be expected is that you not bridge the campground to the hiking path.

ANSWER This South side route from Jerseydale to the Hite Cove area has been available to the 4-wheel drive groups for many years. Hikers have also enjoyed the north side trail from Savages Trading Post to Hite Cove during these same years. There has been no major public use or environmental problems resulting from these uses. Alternative C will retain these patterns so that both user groups can continue to enjoy the area.

17.1

COMMENT I don't think adding buildings in Hite Cove is either practical or appropriate. The original buildings were utilitarian and in no way unusual. There are many preserved or restored historical mining buildings in the West already. Even if you could find the money to build them you couldn't afford the maintenance. Being fairly isolated, fires and vandalism would be a problem. Without regular maintenance they would weather rapidly. They would add nothing to the scenery and would detract from the overall experience. There is a pleasant contrast upon walking into Hite Cove. The river widens and the wooded ridges expand out to the sky adding different pleasant feelings to those experienced in the narrower more intimate canyons up and down stream. The dabbler/hobbyist miners living there for several years with their junk collecting blunted the experience. Buildings, however authentic, would also detract.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending no additional buildings. The original utilitarian buildings may seem unusual if compared to today's architecture. Limited interpretive facilities are planned to be included at this Hite Cove area after through archeological and cultural studies are completed. The goal is to protect, preserve and educate the public concerning the important pre-historic and historical archeological resources of the area.

17.2

COMMENT A bridge across the river at Hite Cove would have similar negative impacts on the experience. If many people use it, the cove would be just another place you drive, spend a few minutes jostling the crowd, and then roar off to another meaningless place. If few people use it, there is no need for it. Because of its length and flood-stage river flows, it would have to be steel and expensive. Furthermore

if it were wide enough for horses, motor bikers would use it and there goes vegetation and the quiet atmosphere.

ANSWER A foot-bridge is permitted at the Hite Cove area under the preferred Alternative C. The non motorized Foot-bridge will span the South Fork River permitting hikers to travel the entire SF trail system from Yosemite National Park to Savages Trading Post without dangerous high water fording.

17.3

COMMENT There is no compelling need for the south road from Jerseydale. Hundreds of thousands of dirt roads exist for four-wheeling. I have driven jeep roads and I have walked them. I find the walking more enjoyable. Driving a jeep road requires care and concentration to avoid getting stuck or damaging the vehicle. Most of the interesting features along a route are missed. Therefore less interesting routes than Hite Cove are more suitable for four wheeling. I am puzzled by the work done on the Jerseydale jeep road. Maintenance on a jeep road seems like a contradiction in terms.

ANSWER The need for the north side hiking trail from Savages Trading Post to the Hite Cove area and the need for the south side 4-wheel drive route from Jerseydale to the Hite Cove area is the same. In both cases it is to provide access to the Hite Cove area for recreational purposes. The hikers already have access to 100% of South Fork River area classified as "wild" and "scenic." The OHV groups already have access to only 5% or 2 miles of the South Fork River area classified as "scenic." Maintenance of the south route is subject to OHV use criteria and environmental conditions. Maintenance of the north side trail is subject to hiker use criteria and environmental conditions.

18.2

COMMENT I understand that Wild status means "...watershed and shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted...one quarter of a mile on either side of the high water lines." By this definition buildings should not be restored in the corridor. Durable signs with diagrams and pictures of the historic features would be educational and add to the experience. However, if this type of development leads to a requirement for a bridge and handicap access, such a development may not be worth the cost and the loss of quiet natural location.

ANSWER "Wild" classified areas are "watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted...generally inaccessible except by trail...approximately one quarter of a mile on either side of the high water lines." However the Hite Cove area is within a classified "Scenic" area which means "watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads...one quarter of a mile on either side of the high water lines." The restoration of historic or pre-historic elements can be considered within this 2 mile scenic corridor. However archeological studies must be completed before anything is planned. Under the preferred Alternative C there are no plans to move major buildings within the W&SR corridor.

21.1

COMMENT I'm one of those Sierra Clubbers who's are opposed to any development at the Hite Cove. The whole purpose of slogging in those 4-5 miles is to not see tons of folks, development, trash, the whole bit. I've always looked forward to the Cove, specially in the Spring, to the water, flowers, rocks, solitude Period. Nothing more.

ANSWER The word development means different things to different people. The only additions planned at Hite Cove area as indicated in the preferred alternative C. is: Sanitation facilities (vault/no-water/solar-use type toilet), Interpretive facilities (guide, regulatory, interpretive signs), Access facilities (pedestrian bridge).

23.1

COMMENT I am not happy with the recent Forest Service decision to approve Alternative C as the preferred management plan. The continued use of the Jerseydale 4WD access road to Hite Cove is not compatible with Wilderness area designation. While I have used this road many times, I am also aware that as a backpacker into the Hite Cove area, the motor vehicle access and types of activities associated with bringing "carloads" of things are very disturbing within the small area of the canyon.

ANSWER The continued use of the Jerseydale 4WD access road within the W&SR corridor of the Hite Cove area is compatible with the "Scenic" classification for this segment of the South Fork W&SR. The tread lightly theme that the OHV groups are now practicing should mitigate your concerns. Only 5% of the South Fork River area will be shared by many different users like hiking, OHV and equestrian. The remaining 95% of the South Fork Area will be used by only hikers and equestrian groups.

25.1

COMMENT Overall I find the document to be excellent. My only concern is the choice of Alternative C over Alternative B. There should be no motorized access to the South Fork except for emergency agency use and then only on existing primitive roads. All OHV traffic should be eliminated.

ANSWER All OHV traffic is eliminated on 95% of the South Fork. Alternative C indicates that 4 wheel drive OHV use will be acceptable within the W&SR corridor to Hite Cove route. There are potential closure periods for this Jerseydale route within the W&SR corridor because of fire or rainy seasons. Please refer to some of the other replies found in this document for further clarification.

26.1

COMMENT I was dismayed to learn the management alternative for the South fork of the Merced has been changed from B To C. OHV access can only degrade the beautiful physical aspects of the area and increase management problems in other areas such as litter, fire control, noise, and firearms. These must be other areas where OHV activities can take place, if necessary and management can be more direct and expedient. Please return to alternative B so that the unique qualities of this area can be maintained.

ANSWER The draft EIS was the first time the Forest Service took the recommended Alternative C position. The existing conditions around the OHV access have not been degraded over the last two decades of use. Please refer to

other similar questions and answers found in this section for further clarification.

27.1

COMMENT Does the proposed South Fork Merced River Plan close the North Side OHV route to the State OHV Motorized Trail System? Recommendation: I have reviewed the draft plan for the Merced and South Merced Wild and Scenic River area. The Central District Members of the California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs, prefer Alternative C if the Forest Service will amend the plan with the following statement. "The North Route to Hite Cove shall remain open for future use in the State OHV Motorized Trail System, to be determined at a later date in the Forest OHV Plan." By taking this position on the North Route Trail the Forest Service will be able to decide on this issue in the forthcoming Sierra National Forest OHV Travel Plan. There are many different recreational opportunities available in this area and I feel this agreement appears to be the best solution due to the difficulties encountered in managing the North Route, because this area is located outside of the wild and scenic river management plan. Thank you for your help in this manner.

ANSWER The preferred alternative is recommending that the south OHV route that is located approximately 1/4 mile from the high water line of the South Fork Merced River remain open within the W&SR corridor to motorized 4-wheel drive vehicles. The existing OHV route from Jerseydale to this corridor boundary line is not within the terms of reference of this plan. However present management direction within the Forest Service indicates that this south route is open within season to OHV use. The preferred alternative is recommending that the north administrative route that is located approximately 1/4 mile from the high water line of the South Fork Merced River remain closed within the W&SR corridor to public motorized use. The existing administrative route from the Merced Canyon State Highway to this corridor boundary line is not within the terms of reference of this plan. Present management direction within the Forest Service indicates that this route is within a Forest Service area called semi-primitive motorized (SPM). However, the north route has been closed to public access since it was built in the 50s.

28.1

COMMENT The subject plan has been thoroughly reviewed and discussed with your staff. We find that we can accept Alternative C as our preferred choice provided that alternative be modified to include the following: "The north side OHV route to Hite Cove shall remain open to future use for the State Motorized Trail System, to be determined in the Forest OHV Plan." We recognize that the time to make a decision on the North Route may not be appropriate and is actually not entirely within the scope of this management plan. However, we need your assurance that provisions to connect all potential north to south routes must be included in the subject plan. Your utmost cooperation in this respect is requested. Our members show tremendous interest in the management of the Merced River system, largely because the Hite Cove is in a semi-primitive location accessible only by 4WD. The area contains numerous recreational, opportunities for our members in hiking, swimming, sight seeing,

fishing, and hunting. The area is rich in cultural, historical, wild life, botanical and geological values. The 4WD makes it possible for the young, aged and handicapped to visit this area and enjoy the unique setting. The South Hite Cove Trail is currently maintained under an Adopt A Trail agreement with the Mid Valley 4-Wheelers. Four wheelers both respect and enjoy the qualities found in the Merced River system just as much as any of the other users concerned with this area. You may consider this response to be representative of our statewide association of 16,000 members.

ANSWER Please refer to answer 27.1. The Forest is not making the decision concerning the State Motorized Trail System through this W&SR plan. This route selected will be made through the Forest OHV Plan after considering all the proposed OHV route alternatives. Further analysis on OHV use is currently being conducted by the Forest. A Forest-wide EIS is being developed which analyzes alternatives for OHV use and access. A DEIS is projected to be available in 1992, with a FEIS anticipated in early 1993. The analysis area includes the W&SR corridors of the Merced and the South Fork Merced Rivers, and may or may not result in a revised management strategy for these areas. This existing W&SR plan did not therefore analyze which potential OHV routes shall remain open to future because they were outside this project's 1/4 mile project boundary. However this W&SR EIS does recommend, in the preferred Alternative C, that no motorized use be permitted within the 1/4 mile W&SR corridor on the north side of Hite Cove area. A decision on this 1/4 section will be made through the Record of Decision document following this EIS and Plan.

29.1

COMMENT The South Fork Merced River canyon needs wilderness recommendations and designation. Close the southern jeep road into Hite Cove, and for God's sake, don't make a tourist attraction out of this quiet place. Leave it be!

ANSWER The South Fork Merced River has already been designated by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River. The agencies have classified the majority of the river as "wild" and 5% as "Scenic" around the Hite Cove area. Alternative C is recommending that the south side OHV existing route, which is within the W&SR boundary, be retained. The Hite Cove area is already a tourist attraction as it exists because of the Wild and Scenic river status. The beautiful wildflowers, free flowing waters and excellent fishing will continue to attract people. The area is going to remain about the same under the preferred alternative.

30.1

COMMENT On behalf of the membership of the California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs, our preferred choice of the alternatives offered is Alternative C. We are recommending the decision on usage of the north side of the river route to Hite Cove be decided in the forthcoming OHV Plan. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

ANSWER A south to north OHV route location for this forest will be made through the Forest OHV plan after considering many proposed route alternatives. This decision is outside the terms of reference of this W&SR planning

process. Please refer to numbers 27.1 and 28.1 found in this section for further details concerning this issue.

31.1

COMMENT Outrageous! The Forest Service Flip flop on the Merced River and South Fork preferred Alternative plans is simply outrageous. Those of us who worked so hard with the Merced Canyon Committee to gain Wild and Scenic designation for the river feel horribly let down by the Forest Service. Hite Cove does not need the kind of improvements such as roads and bridges and parking areas for motorcycles, four-wheel jeeps, etc., that are now being proposed. Is the motivation for this change simply to make use of the money that is available from "green tickets"- fees paid by the motorcycle crowd? There are desert areas in Southern California that are being put off limits after they have been ruined by off road vehicles. Does the South Fork have to suffer the same fate before the Forest Service sees the light? I implore you to return to scheme B and do right by the Hite Cove area.

ANSWER The Forest Service's position was first recorded when the draft EIS/Plan was published. Your concern is with the Hite Cove river segment which represents 2 miles of the 114 miles of designated W&SR. A foot-bridge, guide/interpretive signs, and a vault/solar type toilet are the only improvements proposed in the preferred alternative C. Both the existing north side hiking trail and the south side OHV route within the W&SR corridor are to be retained. There has been no significant environmental problems from these uses during the past two decades.

32.1

COMMENT I represent the Lake Tahoe Hi-Lo's 4WD Club as the conservation chairperson. Our 72 member club enjoys visiting areas different from Lake Tahoe. The Hite Cove area provides four-wheelers a chance to see old mining sites, offers fishing and interesting hiking. We particularly enjoy the varied wildlife and vegetation native to the area. Please provide for OHV access from both the north and south routes. With the Adopt-A-Trail program so widely accepted, I am sure a responsible OHV club or clubs would happily assist in the maintenance of both the northern and southern stretches of trail. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending that the south side OHV existing route that is within the W&SR boundary be retained. Please refer to 27.1, 28.1 and 30.1 for more details concerning this issue.

33.1

COMMENT The following represents public input on the South Fork and Merced Wild and Scenic River EIS and Implementation Plan presented by the California Enduro Riders Association. We are a non-profit California corporation dedicated to environmentally responsible off-highway vehicle recreation. We volunteer hundreds of hours per year performing OHV trail maintenance and building services to the US Forest Service at both the Eldorado and Tahoe National Forests. We have a hard legal contract to maintain 2 resource trail sections in the Foresthill Ranger District, and annually maintain over 75 miles of trail in the Georgetown Ranger District. Our members often ride the US

Forest Service trails throughout the Sierra Nevada, especially the Hite Cove Trail. Our public input concerns the future of the Hite Cove Trail. We recommend that the Forest Service keep the portion of the Hite Cove Trail south of the river open, but prevent OHV access to that small portion of the trail which is actually within the boundary of the scenic river. We also recommend that decisions concerning the north side of the Hite Cove Trail be deferred until the planned scientific studies for the statewide trail system are completed. Future decisions should be based upon the results of the scientific analysis, as well as public input by all interested parties. Our basis for the above recommendations are presented below: 1) The recognition that 99.99% of the Hite Cove Trail is outside the boundary of this EIS. Alternatives concerning wholesale closure of the entire trail are simply not acceptable because the EIS does not present scientific information nor public input about areas outside the boundary of the river system. 2) Use of the Hite Cove Trail by off highway vehicles does not present any significant natural resource issues. In fact, the public comments documented in the EIS by people who desire to close the trail are all based upon aesthetic concerns rather than environmental concerns. While we certainly agree that aesthetic issues should be considered in public land policy affecting the national forest, they should not dominate policy. We believe that Alternative C represents the most even-handed approach, and environmentally responsible approach, to the competing demands for limited resources and we support Alternative C.

ANSWER The final EIS/Plan is recommending that the south side OHV access within the W&SR scenic corridor around Hite Cove remain open. This recommendation only includes a approximately a one mile portion of the trail that extends within the river corridor. You are right, this EIS document does not deal with the south side Hite Cove Trail that extends approximately five miles to Jerseydale outside this W&SR boundary. However current forest management direction indicates that this area is within a semi-primitive motorized area and is currently open. The final EIS/Plan is recommending that the north side administrative access within the W&SR scenic corridor around Hite Cove remain closed to the public. The analysis indicates there may be significant cultural and archeological concerns within the river corridor which require further studies. This EIS document is not dealing with the north side outside the 1/4 mile W&SR boundary. The south to north OHV issue will be considered within a forest OHV plan after completing the environmental analysis for many potential routes. Please refer also to 27.1, 28.1, 30.1 concerning this issue. Thank you for being a good partner to the Forest Service family.

34.1

COMMENT The following are my comments on the WSR Implementation Plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Hite Cove-OHV road..Section 4.3 in the IP states that the scenic segment "is accessed by...an existing OHV route from Jerseydale on the south side." Section 8.1, paragraph 6 states "Off road vehicle use will continue on the designated route. Adverse effects will be mitigated." Section 8.4, paragraph 8 states "Vehicle travel will be limited to the designated routes..Any user caused damage will be mitigated." Section 8.4, paragraph 14 states "Provide infor-

mation and input to California Department of Transportation (on) activities involving highway 140, Seek to improve or maintain the current highway conditions." There is no explanation of a method whereby adverse effects will be mitigated. Nor is there any explanation of techniques which will restrict vehicle travel to the designated routes. Nor how any user caused damage will be mitigated. Under Section 5.4, Public Information and Interpretation, paragraph 3 states "Uniformed Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management employees will be available during specified use periods if appropriate funding becomes available." If the funding, for this purpose, is not presently available; what is the present source of funding to restrict the vehicle travel to the designated routes? What is the present source of funding to mitigate any user caused damage? Does the use of the plural "designated routes" and the reference to highway 140 in paragraph 14 of Section 8.4 reveal a hidden agenda to open the north access road? I have ridden with a friend, who is an off-highway enthusiast and I found the cross country travel to be an exhilarating experience. Nevertheless, this activity is not appropriate for the Wild and Scenic corridor or the Hite Cove Segment. Persons who break down gates, to gain access to a road, are not likely to restrict their activities to those prescribed by regulations. In the absence of funding to provide uniformed enforcement of the regulation, the road should be kept closed. There are other routes in the National Forest that OHV drivers can use.

ANSWER The final EIS/Plan now explains methods where adverse effects can be mitigated. A menu of techniques which show how to restrict vehicle travel to the designated routes are shown in the final Plan documents. These techniques include but are not limited to the following: regulation/warning signs, physical design of OHV access routes, OHV sponsor or partners responsible for the operation and maintenance of the designated trail, a tread lightly theme sponsored by the OHV organizations and implemented by all their user individuals, uniformed agency personnel and flyers handouts accessible at trail heads and information points. The Forest Service understands the conservation and OHV concerns. Uniformed agency or volunteer persons to monitor these hiking and OHV trails is a priority. The present source of funding comes from Congress to the Forest Service to protect the resources. It is encouraging to find that many volunteers, partners, and sponsors are now monitoring their own organizations and use patterns and helping to operate and maintenance many specific Forest Service trails. The south side OHV Hite Cove trail is presently one of these sponsored trails.

36.1

COMMENT I am opposed to closure of the north and south trail access to Hite Cove. Because it is still one of the best 4 wheel drive vehicle trails in the Sierra National Forest. My Sandy enjoys four wheeling where the trees all grow and the great out of doors are still the same as they were years ago. Thank you very much for letting me tell you how I feel as a 4 wheel person.

ANSWER Alternative C retains the existing south OHV trail to Hite Cove. Please refer to numbers 27.1, 28.1, 30.1 and 33.1 concerning the south to north OHV issue.

37.1

COMMENT After review of the Draft Plan I believe the preferred alternative is C, provided the forest service modify alternative C with the statement "The north route to Hite cove shall remain open for future use in the State (OHV) motorized trail system. I believe this option offers recreational opportunities that everyone can enjoy. Why limit public access to a chosen group of hikers when the existing Hite Cove Road is now open and usable by 4 WD vehicles. This last year I toured this historical area, I didn't see any misuse or reasons this road should be closed. If the Hite Road is closed access will be surely limited.

ANSWER The Alternative C shows the existing south OHV trail to Hite Cove as open. Decisions concerning the south to north routes will be made in the Forest OHV Plan scheduled to be completed next year. Please also refer to numbers 27.1, 28.1,30.1 and 33.1 regarding this issue.

38.1

COMMENT I've lived in California from 1956. I've enjoyed outdoors through Boy Scouts and jeeping. I belong to the Sacramento Jeepers Inc. and want to do all I can to help the forestry keep the lands up. Alternative C is preferred provided motorized vehicle access to the Hite Cove area is included. The roads to Hite Cove were not declared unsuitable when the Merced River was put in a Wild and Scenic river system, so I don't think it should be closed on this basis. Fishing and hiking are part of the OHV experience. We need OHV access to Hite Cove to enjoy these opportunities. I object to closing the road to Hite Cove. Thank you for letting me state my opinion.

ANSWER Alternative C recommends the existing south motorized OHV route remain open within the W&SR corridor. Please also refer to numbers 27.1, 28.1, 30.1 and 33.1 regarding this issue.

39.1

COMMENT I am writing concerning the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Plan. I, as a member of 2 four wheel drive clubs, have been informed on this subject. However, I need to be assured that provisions to connect all potential north to south routes must be included in the subject plan. I am interested in the Merced River systems mainly because the Hite Cove is one of our few semi-primitive locations available to the 4 WD. The area contains lots of outdoor activity such as hiking, swimming, fishing and hunting. The south Hite Cove Trail is currently being maintained by Mid-Valley 4 Wheelers in Merced California. Four Wheelers enjoy and respect this area just as much as anyone else concerned with this area.

ANSWER This W&SR plan only deals with the river issues within 1/4 mile on each side of the river. The final EIS/Plan is recommending keeping the existing south side one mile OHV portion of the Hite Cove trail open within the W&SR corridor. Provisions to connect potential north to south OHV route alternatives are outside the terms of reference of this plan. However these provisions will be studied through the forest OHV plan. Please refer to numbers 27.1, 28.1, 30.1 and 33.1 for more details concerning this issue.

40.1

COMMENT I am writing to ask you to please consider the supporting of alternative C of the Merced and South

Merced Draft management Plan. Members of our association have invested a lot of time and energy to build and maintain this (Hite Cove) area for the use of all, not just a select few. We who spend most of the time outdoors respect and want to protect what we have. We also would like to see a trail from one end of this State to the other. My son and daughter love the mountains and I am glad we can camp and see them up close and not in a book or on TV.

ANSWER Alternative C is the preferred alternative.

41.1, 42.1

COMMENT I favor having both north and south routes to Hite Cove to remain open to 4WD use. The south is presently open and the north route could be opened by modifying alternative C, which is the Alternative I favor. We as a family, appreciate the opportunity to use this land as a family recreation area. I hope that in your wisdom you will give the OHV people who enjoy the outdoors equal consideration in this question.

ANSWER Please refer to answers 27.1, 28.1, 39.1, 30.1, and 33.1 which indicate that this north to south OHV issue will be considered through another planning process.

43.1

COMMENT I prefer Plan B. I feel that development for Plan C is too costly for it's benefit in proportion to the people who want to use it. Such development also would have everlasting effects on all the environment for a radius of 20 miles that would be destructive.

ANSWER If you are referring to the Hite Cove area, Alternative C is now similar to the existing Alternative A. Emphasis is placed on providing limited recreation facilities at this area. Please also refer to numbers 1.1, 9.1 and 12.1.

46.2

COMMENT The South Fork of the Merced River is general and Hite Cove in particular should really be left essentially as they are. Alternative A is my own preference. Alternative B should be the absolute limit of what is done there. The Jerseydale road should be closed to all vehicles except what is absolutely needed for administrative purposes. The north side road should be maintained on same basis, ie. minimum level necessary for administration. The only housing should be for a resident member of the Forest Service at Hite Cove to insure that degradation of area is kept at a minimum and that restrictions are okayed. Bicycles, Dirt bikes and horses should not be allowed along the river or in the Cove. They and hikers would certainly be hazards to each other. Rest room facilities should be provided in order to minimize that impact on the river and surrounding areas. Old fashioned pit toilets are the most practical and least expensive, Next choice could be a Clivus Moltrum or comparable system. Lastly, flush toilets. However, these would certainly be an impact from the necessary pumping systems, pipes, sewage, disposal etc., and the cost would exceed either of the other two.

ANSWER The Alternative C is now similar to Alternative A. Alternative is recommending that the Hite Cove area is to be left essentially as it is. The south side motorized public OHV access route within the wild and scenic corridor is to be retained. The north side motorized access route within the wild and scenic corridor is to be retained for



non-public administrative reasons. The north side non-motorized hiking access trail is to be retained. A vault/low volume/Clivus Moltrum or similar type toilet facility is to be provided at the Hite Cove area.

46.4

COMMENT Buildings in the corridor should not be restored. Informational signs (vandal-proof) could be installed to add to hiker enjoyment of the history, past and present use. The restoration would be in direct opposition to the wild and scenic designation.

ANSWER Alternative C recommends no restoration of buildings within the wild and scenic corridor at Hite Cove. Informational interpretive signs/facilities are recommended in Alternative C. They are to be designed and planned at Hite Cove in accordance with the State's archaeological guidelines.

46.5

COMMENT What does expansion of commercial activities mean? What activities? Introduction of same should not even be considered. The first such small enterprize be it a refreshments or souvenir stand would lead to all manner of encroachment on the Cove. A road would be necessary for supplies, a bridge, housing for employees road access would increase the ever present fire danger manifold as well as noise, litter, firearms and general miss use. Firearms should be totally banned.

ANSWER Alternative C recommends no expansion of commercial activities. There will be marked areas within the Hite Cove area where shooting will be disallowed for public safety reasons. Please refer to answer 8.1 for further details concerning this issue.

46.6

COMMENT The many values of the river must be considered and protected. Why not do your utmost to keep it the gem that it is? The geology, wildlife and flowers are in many cases unique to this area. It is a place to escape from auto exhausts, boom boxes, the roar of motorcycles and firearms. Lets take care of it. We are all stewards of this land. One can't really see, much less appreciate, delicate lupines and stream side moss from a mechanical monster. And who can appreciate a soaring eagle or hawk through a windshield? And remember that no one can compete with a blasting radio. Leave it like it is, was a most appropriate statement made years ago regarding the Grand Canyon and can well be applied to this bit of wilderness now.

ANSWER The values of the river have been considered. Everyone has their own values as to how this river should be protected and used. This plan is attempting to bring all these person and resource values together. Assuming your concerned about the Hite Cove Area, values have been considered according to the "Scenic" classifications previously allocated to this 2 mile segment. It is understood that 95% of the SF Merced has also been classified "Wild" with corresponding values.

47.1

COMMENT I have several areas of concern regarding the proposed management policies. First of all, keeping the Jerseydale four wheel drive road open to OHV use is bound

to create problems for the Hite Cove Area. There is bound to be extra litter and trash brought into the area. Conflicts between shooters and those wishing to experience a quiet day in the Canyon contemplating nature will occur. These will be increased likelihood of fires. The immediate environment will suffer from increased degradation occasioned by vehicles operating from the road and venturing onto roadless and trailless areas. Parking of vehicles within sight of the Cove will contribute visual blight. All of these disadvantages could be worded around or mitigated if the USFS had a large enough budget to justify keeping a caretaker in the area. The money for such a position does not seem likely in the foreseeable future. There is a possibility of a volunteer caretaker being given responsibility for keeping an eye on the area but that would seem to be a more dubious way of dealing with violators of USFS restrictions on use of the area. In my opinion, the initially proposed Alternative B management plan for the area was much sounder than the Alternative C proposed found in the DEIS document.

ANSWER The existing OHV route that is open within the W&SR corridor at the Hite Cove area has created no significate problems over the last two decades. OHV route sponsors are now self policing this route. The litter and trash found on the north hiking trail and south OHV routes will be the responsibility of the users. A pack-it-in-out and tread lightly policy is to be practiced. Conflicts between shooters and others are to be mitigated through designated non-shooting area posting policies. Alternative C is recommending existing use patterns indicating that fire issues are to remain the same within this area. Uniformed volunteers or USFS employees are being considered for the Hite Cove's operation and maintenance programs.

48.1

COMMENT Having hiked the Hite Cove Trail several times from Savages on the Merced River, I can see no need for commercial development at the mine site. Nor do I feel a OHV road from Jerseydale to the South Fork of the Merced At Hite Cove is desirable. Moving structures to the area of Hite Cove is questionable from a fire protection safety standpoint. I would prefer alternative B but find management requirements 18, 19, 22, 23, 24 from alternative acceptable. In the future, management can change from Alternate B to C but would find it nearly impossible to go to Alternative B if you start with Alternative C and C proves undesirable.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending the following: no commercial development at the Hite Cove mine site; the OHV route within the south side of the South Fork Merced W&SR corridor be retained; and no major structures be moved within the W&SR corridor. Management requirements 18, 19, 22, 23, 24 are also being recommended in the final EIS/Plan and Alternative C. If things become undesirable, the plan's monitoring plan is designed to help correct them before they become problems.

50.2

COMMENT There seems no good reason to us, including OHV interests, for Hite Cove to be made more accessible than under the provisions of Alternative B., federal public land development policies notwithstanding. Maybe you can

better explain your position in your final statement to your superiors, as required in step 8 of your evaluation process.

ANSWER The ID team makes recommendations. The recommendation is alternative C. The decision maker decides through a Record of Decision (ROD) which alternative is chosen. A decision maker could choose any alternative A-D or any variation thereof, even though the recommended alternative is Alternative C. The ROD document will give the reasons for any alternative recommendations. In summary, the EIS is the analysis. The Plan is a written document based on the preferred alternative's plan. The ROD is the decision document.

### 52.3

COMMENT Please refer to USGS map El Portel, California N3730 W11945/15 dated 1947 for use with following comments. I propose establishing a trail head and parking area with pit toilets at an intersection shown in square 15 (37 degrees 35 feet N lat. 119 degree 51 feet W long). North of trail head would be a hiking-only trail. I further propose that OHV trail/road be considered and constructed if feasible starting at Jerseydale north then square 22, 15 then taking left at fork on square 9 then south to square 16 over route 17 south to 20 past Sweetwater mine then across to road north of 416 in square, then returning to the Jerseydale area and then up to square 15. This it seems to me would give the OHV enthusiast a beautiful spectacular and existing loop which should satisfy their longing for thrills without descending a wild river. When active roadways are involved, an OHV trail way would be constructed adjacent to the road using green tag moneys. I request that the EIS be amended to include this suggestion. The DEIS did not, nor did the DMP address the problem of cleaning up the volumes of litter traditionally descended by OHV persons. At the Nov 5, 1990 public hearing, one of the panelists suggested that the OHV groups had clean-up crews following OHV use of an area. I request that the DEIS and the DIP be amended detailing what groups are assigned to the cleanup responsibilities, which officers, have final accountability and what the Forest Service and BLM plans to do in the event the cleanup is not accomplished. In other roads what police action will FS/BLM take to enforce the cleanup.

ANSWER Your positive suggestion will be considered in the Forest OHV management plan. This W&SR plan only deals with the activities within the river corridor, therefore your suggestion is outside the scope of the W&SR EIS. This OHV route within the corridor is currently being maintained by Mid-Valley 4 Wheelers from Merced California. The officers names are on file. The litter issue has been re-addressed and improved in the final plan.

### 52.4

COMMENT Alternative C permits OHV to come to Hite Cove from the south ie from Jerseydale. The DEIS does not adequately consider the impact of OHV on the environment, and by this I mean all aspects of the environment. I would like to have all aspects considered, such as but not limited to vehicle noise, vehicle exhaust, protruding vehicles from trails, the availability to Hite Cove by large numbers of people, etc. On animals plants, insects, archeology, geology, etc. I would further ask you to access the fragility of this river and its total ecology system and determine how many people

it could and can handle in a year recognizing that fewer people can be safely handled in dry months, periods of drought and in winter months, I would also ask you to consider the removal of artifacts by people who would find the Hite Cove area easily accessible by a ride on a motor vehicle.

ANSWER The potential impacts to the environment by people using a motorized vehicle might be noise, emission pollution, fire potential, erosion potential, moderate access (parking) problems, safety problems and easier access therefore more people within an area. These users may want to fish, hike, shoot, explore cultural sites, picnic, examine wildlife, photograph flowers. They will want and need directions and sanitation facilities. The potential impacts to the environment by non-motorized vehicles (mountain bicycles/horses) or hikers might be noise, erosion potential, minimal access problems, and safety. These users also may want to fish, hike, shoot, explore culture sites, picnic, examine wildlife, photograph flowers. They will also want and need directions and sanitation facilities. The FEIS analyzed the impacts to the Hite Cove area and found no significant impacts from the hikers or from the OHV users that can not be mitigated.

### 54.2

COMMENT By unanimous vote of the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, the attached resolution was passed which states that after much discussion we believe it to be in the County's and Hites Cove's best interest to close the Hites Cove Road at the gate at Jerseydale. Whereas, the segment of the South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River which includes the Hite Cove area has been classified by the Sierra National Forest Service as "scenic"; and Whereas, the Draft implementation Plan for this segment permits continued access by Off Highway Vehicles (OHV); and Whereas, the DEIS concedes that the preferred Alternative will result in increased instances of illegal activities such as vandalism, graffiti and artifact collecting; and Whereas, the Implementation Plan does not include any provisions for preventing these illegal activities; and Whereas, the BLM has reported many instances of accidents and injuries involving OHV users which required emergency assistance; and Whereas, the Implementation Plan does not include any proposals for providing such emergency services; and Whereas, Mariposa County is not prepared to provide such emergency assistance. Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, a political subdivision of the State of California, that they petition the Sierra National Forest Land Management Team to alter their proposed plan and prohibit OHV access to the "Scenic" segment of the South Fork Merced. Passed and Adopted by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors this 13th day of November, 1990, by the following vote: Ayes: Baggett, Punte, Erickson, Radanovich, and Taber.

ANSWER Access within the W&SR corridor by OHV vehicles on the one mile existing south side portion of the Hite Cove route is retained in the preferred Alternative C. There may be closures within season for wildlife, fire safety, or environmental reasons. There are no existing significant environmental resource issues as a result of this existing OHV use. Most public comments are based upon aesthetic concerns (safety, vandalism, graffiti, noise) rather than en-

vironmental issues. Aesthetic and environmental issues can be mitigated if OHV use is retained on the south side. The final Plan addresses emergency services, illegal activities and artifact collecting.

54.3

COMMENT The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors feel that any bridges built along the South Fork should be designed for equestrian and foot travel with measures to prevent access by motorized bikes.

ANSWER The proposed Hite Cove bridge will be designed for pedestrian use only. The Devils Gulch bridge will be designed for pedestrian and equestrian use only. Both will be designed for no motorized bike use.

54.4

COMMENT The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors agree, the designated camping areas along Incline Road are sorely needed. In developing the detailed plans, we ask that you consider the need for water for fire protection, fire safe clearances, additional rest rooms, and protection of the riparian habitat. If we can be of assistance in implementing this plan please contact me. Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

ANSWER Your ideas will be considered within the next site development plans phase.

56.1

COMMENT In order to maintain the natural value of South fork, we urge you to vote for Alternative B. We do not want to encourage U.S. Forestry to upset any area for brief roads and bridges. Any extended use of Hites Cove would be a crime. It should be kept to those who appreciate the natural gift that comes from our creator. To be assured of this concept, Alternative B would be adaptable to this.

ANSWER Alternative C retains the natural values along the South Fork. 95% of the River's 43 miles is a "wild" classification with foot/horse access only. 5% or 2 miles of the river's 43 miles is a "scenic" classification around Hite Cove with a foot trail on the north side and a OHV route on the south side. No new roads or vehicle bridges are suggested in any alternative along the entire South Fork.

58.3

COMMENT I am aware that OHV enthusiasts have mounted a letter writing campaign advocating motorized access to Hites Cove and that part of their plea was that it would give the handicapped access to a wild area, which would become less wild as a result of vehicular presence. Hite Cove is not a one of kind area such as Yosemite Valley, Devils Postpile or other totally unique place. There are other relatively wild areas accessible by OHV. I am somewhat circumspect of the OHV enthusiast's appeal. I suspect that more people become handicapped as a result of OHV use than handicapped people use of OHV to gain access to remote areas. I would like to suggest a compromise in this area. Leave the Jerseydale Road open to within a short distance of the South Fork allowing people to motor within a reasonable distance. The Park Service in Yosemite has a system which could perhaps be borrowed. Those persons who are certifiably handicapped are given permission to drive to areas which are other wise closed to vehicular traffic.

This would allow access to those who truly need it while doing the most to preserve the naturalness and wildness of the area. Dirt bikes and ATV buzzing around the area is certainly inconsistent with the concept of wild and natural or sacred ground. Given the recent information that a good percentage of the vegetation in Yosemite is being threatened by air pollution it is hardly in keeping with efforts to preserve the natural beauty of an area to encourage the burning of fossil fuels and their resultant exhaust emissions.

ANSWER Thank you for your positive recommendations. Your ideas are a good example of how people with disabilities can have opportunities to visit hard to get to sites. The preferred Alternative C recommendation to allow the continued use of OHV access within the one mile W&SR corridor was based on existing and future environmental issues not handicapped issues. Please review a few of the other answers for more details.

59.1

COMMENT Our association represents over 10,000 off-Highway motorcyclists in northern California who recreate on National Forest lands, including the Sierra National Forest. As such, we have a significant interest in the Merced and south Fork Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan. Our concern is that a north-south OHV route remain available through the Merced River corridor. Wild and Scenic designations of Sierra Nevada Streams have the potential to create a series of Great Wall of China roadblocks to long distance OHV route opportunities. You are probably aware the California Off Highway motor vehicle recreation division of parks and recreation has identified a Statewide Motorized Trail as a priority in California. OHV recreationists are looking for possible long distance routes for motorized recreation similar to the Pacific Crest Trail. The route through Hite Cove is the best prospect for this route on the Sierra National Forest, and as such should remain open for OHV use. The route out of Hite Cove to the north should not be ruled out until it can be studied. The route to Hite Cove from the south should remain open to OHV as it has been for many decades. Accordingly, we support Alternative C, with the added provision that an OHV route to the north out of Hite Cove not be precluded by the EIS so that it may be evaluated for OHV use in the future. OHV recreation is enjoyed by many people from all walks of life. Almost all visitors to National Forest lands use vehicles as part of their visit. Only a small percentage of visitors come to hike or raft exclusively. For example, Wilderness visitors make up less than 5% of National Forest recreation visitors. Please do not exclude the majority of visitors to benefit a small group of vocal opponents to motorized recreation. The Sierra National Forest already has more than ample opportunities for those who seek a non-motorized recreation experience in the John Muir, Kaiser, Ansel Adams, Dinkey lakes and Monarch Wilderness areas. On the other hand, there are very few quality motorcycle trails or jeep trails, such as the Dusey Trail, on the Forest. We urge you to develop more motorized OHV routes, not further reduce already scarce opportunities. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

ANSWER Your interest with the W&SR EIS/Plan is with a 2 mile segment on the South Fork Merced River. The

preferred Alternative C recommends that the existing OHV route remain open within the 1/4 mile W&SR corridor on the south side of the South Fork Merced River. Alternative C recommends that the existing administrative use route on the north side of the Hite Cove area remain closed to public use within the 1/4 mile W&SR corridor. The north-south OHV route location is not within the terms of reference of this W&SR EIS/Plan. There are no environmental studies which indicate that the Hite Cove route or any other route within the Forest is the best prospect for a north-south OHV route. This issue will be considered within the Forest OHV plan scheduled to be completed within the next two years. Please refer to 27.1, 28.1 and 33.1 for further details concerning this issue.

62.2

COMMENT Perhaps OHV enthusiasts are just as caring about natural areas as the hikers are. Both groups have their bad apples. In my experience hikers carry as little as possible. When they arrive at Hite Cove they enjoy the quiet scenery during lunch then soon after are anxious to do the hot trip out. As a camper I know overnighters usually have extra time as well as extra carrying capacity in their vehicles for guns, alcohol, and radios. there is an increased temptation to get into trouble. If attention is called to area artifacts from pre-historic and historic times, who can prevent vandalism?

ANSWER Hikers may have a lighter impact on the site than the OHV users because of what they don't bring and the little time they stay. OHV users may have a heavier impact on the site than hikers because of what they bring, take out and time they stay. However, the best way to prevent vandalism is by self policing, self education, and uniformed personal who can help the public understand that these historic treasures must be retained for future generations.

63.1

COMMENT I have been very involved over the last ten years in trying to protect the Merced River from changes that would threaten it's wild and scenic values. As a past vice president of the Merced Canyon Committee, I worked hard to persuade our federal legislators to pass the wild and scenic river bill. I am now very concerned about the possibility of development at Hite Cove. Hite Cove is a very sacred place to the Indians who have inhabited this place for millennia. The South Fork canyon is still one of the wildest foothill canyons left in California and home to one of the largest deer herds in the Yosemite region. Increase access to this area will threaten archaeological resources, wildlife and the wilderness qualities. This is not an appropriate place for off highway vehicles. I strongly oppose development of OHV roads in the Merced Canyon and support alternative B mentioned in your DEIS. Let's keep the South Fork Canyon wild, I say no to bridges, roads and any other new developments.

ANSWER The South Fork of the Merced River is protected. Alternative C is recommending that the Hite Cove area remain essentially the same as it is today. Please refer to answer 54.2.

64.1

COMMENT Every spring for the past 15 years I have hiked up the Hites Cove Trail to enjoy the wildflowers, birds

and the wild river. I thought the river was saved. Now I have heard that you would like to open Hites Cove to 4 wheel drive vehicles. I am opposed to roads in the Hites cove area. The existing dirt roads should be kept as fire roads and closed to all vehicles except in times of emergency. I favor alternative B in your wild and scenic plan for the Merced River. Please keep the river wild for my children and their children.

ANSWER The river is saved. The north side Hite Cove hiking trail is remaining open within the "Wild" segment as its been for many years. The south side Hite Cove OHV route is remaining open, within the "Scenic" segment, as it has been for many years. The north side Hite Cove administrative route within the W&SR corridor is remaining closed, as it has been ever since it was built. The Hite Cove area is to remain almost unchanged under the preferred alternative C.

62.1

COMMENT This is written in regard to recreational facilities at Hite Cove, on the S.F. of the Merced river. First off, my family is opposed to any recreational development at Hite Cove. We thought when it was declared wild and scenic, that the government meant just that. Evidently not. Our home is on Hite Cove Road. We settled down there because of the quiet and peacefulness of this mountain setting. Although there is an occasional RV vehicle that passes by on week-ends, it is quite tolerable. But groups of RV's, many with no mufflers, exceeding our 25 mph speed limit, will destroy our peacefulness. I hope the National Forest will prevail in keeping Hite Cove and Hites Cove Road in its present state of development.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending that the Hite Cove area remain about the same as it is today. The FEIS is recommending the continued use of OHV use within the 1/4 mile wide river corridor. This EIS does not deal with the south side Hite Cove Road to Jerseydale because it is outside the W&SR boundary.

68.1

COMMENT Because the scenic and historic values of the Hite Cove are so special, I feel strongly that no commercial development be allowed. No statistics were offered in the EIS to specify the repeated walks yearly into the canyon by individuals. This canyon is appreciated by thousands of people, enjoying the change from the daily work. The walking experience and the beauty restore the person, and the need for this experience should be repeated several times a season. Personally I have lived in Mariposa County 17 years. I have led walks, bird studies, with many friends every year and encouraged other to enjoy. This precious gift to the county should remain undeveloped for all time. The OHV people represent only their own group. They care little or nothing for the environmental or the ecology so delicate in the scenic category of the South Fork. Considerable personal and supervision will be required to keep the area as natural as possible. All life will suffer. I strongly oppose the south road from Jerseydale, any bridges across the river, and of course, no development of the north road out of the Cove to Hwy 140. It seems only fair for the Forest Service to consider the aesthetics needs of the many in comparison with the self centered and money input of a minority, a group who will wreak havoc to a very special natural creation which could be exploited for years to come and people would have no need to seek any longer. I implore your agency to consider Plan B.

ANSWER No commercial development is recommended in Alternative C within the Hite Cove area. Your walking experiences along the north Hite Cove trail within the "wild" segment will be the same as they are now with the preferred Alternative C. The OHV experience within the 1/4 W&SR corridor "scenic" segment on the side of the river will be the same as it is now. Many OHV groups also care about the environment as noted in 33.1.

71.2

COMMENT The forest's planning efforts on the South Fork of the Merced have raised more public controversy. Certainly, your planning effort appears to have sparked the expression of a diversity of views about the future of the Hite Cove area-although I am firmly convinced that the great majority of the public share my preference that Hites Cove remain pretty much the same as it is today. As you may recall from the long history of conversations with you and other Forest staffers, I would much prefer that the Hites Cove Jeep road be closed to public motorized access. Given its lack of linkage to a larger road net, its use is not high, but its presence offers the temptation to cross the river at low water and disturb the peace of the non-motorized hiking trails on the north side of the canyon. I therefore regret both your classification decision and your decision not to close the jeep road in the management plan. However, assuming that motorized travelers to this very special place do not abuse the privilege of using the existing Hite Cove Road, the present level of use of the Hites Cove road will not create insurmountable problems. The same cannot be said if the Indian Flat route is opened up to public motorized vehicle access. The construction of a vehicle ford or bridge across the South Fork linking the two routes would compound the problems with permitting public use of the Indian Flat use. Such actions would result in the conversion of a little used

off-road-vehicle spur trail to a frequently used off-road-vehicle thoroughfare in the heart of the wild lands of the South Fork-dramatically altering the character of these much beloved lands. You should expect a loud public outcry and response if this alternative D feature is ever selected. Going hand in hand with alternative D's increased road access to Hite Cove, is alternatives D's conceptual approval of permanent facilities at Hites Cove. Without year round road access, a pack station at Hite Cove is impractical. So it should be. This pristine, beautiful, and remote area should be a place of quiet.

ANSWER The preferred alternative C is recommending Hite Cove remain about the same as it is today with the addition of a foot bridge, a vault type toilet structure and minor interpretive and regulatory signs. No significant environmental problems were identified that suggests closing the existing south side OHV route within the W&SR corridor is necessary. Opening the north route within the W&SR was not preferred because a cross country OHV route may alter the character of this scenic river segment. There are also potential significant environmental (historical and pre-historical cultural) issues which may be difficult to mitigate within the W&SR corridor. No commercial facilities at the Hite Cove area are recommended in Alternative C. This beautiful and remote area is to remain a place of quiet.

74.2

COMMENT My second major request is that motor vehicle access to the canyon be reduced and eventually eliminated. The promotion of the Iron mountain trail as an ORV route is a very destructive idea. Really, folks, let the ORV trash somewhere that already ruined not a pristine area like the South Fork Merced.

ANSWER Motorized access to the Iron mountain trail within the W&SR "wild" segment corridor is not recommended in any of the alternatives. Existing OHV motorized access to the south side Hite Cove route within the W&SR "Scenic" segment corridor is recommended for retention in the preferred Alternative C.

76-1017

COMMENT I support the Forest Service's Alternative C in the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Plan provided the North Side Off Highway Vehicle route to Hite Cove shall remain open to future use and consideration for the State Motorized Trail System. It is not appropriate to make a decision on the North Hite Cove OHV route at this time. The north Hite Cove OHV route is not entirely within the scope of this management plan and should not be prematurely ruled out of the Statewide Off Highway Vehicle Plan. The North and South Hite Cove Trails are in a semi-primitive location that is accessible only by Off Highway Vehicles. The area contains numerous opportunities for diversified public recreation. The trail system will make it possible for young families, the elderly and the handicapped to visit and enjoy a diverse recreation and scenic area. I request that you support the Hite Cove Southern OHV trail as planned in alternate C and include provisions for future planning for the Hite Cove Northern trail in your decision. Please send me a copy of your decision on this matter.

ANSWER Alternative C is the preferred alternative. The existing south OHV Hite Cove route within the 1/4 mile wide W&SR corridor remains open in Alternative C. The existing north administrative route within the 1/4 mile wide W&SR corridor remains closed to public use in alternative C. This Final Wild and Scenic river EIS does not address issues outside this 1/4 mile wide W&SR corridor boundary. The north-south OHV alternatives within the Sierra National Forest are to be considered within the Forest OHV management plan. Please review 27.1, 28.1, and 33.1 and other answers found in this Land Use section for related agency answers.

THESE ARE "RECREATION" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN. EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

1.3, 2.3, 15.3

COMMENT In several places, the DEIS and the Implementation Plan mention that, "The classified 'Scenic' and 'Wild' segments would be available for minimal 'expansion' of commercial activities like packing." There are not, at this time, any commercial activities at Hite Cove. Therefore such activities would have to be "introduced" not "expanded." Introduction of commercial activities, of any kind, is not appropriate for the Hite Cove area. Such activities would require supplies to be transported into the area and this would produce intolerable pressures to open the North access route. The ROS map in the DEIS shows the east side of the Hite Cove area as Semi-Primitive Motorized. This classification will also produce pressures to open the North road. The North road should never be opened for other than administrative access.

ANSWER There are no commercial activities planned in Alternative C for the Hite Cove area. Existing commercial packing activities are allowed on the South Fork Merced upstream of the Hite Cove area. These commercial packing activities are continuing in the preferred alternative. The ROS Semi-Primitive motorized classification as shown on the map is the current Forest management direction for this area. Forest ROS classifications are outside the terms of reference of this W&SR EIS/Plan.

5.4

COMMENT It has been suggested that the old Rail Road bed that follows highway 140 be converted for use as a mountain bike/hike/horse trail. If you are looking for an area to develop for such use this makes definitely more sense to us. It is wide and flat for safety and ease of maintenance and it follows the river through a variety of alignments of beauty. Of course there are problems to solve, but it seems the end result used will result in a safe and happy journey for all.

ANSWER The preferred alternative C endorses this proposed trail. The Forest Service and BLM are planning to implement the portions of the trail that is on their administered lands if this proposal is endorsed.

22.2

COMMENT You do not have a Congressional mandate to develop a trail. So please, why don't you simply do what is right: leave the canyon alone. It has been fine for several million years without the Forest Service or BLM. It will survive without you. Now the FS/BLM want to change that. The presence of white water raft put-ins, restrooms and trails changes all that. In a small, but very significant way, you will be transforming the very character of the canyon. If I had known that the FS was going to get in and screw around with the canyon that I so love, I would never have fought to save it. Maybe we should have handed it over to Keating and the development boys saying, "Take it boys, if you don't get it the FS will." I know that there is a lot of talk about, "New Perspectives" in the FS, but as much as you talk about public input, you still do whatever the "Expletive deleted" you want to do. Regardless of whether you receive 100 or 1,000 letters like mine, you still move ahead with your own plan.

ANSWER The preferred alternative C is recommending that things stay approximately the same as they are in 1991 for the Merced canyon. The present character of the canyon along this 14 mile W&SR Recreational Segment from Briceburg to El Portel includes existing commercial private motels, commercial private restaurants, commercial white water use, fishing use, camping use, picnicking, restrooms, parking areas, a State paved highway to Yosemite National Park on one side of the river, a county paved and dirt road on the other side of the river, photography use, private homes, historic mines buildings, old railroad bridges, an old abandoned railroad grade, three major vehicle bridges, trails, automobiles/mobil home use, hydro utility lines, guide/warning signs, interpretive markers, and an interpretive building. During the last century the BLM and Forest Service have developed two picnic areas and one campground area along the canyon area. Everything else was done privately. No letters were received suggesting to remove anything along this portion of the canyon. A few letters have been received indicating that because of the fire problem to private land owners that we should control the existing dispersed camping on Incline road by making the camping sites developed. We are showing this change in the preferred Alternative C.

25.2

COMMENT I would like to see the trail from Wawona maintained and, in one deviation from Alternative B, hiking bridges be constructed across the river at Devils Gulch and Hite Cove to facilitate year-round hiking through the canyon. A self-directing interpretative brochure could be developed to instruct visitors in the history, geology, biology, and ecology of this unique transition area of the Sierra Nevada mountains. This would reduce the need for signs. The South Fork should be designated "wild" from its confluence with the Merced River to the park boundary. Thanks for listening to my perspective!

ANSWER The preferred Alternative is recommending hiking bridges be constructed across the river at Devils Gulch and Hite Cove. A self-directing interpretative brochure is being planned for this area. Brochures will surely help people understand what and how to protect these resources. The South Fork Merced is already designated by Congress as a W&SR. Approximately 95% of the South Fork

is already classified "Wild" by the Forest Service. The remainder two mile Hite Cove segment is already classified "Scenic."

34.3

COMMENT Under "Noise" in section 5.4, the IP (Implementation Plan) states "Designate no shooting areas within the Recreation and Scenic Zones in accordance with Fish and Game regulations." The BLM has designated the lower River (below Briceburg) as a "no shooting" zone. However, the miners report that shooting does occur frequently. This emphasizes the need for continuous patrolling by uniformed personnel in the Scenic and Recreational zones.

ANSWER Visible agency presence, selective information signs, well placed brochures are all ways to help the agencies inform the public of this policy. Public education concerning this issue is essential. Partners like the NRA will be asked to help us spread and enforce the word. We do not have the staffing to monitor this program alone.

34.4

COMMENT Hite Cove Bridges, Under 6.4 paragraph 5, the IP states "...two foot and horse bridges will be constructed to take advantage of natural breaks in the terrain from the Hite Cove area to the Yosemite Park Boundary." There is no mention of a bridge at Hite Cove under Management Actions, Section 8.4. However, under Alternative C in the DEIS there is the statement "Access would include a foot/horse bridge across the South fork at the Hite Cove river crossing." The intent to install a bridge at this location has been discussed at several public meetings. Before moneys are allocated for construction of these proposed bridges, the recommended additions and improvements to the campground and put-in take-out sites, in the recreational Zone, should be completed. The contemplated bridge at Hite Cove should be constructed to accommodate only foot and bicycle traffic. There should be a maze at each end to preclude access to motorized bikes. This would not preclude access to disabled persons: as a companion could carry the disabled person through the maze while a third party lifts the wheelchair over the maze.

ANSWER The preferred alternative C is recommending a foot only bridge at Hite Cove and a foot/house bridge Devils Gulch area. The bridges will be designed at the detailed facility design phase to accommodate only foot or foot and horse traffic. Your maze idea will be considered at this detailed design phase.

45.1

COMMENT There is no reason to open the door to commercial use in the Hite Cove area. This sort of entree leads to trouble later on in the form of pressure for development and counter-pressures from environmentalists. A pack station at Hite Cove would just create pressure for bridges at the cove and higher up the river. As you know, I advocate preserving the wild characteristics of the entire river; I am especially concerned about the region about Hite Cove. What you do at Hite Cove may not only disturb the cove, it may also open up the upper river miles to heavy use and possible misuse. I am afraid I no longer have much confidence that the USFS wishes to preserve the unique

qualities for which this river was designated wild and scenic. It was the Forest Service that decided to call the Hite Cove segment Scenic rather than Wild: it was the Forest Service that wanted a mining museum/park attraction at Hite Cove and now it is the Forest Service that wants some commercial pack station at Hite Cove. Along the way the Forest Service has consistently used Green Sticker funds to maintain the Hite Cove Road despite opposition from County officials. This is a sure way to preserve OHV use of Hite Cove and their pressure to expand their access routes in the area. For all I know the USFS still wants a history center at the Cove under option C. Please note that when WSR legislation passed three years ago I was a great fan of yours. This letter registers disappointment with your management of the WSR process since that time. My recommendations are: 1. eliminate your gratuitous invitation to commercial use of Hite Cove. 2. Have the guts to stop using Green Sticker funds. 3. Downgrade the Hite Cove road to trail status.

ANSWER The Forest Service did classify the Hite Cove Area "scenic." This was the highest level this 2 mile segment was eligible for because of the existing south and north access roads. The Forest Service did present alternatives for possible active mining interpretive opportunities at the Hite Cove area at past public meetings. The preferred Alternative is not recommending active mining interpretive opportunities use within the W&SR corridor in this final EIS. The Forest Service has not recommended nor is the preferred Alternative C recommending commercial opportunities at the Hite Cove area. Green Sticker funds have been and Alternative C recommends the continued use of Green Sticker funds on the south side Hite Cove OHV access route as they have been in the past. The Forest Service listens and analyzes to all public, agency and county opinions as noted in this EIS's public involvement summary. However there are differences in public opinion and decisions have to be made. The Forest Service will continue making land use decisions effecting USDA administered lands as authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture.

47.2

COMMENT A second difficulty arises from the proposal to build a bridge (footbridge?) across the South Fork of the Merced River at Hite Cove. The bridge would certainly be useful to hikers making their way from Savage's Trading Post to Wawona, or vice versa, but unfortunately it will also be used by ORVers. It would seem to me to be impossible to construct a bridge that they could not use, especially if it was also designed to accommodate pack animals. Certainly any two wheeled ORV could use any bridge designed for use by pack animals. These vehicles could then tear up both sides of the river and even proceed up the North access road for a trough trip. Once again without a caretaker on duty, the potential for abuse would be enormous.

ANSWER The bridge recommended in Alternative C is to be designed for foot traffic only for the Hite Cove area and foot and horse traffic only for the Devils Gulch bridge. Efforts will be made at the next design phase to regulate the OHV bridge use problem. Please review 34.4 for a recommended solution to this problem. ORVers are not allowed within the "wild" South Fork Merced River segments and will not be allowed on the foot-horse bridge at Devils Gulch.

47.3

COMMENT A third difficulty I encountered was the proposal for commercial development at Hite Cove. I think that any such development needs to be spelled out in some detail so that we know precisely what is contemplated by the USFS. Are we talking about Hot Dog Stands? A pack Station? A museum? An operating mine? A motel type facility? Or are we talking about something less controversial such as information boards that tell the visitor about some of the history of the area? The way the proposal is casually presented in the DEIS lends itself to all sorts of sinister interpretations. Help us all out by being more specific please.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending no commercial facilities at the Hite Cove area. Information boards are not considered commercial developments. Commercial packers are to be allowed on the South Fork Merced trail down Wawona to Hite Cove on the south side then out on the south Hite Cove route.

47.4

COMMENT The fourth and final difficulty concerns the use of pack stock on the Hite Cove trails. The trail across private land in the vicinity of Savage's Trading Post is too dangerous for pack animals. I presume they would be used on the Jerseydale four wheel drive road to Hite Cove and on the trail from Hite Cove to Wawona. Bridges at Hite Cove and at Peach Tree Bar would be required. These bridges would also open up the trails to two wheel motorcycle use even if it were declared illegal resulting in all kinds of extra hazards. Motorcycle hiker confrontations on steep sections of the trail would be dangerous. Even more dangerous would be Motorcycle-pack stock encounters. Even pack stock-hiker encounters would be dangerous on some stretches of the trail. In my opinion pack animals use of the trail should not be encouraged especially commercially orientated use by the USFS. There should be no Pack Station at Hite Cove and any bridges across the South Fork should be designed so as to accommodate foot traffic only and not pack animals certainly not ORVs. Such foot bridges would be much cheaper to construct and maintain than would be the case with the sturdier bridges needed for horses and mules and motorcycles.

ANSWER No commercial pack stations at Hite Cove are recommended in Alternative C. No horses are allowed from Savage's Trading Post to Hite Cove. Horses will go out on the Jerseydale four wheel drive route. There is a foot only bridge recommended in the preferred Alternative C at Hite Cove and one foot-horse bridge recommended at Devils Gulch. Motorcycles are not recommended on the Wawona to Hite Cove trail, which is within a "wild" river segment. Controls will be enforced through the bridge designs, field warning and regulatory signs.

52.2

COMMENT I would be willing to accept a compromise to alternative B to allow the erection of 2 simple non-rigid suspension bridges. The suspension bridge is certainly in character with many of the spaces across the Merced River. On a recent hike to Hite Cove I saw a scruffy young man carrying something enclosed in large canvas bags across the

river and then put them on the back of his motorcycle and head back out the south road toward Jerseydale. He knew that I was watching him and this seemed to make him apprehensive, but he knew that I could do nothing to stop him so he drove off. Think of how much could be carried off by hundreds of OHV users. This definitely needs to be addressed in your DEIS.

ANSWER The proposed bridges recommended in Alternative C will be designed to be in character with the spaces along the South Fork River. Suspension and other types of bridges will be considered during the next design phase. The operation and maintenance and how to preserve existing resources around the Hite Cove area is a concern to all user groups. Public education and visible presence of Forest Service or BLM officials are ways to help control this problem. These and other solutions are identified in the Plan's monitoring plan.

51.2

COMMENT What bothers me about Alternate C is its inclusion of imported structures at Hite Cove. I hope that this would mean nothing more than perhaps a restroom and information board. I am also concerned that by providing a footbridge for hikers and horses, the temptation would exist for off-road vehicles to use the bridge also.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending an imported toilet building (non-water/vault or equal), a foot bridge, and a few imported information/interpretive boards/signs. There is to be no off-road vehicles use on the foot-bridge or trail. This issue is addressed in the final EIS/Plan.

61.4

COMMENT In Alternative C and D, restrooms are shown at Hite Cove and at the bottom of Devil's Gulch. How are water supply and sewage disposal to be provided for these remote restrooms? What impact will water demand and sewage disposal have on the river's flow and quality? If these restrooms are chemical latrines, how will they be serviced? In Alternative C, the two roads to Hites Cove would have to be rebuilt to accommodate the wide turning radius required by the chemical treatment trucks. Would wide paved roads and daily truck traffic be consistent with the wild and scenic category guidelines?

ANSWER The recommended toilets in these remote areas will be chemical/vault/non-water/comporting type units. There will be no water demand on the river's flow and quality. The toilet units will be self-serviced by a composting or equal type breakdown of waste materials. Access for disposal may be necessary annually via horseback at Devil's Gulch or OHV at Hite Cove. No roads will have to be rebuilt to accommodate any service vehicle.

61.9

COMMENT The EIS does not evaluate the impact that increased accessibility from bridges at Hite Cove and Devil's Gulch will have on the area. The South Fork's wildness is due to its limited accessibility. Making it easier to get there insures that more traffic will get there, destroying its wild solitude. Part of the wilderness experience is successfully traveling difficult distances to reach pristine solitude.

ANSWER The Final EIS/Plan evaluates the impact that occurs from increased accessibility from bridges at Hite



Cove and devil's Gulch area. Your analysis is correct. Making it easier to get there creates opportunities for potential higher impacts from users. This potential impact can be mitigated. Through public education and pack-it-in, park-it-out programs, it is anticipated that this easier access and use problem can be controlled. The Plan's monitoring program gives the prescription for corrective actions concerning this issue.

62.3

COMMENT A bridge, interpretive area, and south OHV road will make a resident/caretaker necessary. I understand a bridge is desired by backpackers to the Wawona area. In that case I suggest a walking bridge only, with a maze at each end, see foot bridge section near the Mt. King Mine. I prefer any development be limited to restrooms and historical plaques if interest warrants. The North Road should be kept as a service road only. OHV use of the South road should be weighted carefully.

ANSWER A seasonal caretaker is being considered at the Hite Cove area. A bridge is desired by backpackers to aid in their access to the Wawona area. A foot bridge will be designed in the next phase. A maze as a possible motorcycle control tool will be considered at this bridge design phase. Developments within the Hite Cove area are limited to a toilet structure, a bridge and a few interpretive plaques and signs. The North Road is a service road only. The south route is for OHV use only.

66.2

COMMENT Do not proceed with issue #16 under recreation the development of historical cultural aspects. Do not improve camping at Hite Cove recreation #22. No additional bridges of any kind on the South Fork of the Merced River.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending that the Hite Cove Area be protected by designating it as a historical/cultural area and that the area provide interpretation within the State's archaeological guidelines. There are no developed sites at the Hite Cove area and Alternative C makes no reference to any camping improvements. A foot bridge is recommended in Alternative C at the Hite Cove area.

66.5

COMMENT Trails in the wild zones should not be maintained.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending that the trail from Trading Post at Merced State Highway to Wawona along the South Fork Merced River within the "Wild" area be maintained.

69.2

COMMENT The proposed Alternative C (moderate recreational use) and Alternative D (maximum recreational use) are rated "EC" (EPA) because we have concerns about potential adverse impacts to wetlands and other waters of the United States resulting from the proposed construction of bridges across the South Fork of the Merced River at the Hite Cove and Devil's Gulch river crossings. We are also concerned that implementation of Alternative C and D would have greater potential to reduce natural resource values, including water quality, riparian habitat, fisheries and

bio-diversity. Our finding of insufficient information ("2" rating) for Alternative C and D as described in the DEIS is based on lack of information whether the proposed bridges across the River would be subject to regulatory review under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Also, the DEIS and Plan contain no specific mitigation measures for impacts associated with the proposed river crossing.

ANSWER The FEIS/Plan shows preliminary trail and bridge locations across the South Fork Merced River at the Hite Cove and the Devil's Gulch locations. The objective of these bridges will be to provide access for pedestrians and horses. At the next design phase, another team of agency personnel, including professional civil engineers with experience in bridge design and the 404 permitting process, will coordinate with other agencies, prepare necessary site detail environmental documents, analyze, design and if funded construct the bridges. The bridges will meet all established federal and state regulations, including Section 404, that pertain to facilities on Forest Service administered lands and rivers. The Forest Service is familiar with Section 404 which regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands, riparian areas, and other special aquatic sites. The Forest Service has in the past worked closely with the COE to ensure that bridge construction activities are consistent with Section 404's statutory and regulatory requirements.

69.6

COMMENT The Plan (under Section 5.4, Management Actions) indicates that hunting will be allowed within the W&SR corridors, but not around developed recreational sites. We suggest that the FEIS identify what general types of hunting use occurs in the area and whether hunting will be disallowed in any of the W&SR areas.

ANSWER The FEIS/Plan is suggesting to designate no shooting areas within the W&SR Recreation (includes all of the Merced river corridor) and Scenic (includes the Hite Cove area) Zones. Hunting is to be allowed in all W&SR zones within National Forest administered lands in accordance with California State Department Fish and Game regulations for species types and seasons. In summary, hunting (without shooting) is allowed in the W&SR Recreation and Scenic zones where hunting (with shooting) is allowed only in the W&SR Wild zones.

70.2

COMMENT We feel (the Friends of the River) the plan's commitment to convert the current dispersed camping along Incline Road to more formal camping area is likely to result in less resource damage to the river shoreline, fewer problems for residents of the area, and solve some of the current human waste problems with the lack of restroom facilities at these intensively used dispersed sites.

ANSWER Yes, this idea was suggested at the public meetings and in writing by a few private land owners. More formal camping areas will also help solve the potential fire and visitor parking along the road problems. Alternative C is suggesting developed sites be constructed in this area with non-water, solar type or similar type toilet structures.

70.3

COMMENT The Plan is also consistent with the BLM's draft wild and scenic river plan for Merced River recreation management and facilities. In our comment letter to the BLM this spring, the Friends of the River was supportive of the BLM's plans.

ANSWER Yes, these plans should be consistent because representatives from both the Forest Service and the BLM have been involved with this EIS/Plan's ID team.

70.4

COMMENT We (Friends of the River) believe that the LMP recreational opportunity spectrum maps should be revised to more accurately reflect areas open to motorized vehicles and those where vehicular use is unlikely and currently road-less.

ANSWER The existing Forest LMP ROS spectrum allocations that are outside the designated corridor boundary can not be revised through this W&SR Plan. However, the ROS spectrum within the W&SR corridor between Salvages Trading Post to Hite Cove has been changed from Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) to Semi-primitive non motorized (SPNM) as a result of the 3.0 mile "wild" classification for this river's segment #8. The two mile "scenic" classification segment #7 is to remain as a SPM ROS spectrum because of the existing OHV and administrative routes that require motorized access. The remaining 12.5 mile "wild" classification for the river's segment #6 is to remain as a SPNM ROS spectrum.

71.1

COMMENT The preferred alternative looks pretty good. I want to thank you for all the hard work that you and the Sierra National Forest put into the effort. I believe that the modest facility improvements on the main Merced contemplated in both the Forest's and the BLM's draft W&S river plans are a good idea. The recognition that the very frequent use of the same dispersed camping sites along the Merced is a problem is long overdue. Accommodating that use with facilities that will reduce fire danger and provide restrooms is a fair way to handle the problem in this very popular area. The other recreational access and campground improvements on the Merced (largely on the Merced) seem to be well thought out, and will certainly increase the opportunities for a positive experience for visitors to the Merced.

ANSWER Thank you for your support on this issue. Alternative C is recommending these camping facility improvements along the main Merced.

71.4

COMMENT I do support keeping the option open to construct foot and equestrian bridges across the South Fork to facilitate hiking access to the full reach of the South Fork within the National Forest. High water crossings are dangerous and correspond to the most inviting time of the year for canyon visitors. The ability to traverse the South Fork canyon from Bishop Creek to the confluence during the spring and winter will, bring a very special new opportunity to a public anxious to see the wild-lands of the South Fork and to treat the country with care and respect.

ANSWER Thank you for your support on this issue. Alternative C is recommending a foot bridge be considered

at Hite Cove and a foot/horse bridge be considered at Devils Gulch areas. Your comments about public seasonal spring and winter use are good reasons why this kind of an access option should be considered.

71.5

COMMENT I strongly support the continuation of the semiprimitive non-motorized recreational opportunity spectrum (ROS) classifications of the Forest Service lands adjacent to Yosemite National Park. These areas are within the Park's natural viewshed, and need to be managed with special sensitivity by the Forest Service. As we discussed at the Mariposa public meeting, it is also time for the Forest to reexamine the LMP's South Fork canyon semi-primitive motorized areas. They appear to cover many thousands of acres of roadless areas that are unlikely to ever to be roaded. Changing the ROS classification of many of these areas is needed to more clearly reflect the actual management of these areas and to more accurately characterize future management options.

ANSWER The ROS values outside the W&SR corridor are not within the terms of reference of this project EIS/Plan. These exterior ROS ratings have not been reexamined at this time. The ROS ratings within the W&SR corridor have been reexamined. Revised interior ratings have been assigned to the river segments in accordance with the river's approved classifications. Please review answer 70.4 for more details concerning this issue.

74.1

COMMENT I love the South Fork of the Merced River very deeply. I've hiked the whole canyon, from Alder Creek to Hite Cove three times, and make several shorter trips at each end. The first time I went, actually the first two times, were before the trail crew came through and did such great work. We had to cross vast thickets of poison oak, and the trip is much nicer with those gone! One thing which makes hiking the South Fork of the Merced Canyon really special for me are the river crossings. What I'd like to ask is please do not bridge any bridges across the river. This is for three reasons first is, the river crossings are fun exiting challenge. Bridges would make the trip duller and less exiting. Second is the river crossing are an objective hazard which keep too many people from using the canyon. The South Fork of the Merced, with its easy access, low elevation, and great swimming is at tremendous risk of overuse. Please keep the river truly wild and free ask the river how it feels. I have and it wants to remain challenging and bridge-less.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending one foot bridge be considered at Hite Cove and a foot/equestrian bridge be considered Devil's Gulch. These bridge values are based on what most of the people have asked for and the experience they wish to achieve. Your three reasons are excellent for persons like you that want to achieve your most wild level of fun, challenge and experience. Of course you can still cross the river wherever you like, but most hikers will probably take the easy safe bridge route.

75.3

COMMENT Eliminate or greatly reduce the amount of uncontrolled camping that takes place along the river in the name of working mining claims.

ANSWER The amount of uncontrolled camping that takes place between Briceburg and El Portal by all persons will be reduced with the additions of controlled camping sites along the Incline Road. Existing mining activities that takes place within this area must have approved mining permits, mining plans of operation. they are acceptable uses within the W&SR corridors within the Recreational and Scenic classified in accordance with the W&SR Act.

75.4

COMMENT Do not develop the north side to the river. This means no campsite improvements, no bathrooms, no trails, no rafting put ins, The river canyon is narrow. All you have to do is to get out of your car and walk along one bank to realize how close the other side is. The spectacular quality of the resource is enchanted by the fact that there is no development and people staring back at you from the other side. We don't need another public aquarium where one's experience is diminished by the fact that while looking into the resource you realize that someone else is on the other side looking back.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending minimal campsite improvements, bathrooms, trails and rafting put ins at the existing Merced Canyon river corridor locations. There will be no authorized dispersed use. The fire and sanitation problems will be reduced. All improvements are to be on or adjacent to the existing Incline Road on public lands close to where there are existing privately owned homes.

THESE ARE "TRAILS/TRANSPORTATION" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

5.1

COMMENT We are co-owners of the trailhead. We walk the trail daily and are intimately familiar with its condition and the effect of native and non-native forces upon it. We must emphatically state that the Hite Cove Trail from Highway 140 should be open to hikers only. It is a narrow and fragile trail. Regarding pack animals: We have seen the damage caused by the passage of hooved animals. They invariably break in the edges of the trail creating unexpected dip and narrower spots. They break through gopher tunnels making the trail more difficult, more hazardous, and opening avenues for erosion. When allowed off the trail their grazing, rolling and walking on soft ground disturbs the surrounding areas. The manure they leave behind, while good for the flowers is obnoxious to hikers or a 1 foot wide trail and 2 years ago created a nuisance with flies. The popular lizards and snakes in any combination with a startled horse, inexperienced rider, soft trail edge, far bank drop or exited dog could have possible deciders results.

ANSWER Alternative C is not recommending equestrian use on the North side foot trail from Highway 140 to Hite Cove that is 85% located on public lands. Equestrian

and OHV use is allowed on the south side route within the river corridor at Hite Cove. Equestrian use is acceptable on the maintained trail north bound to Wawona along the South Fork of the Merced.

12.2

COMMENT If I had known previously to moving here, nearly twenty years ago, what dealing with the Hite Cove Trail encompassed, I might have lived on the Trinity River instead. Of all the alternatives for usage of the South Fork Merced and the Hite Cove Trail, the only usage will be foot traffic. The trail is not conducive to any type of bicycle, vehicle or to horses. While wildflowers enthusiast crawl about on hands and knees, magnifying glasses in hand, gun packing nuts shoot at cans and bottles. We've had too many close calls for the two types to share the same space. It's bad enough to have a year around supply of bear poachers who have no regard for any rules. They are a menace to the trail and the people who use it, and to the bear population. Under the "volunteer" agreements, we would not be amenable to any other type of traffic other than on foot.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending pedestrian use but no vehicle, bicycle or equestrian use be permitted on the north side foot trail from Highway 140 to Hite Cove on the South Fork of the Merced River. Alternative C is recommending no shooting zones be posted within the Recreation (within the W&SR corridor on the Merced River) and Scenic (within the W&SR corridor at the 2 mile long Hite Cove site) zones. A no shooting policy will also be considered within this 3 mile long wild zone where the north side Hite Cove trail is located. Hunting and shooting outside the river W&SR corridor is allowed through out National Forest administered lands in accordance with the California State Department of Fish and Game regulations for species types and seasons.

18.3

COMMENT I would prefer that the South Fork trail not be improved to accommodate horses. It is not the dropping as much as it is the churning of the surface of the trail resulting in powdery dust. Another major objection is that hikers must get off the trail to allow horses to pass causing trampling of the flowers. Such a maneuver could be very dangerous to both horsemen and hikers in the steep areas of the trail. A restroom is a necessity for every hiker who visits the cove. I cannot understand the explanation that this small effort to eliminate the pollution of the ground and subsequently the river would require a bridge and access for the disabled, especially if there were a restroom on the south side of the river as well.

ANSWER Alternative C is not recommending to improve the 3 mile trail from highway 140 to Hite Cove for equestrian access. Alternative C recommends a non-water, vault, solar type toilet be located at the Hite Cove area. A toilet structure does not require a bridge for maintenance access. However, alternative C recommends a footbridge be located at the Hite Cove area to permit hikers to travel the entire SF trail system from Yosemite to Savages Trading Post without dangerous high water fording.

66.1

COMMENT Regarding the Merced WSR, I support Alternative B with the following addition or deletion. Access to Hite Cove through Savages Trailhead should be open year around. Presently this access has been closed during high fire periods of summer and early fall. Other forest trails are rarely closed during these same periods.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending to continue this closure access policy for this South Fork north side to Hite Cove trail. This policy is implemented throughout many forest roads and trails as a direct result of potential fire, safety and health reason. We are fortunate at the Savage Trailhead to have private land partners (the trailhead is not owned by any federal agency) who can help the Forest Service regulate this program along the 85% of the trail to Hite Cove which is administered by the Government.

74.3

COMMENT Please ask the trail crew not to use cement on the trail. The cement from savages to Hite Cove is ugly and not necessary. Also, please minimize the use of trail signs and other improvements. I feel this is very important, please practice strict minimum impact hiking and camping procedures by all users. I was dismayed to see the new fire rings made by the trail crew. They need to be educated about how not to build new fire rings, pack out trash, not defecate or wash dishes near water sources, etc. I love the South Fork of the Merced River dearly. It is sacred ground and sacred water. Please, please make your decision with the long term future of human/earth relations in mind.

ANSWER Thank you, this advice will be passed on to the trail crew leader. The trails are rehabilitate in accordance with Forest Service trail manual guidelines.

75.5

COMMENT Do not develop a trail on the north side of the river. Leave one side of the river wild and naturally scenic. Development of a trail will only increase the need for campsites, restrooms, access routes, and patrols. In addition, what would be the quality of the experience of hiking or biking along only to realize there are others only a few yards across the river, who have arrived there by car, etc. and are yelling, shouting, swimming and throwing rocks your direction? To develop the trail would be to mix your recreation values. You are suppose to have studied enlightened recreational planning and to present the public with a plan which reflects this training. We don't need another experience of a city park with a river running through it. What you are proposing to add will subtract from the wild and scenic qualities of this river system. I feel that you know this to be true but it is hard for a bureaucracy not to want to play bigger role and therefore to justify it by proposing greater development. The Merced River, in the limited and narrow coarse from El Portal to Briceburg, can not be all things to all people. The river's best value is wild and scenic: do the right thing and let it be!

ANSWER The Forest Service and BLM are endorsing the north side trail proposal (on the existing railroad grade on the Incline Road) completed by the National Parks Rails and Trails organization for the Merced River. Alternative C is recommending that the hiking, biking and horse trail be implemented if endorsed by all agencies. The implementation of this project will not subtract from the river's "Recrea-

tional" classification. The public experience level for this existing river corridor is already within the most developed recreation oriented class. The river already has a high variety of river based (rafting, mining, fishing) and land based (motels, restaurants, major highways, campgrounds) opportunities within a moderately natural environment. The more natural wild and scenic experiences are found on the South Fork of the Merced. The South Fork is classified "Wild" and "Scenic" and zoned to these more natural public experience levels.

THESE ARE "CULTURAL/HISTORICAL" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

12.4

COMMENT Speaking of the Miwok, one of the most important efforts in the South Fork Merced River corridor is to set aside a tract of land for Miwok use and management. The USFS needs to take the initiative. Fifty years from now the people involved with this plan will be gone. The plan's concepts operating is a matter of fact. But this part of our world will be a better place and the plan remembered if only that the Miwok can see a small portion of good will and justice. The present stewards of the forest can return a portion of it back to the original stewards. This needs to be addressed now.

ANSWER Decisions concerning this Miwok issue are outside the terms of reference of this W&SR EIS/Plan. Giving public lands now owned by all the people of the United States back to specific Native Americans tribes to manage is a forest-wide policy issue and effects Forest Service and other agency administered lands throughout California and the Nation. This issue should either be addressed at the Forest, Regional, National or Congressional Planning levels. See also answer 52.6, 58.2.

34.6

COMMENT Under Alternative C, Section 3.5 in the DEIS there is the statement "...and renovations to a minimal of imported turn of the century period items in accordance with archeological guidelines." It has been stated that these building would be placed on existing foundations. However, the existing foundations are also turn of the century and probably not acceptable under building code requirements. There is nothing to prevent these building from being used as shelters; therefore they will become de facto "habitable structures." Sealing the entrances and boarding up the windows would not be effective for preventing entry. Persons who are willing to break down a locked gate to gain access to a road would not hesitate to breach any seals on such building.

ANSWER For a few years the Hite Cove area will not be touched. More historic studies have to be made before any new toilet buildings or renovations or removal decisions can be made to the existing mining structures. More prehistoric

studies have to be completed concerning the Native American cultures before the site can be touched. A site plan showing exactly what is planned and where it should be placed will have to be made before anything gets moved, removed, or retained. The site plan will recommend what existing mining structures will stay, what will be interpreted, where the new toilet building will be placed, where the new foot-bridge will be placed, where the trails will be located and what existing Native American or archeological treasures should be retained or removed. There will be no habitable structures. However, existing structures may be used to facilitate operation and maintenance of the area resources.

44.3

COMMENT Department of the Interior (DOI) Cultural Resources- Mitigation measures, management user controls and planning controls are all cited as effecting potential impacts to cultural resources. Analysis should be provided regarding the effectiveness of these measures on each of the potential impacts mentioned. It would also be useful to know how each of these categories differ.

ANSWER These mitigation measures are generic to specific areas within the Wild and Scenic River corridor. A management user control around the 2 mile long Hite Cove area will be to keep the public out of designated archeological sites by not identifying the resource. The effectiveness of this procedure is known and therefore requires no further analysis. A planning control like not allowing the public to use the north side route to Hite Cove is effective because the archeological sites will not be effected and therefore requires no further analysis. These mitigation measures were identified in the Final EIS/Plan.

52.6

COMMENT Some local people think that local Indian Native Americans should be deeded and given title to some lands along the South Fork. A Native Leader is reported to be buried in a secret location somewhere in the South Fork watershed. You addressed this issue at the Nov 5, 1990 public hearing saying that the Indian community did not respond to your request for input to the plan. Can't you understand that the American Indian all over the U.S. totally mistrust those representing the U.S. Government. You need to go to extremes with tons of patience to reach them. Did you try to reach them through others whom they can trust? This it seems to me is a critical area not considered in your DEIS. You must correct this omission!

ANSWER No specific facts or recommendations were presented by any Native American individual or group concerning this issue during this planning process. The final EIS/Plan did not deal with this issue of giving public lands back to Native Americans within an existing Congressionally designated Wild and Scenic River corridor. The issue is outside the mandate of this EIS/Plan and decision making process. The issue should be raised at the National Congressional level. Please review answer 12.4, 58.2 for further details.

56.2

COMMENT Any construction of commercial facilities on public lands would not be permitted because of the

prehistoric and historical archeological resources of the area. Construction of vulnerable uses in a fire-prone remote area of South Fork is perhaps inviting more opportunities and invitations to illegal artifact collecting. For the above reasons we encourage you to vote for Alternative #B.

ANSWER No construction of commercial facilities were recommended in the DEIS within the Hite Cove area nor are there any commercial facilities recommended in the Final EIS's preferred Alternative C.

58.2

COMMENT I would like to suggest that a parcel encompassing the Place where Chief Tenaya's ashes are buried be given to the Miwok Tribe if they would have it and that activities in the area be limited to those sensitive to the existence of sacred ground.

ANSWER Please review answers 12.4, 52.6. This plan is not a decision making process for this issue. We are however, going to conduct a more historic and prehistoric archeological analysis of this Hite Cove area's past before we make any more site decisions.

61.2

COMMENT In Alternative C, the EIS mentions the relocation of "minimum historic structures" to Hite Cove. What structures do you have in mind? How will they be transported? Are they structures originally associated with Hite Cove or just brought in for visual attractiveness? Are they the mining equipment offered by Garoogian? In alternative C, the EIS has not made any projections of the increased traffic counts (pedestrian and motorized) that enhancement of Hite Cove historical values will generate. Provide a traffic study.

ANSWER The preferred Alternative C is recommending that the relocation of historic structures within the Hite Cove area may be necessary. This includes the existing structures (buildings and mining infrastructure). If these existing buildings had to be torn down, the possible importation of one or two of Garoogian's small buildings will be considered and then transported as necessary to the site via the north route. These buildings are to have a motif in character with the 1900s. They will be the same scale as the existing structures. They might store mining elements that can be interpreted. The interpretation will be static, no moving mining parts. One building might store the toilet building that will also be imported to the site. Any removed or imported structure will be approved by existing archeological State guidelines. A site plan is to be completed before any existing site element is removed, imported or reconstructed within this area. In summary the area will retain the same character and looks that exists in 1991 and not the looks of the 1890s when approximately 300 people may have lived within the area.

61.6

COMMENT The EIS does not adequately describe the current status and potential impact on archaeological and ethnohistorical sites on the South Fork of the Merced River. A survey is mentioned in the public scoping comments, but not described. The middle Fork relies on previous surveys. A comprehensive survey and detailed mitigation plan should be required before any alternative is implemented.

ANSWER A surface historical and prehistorical survey has been partly completed for the Hite Cove area. All surface elements that exist have been recorded. This survey will be completed when further subsurface archaeological and ethnohistorical sites are identified. Before Alternative C is implemented, a comprehensive archaeological survey and a site concept location and mitigation plan will be completed for the Hite Cove area within the W&SR river corridor. This action will be done before the foot-bridge and toilet building is site located, before any rehabilitation or removal of any existing mining building is completed and before any zones are allocated, retained or interpreted for Native American cultural reasons.

61.7

COMMENT The EIS fails to take into account current native american uses of the two river basins for traditional religious and subsistence activities. These activities are protected under the Native American Heritage Act. The area is currently so used. Provision must be made under any alternative to protect religiously significant locations, to accommodate collection of plant materials required for religious activities, and to protect traditional plant collection areas from further damage and depletion.

ANSWER The Final EIS/Plan takes into account all necessary existing past and current Native American information required to make a decision on the preferred Alternative C. Any new or existing activity within the wild and scenic river plan's 33 miles corridor is subject to State's Archeological and standards and will be monitored by staff agency archaeologists. Before any management activities (rehabilitate the camping areas along the Incline Road or construct a foot-bridge at the Hite Cove area) is completed, a cultural resource inventory of the specific sites will be completed with necessary mitigation measures taken.

71.3

COMMENT While I have no objection to the reconstruction of historic mining buildings at or near Hite Cove, without year round vehicle access I would question the practicality of that decision. The traffic usually necessary to justify such operations would not be there; and whether these buildings are likely to long survive the inevitable fires that will sweep the canyon (and long ago burned down the historic structures at Hite Cove) is of equal concern.

ANSWER Alternative C is recommending retaining the existing two old mining buildings at the Hite Cove area. The new solar, no-water type toilet could be located in one of them. Importing one or two buildings of equal scale and motif could be completed if the existing ones have to be removed for safety reasons. The idea is to keep the area looking pretty much like it is today. Inside one of the buildings could be a static interpretive display. Necessary fire pretention measures will be established and implemented for all structures.

THESE ARE "FIRE" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH

COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

1.4, 2.4, 15.4, 16.4,

COMMENT The DEIS points out that Alternative D will produce the highest potential for fire. I would submit that Alternative C has a significantly greater potential for fire than Alternative B, because of activities such as alcohol consumption and shooting.

ANSWER Alternatives A and B have a higher potential for fire than Alternative C along the Merced River because more controlled instead of dispersed campsites are recommended along the river canyon. Alternatives B and C have an equal potential for fire along the South Fork "Wild" river segments because their is no difference in their development scale. Alternative A and C have a greater potential for fire along the South Fork "Scenic" river segment at the Hite Cove area than Alternative B because the motorized Four Wheel Drive Access is to be retained.

11.3

COMMENT Alternative C and D will be the high potential for fire. Alternative C for sure has a significant potential for fire than Alternative B because of alcohol consumption and smoking and the shooting off of weapons. These two alternatives C and D just don't harmonize with the environment in the Hite Cove area.

ANSWER Please see answers 1.4, 2.4, 15.4, 16.4. There is a strong potential for fire with all user groups at the Hite Cove area. Through education this fire problem can be mitigated. The Hite Cove area is to be posted a no shooting area. There will be no camping and therefore no fires allowed at the Hite Cove area. People will have to be responsible for their own alcohol and smoking habits within all forested areas.

15.5

COMMENT I would like all employees in this district to be made aware that the Hite Cove Trail closes, with no exception, on the day that a State II fire alert is declared by the USFS, staying closed until the first substantial rains. My job would be a lot easier if that were common knowledge.

ANSWER Your referring to the privately owned north side Hite Cove Trail head along Highway 140 and the one mile privately owned entrance at Salvages Trading Post. It is desirable to coordinate the fire closing dates for public safety. However, the remaining 3 miles to Hite Cove and then the northern 18 miles following the South Fork Merced river to Wawona that are administered by the USFS may be at times subject to different fire control conditions and closing criteria.

44.4

COMMENT The Department of the Interior (DOI) Fire, Analysis for each of the alternatives should be provided. A conclusion is simply made that fire policies for the FS and BLM are compatible with all proposed alternatives. Planned and potential fire management actions should be described and their effects on wild and scenic river values for each alternative should be analyzed.

ANSWER The final EIS shows an analysis for each of the Alternatives. Fire policies for the FS and BLM are compatible with all Alternatives.

69.5

COMMENT The EPA comments, Air Quality, The DEIS under Section 3.3 Management Direction Common to all Alternative states that prescribed burns will be used for wildlife enhancement and fuel reduction. The Plan (under Section 5.4, Management Actions) states that all planned fuel management burns will comply with current air quality regulations. We recommend that the FEIS identify the California and Federal Clean Air Act requirements for meeting air quality standards for public health, and local plans for maintenance of air quality standards. We also recommend that you coordinate with the Madera and Mariposa Air Pollution Control Districts for compliance with Federal and State air quality standards and to adopt measures to minimize adverse impacts to air quality, if necessary. The FEIS should demonstrate that sufficient mitigation measures will be implemented to assure attainment and maintenance of air quality standards. We also recommend that the FEIS include the following additional information: 1 where the prescribed burns would be located, including elevation and proximity to sensitive areas such as roads and recreational areas 2. how many acres would be burned at a time; 3 what active measures, if any, would be taken to reduce emissions from prescribed burning (e.g., backing fires, evaluation of moisture content, and mop-up procedures to minimize smoldering); 4 the time(s) of year when prescribed burning is anticipated (we recommend that any burning of forest products occur only under favorable meteorological conditions required for smoke dispersion and attainment of air quality standards); and 5 permit conditions likely to be required by the Madera or Mariposa Air Pollution Control Districts for prescribed burning.

ANSWER The principle factors affecting air quality are photochemical smog from the San Joaquin Valley air basin, airborne dust from roads, and soot and ash from prescribed burning or naturally occurring fires. Federal land managers have direct responsibility for protecting air quality. Sources directly under FS control include dust from non-surfaced roads, and discharge of smoke and soot through prescribed burning. The final EIS identifies the California and Federal Clean Air Act requirements for meeting air quality standards. At past prescribed fire planning projects, the agencies have coordinated with necessary counties pollution control districts for compliance with Federal and State air quality standards. The FEIS will only indicate that sufficient mitigation measures will be implemented for these prescribed fires. The project level will indicate the specific mitigation measures, location, acres, and what the fire prescriptions will be. (See 11.3 Plan BMP)

THESE ARE "GEOLOGY AND SOIL" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN. EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

44.6

COMMENT Department of the Interior (DOI) Geology and Soil- Potential impacts from such activities as prescribed burning, road building, timber harvesting and the subsequent increased erosion should be analyzed.

ANSWER The potential impacts from prescribed burnings within the Wild and Scenic river corridor will be analyzed for each project as indicated in answer 69.5. There is no road building or timber harvesting recommended in any of the Wild and Scenic River EIS/Plan Alternatives. These activities are therefore not analyzed at this phase of planning.

57.1

COMMENT In considering the wisdom of opening the Hite Cove area to ORV activity observe that: Soil destruction is directly proportionate (all other parameters constant) to the energy applied to the surface of the soil causing failure of the soil in hand. This simply says that if you employ a person to dig a ditch, two like persons with like tools (other variables constant) will dig twice as much ditch, three, three times, etc. On an average a human cannot deliver more than .2 horsepower in one hour while hiking a trail. Now suppose you designate a given area for hiking that has been determined to be able to absorb 1000 man hours of hiking recreation per year without irreversible damage. You can also, if you wish, apply power recreation to this designated area. Since with increased rate of power to the designated area the land will reach the point of irreversible damage sooner. If the power recreation is applied at the value of 10 horse power then the recreation hours available from the designated land is reduced. Thus you may give the land to a pedestrian for 1000 hours, give him an ORV bike (5 to 20 brake horsepower) and the usage will be reduced to 40 or 10 recreation hours. Give him an ORV FWD heavy duty and he will get less than two hours, For every 1 horsepower for power recreation applied to the forest you automatically disfranchise four other non-power users. There are in California in excess of 1 million ORV vehicles. Supposing only 1% visited Hite Cove area yearly. What would happen if 10,000 ORV visited Hite Cove area yearly? Your trees are stressed now from smog constituents. How would additional smog concentrated in a confined area affect Hite Cove trees? Future demand for FWD activities will be greater. Are you prepared to cope with an industry that gets its funds for growth from public funds through office DMV as green sticker funds?

ANSWER Alternative C keeps the same access systems open to Hite Cove that presently exist. This includes the north side hiking trail to Hite Cove, and the south side OHV route to Hite Cove. No further access systems are being recommended in the preferred alternative. There has been no significant soil damage within the W&SR corridor and along the north side hiking trail or along the south side OHV route during the past 20 years of public use.

THESE ARE "MINERALS" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

19.1

COMMENT I wish this letter to be part of the Congressional record concerning the Environmental Impact Statement, Merced River Draft 8-1-90. In Section 4.7 Minerals, the second paragraph contains false information. There are only six miners living on mining claims along the 13 miles of the Merced River, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). All six miners have approved Plans of Operation concerning their occupancy of their claims. All live in State approved structures. The mining activity on the Merced River is commercial, but the claimants do let the public pan and use small dredges on their claims. The BLM is attempting to install a permit system concerning dredging on the river, which would reduce the number of dredges on the river and would exclude the public at large. Also, the public at large is deprived access of about 3,000 feet of Public Domain road way along the Merced River 5 miles west of Briceburg California. The BLM has allowed a private party to place a locked gate access the roadway which is Public Domain land and is in conflict with the Wild and Scenic Act, concerning public access. The Environmental Impact Statement Draft does not address this issue.

ANSWER The final FEIS deletes the sentences that began in the DEIS with "A few claimants are living on their claims in substandard structures. The legitimacy of these claims is in question. A few claimants appear to be in trespass of public lands." The FEIS has been edited and now indicates these facts. A few of the minors do not have approved plans of operations. Interlocutory decisions to void these plans of operations were issued in January 1991. The claimants did not live in state approved structures. The structures failed county health and building code inspections on three separate occasions. The claimants have been cited for violations of federal regulations regarding these structures and are currently scheduled for trial in federal court. The public at large has access along the Merced River from Briceburg to Bagby (outside the terms of reference of this EIS/Plan). The public used Merced River Trail runs this entire distance. There is road and vehicular access to the river from Briceburg to Railroad Flat." The mining structures are subject to the same aesthetic guidelines given other structures on BLM and Forest Service lands. Most mining activities are commercial in nature. The miners in the past have allowed the public to recreation pan and use small dredges on their claims. The agencies are considering installing a permit system to manage this secondary use. The goal will be to make sure this use protects the values for which the river was designated. This dredging or panning recreational type use will have to meet these criteria; minimize surface disturbance, sedimentation, pollution and visual impairment in order to be acceptable. The responsible agency will make this decision.

THESE ARE "VEGETATION" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

44.7

COMMENT Department of the Interior (DOI) Vegetation- Analysis should be provided for the different impacts to vegetation from implementation of each of the alternatives. This analysis should reflect the different levels of visitor use, road building, wild fire potential, ORV use and erosion. Potential impacts to threatened And endangered plant species should also be provided.

ANSWER An analysis and potential impacts to vegetation and threatened and endangered species are shown in the FEIS.

THESE ARE "WATER" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

69.3

COMMENT EPA, Wild and Scenic Rivers, The Clean Water Act (CWA) is designed to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's waters (Section 101 (a). In California, programs to implement the CWA have been delegated to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB) under Section 208, Water Quality Management Planning, and Section 319 Non-point Source Management Program. Furthermore, pursuant to Section 1283 (c) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the FS and BLM are required to cooperate with EPA and the appropriate State water pollution control agencies for the purpose of eliminating or diminishing the pollution of waters in these rivers. The FEIS should discuss: (1) how CWA program implementation will be coordinated with EPA, SWRCB, and FWQCB; and (2) the proposed W&SR designations's effect on compliance with state water quality management plans and the Central Valley Basin Plan, including EPA approved water quality standards and designated beneficial uses.

ANSWER (1) The FEIS discusses how the CWA program implementation is to be coordinated with EPA, SWRCB and FWQCB. The BLM and FS are cooperating with the EPA. (2) The Merced and South Fork W&SR is already designated down to Briceburg, California. To our knowledge it already complies with state water quality management plans.

69.5

COMMENT EPA, Riparian Habitat, We suggest that the DEIS and Plan include more specific information regarding how riparian habitat along the W&SR corridors will be managed to protect it from grazing and recreational (e.g., rafting access) activities. Riparian habitat is critical to the maintenance of water quality and beneficial uses, and this type of wetland habitat has been significantly reduced in California. The plan includes protective measures such as



providing water developments for cattle outside riparian zones to facilitate their dispersion, and completing or updating grazing allotment plans following NEPA directions "when necessary." The FEIS should explain how grazing use would be managed (e.g., animal utilization levels and riparian zone protection strategies) to assure that riparian habitats are maintained or improved. The FEIS should also indicate how the FS and BLM will re-issue range allotments within the W&SR corridors. The April 17, 1990 memorandum from the Chief of the FS regarding grazing and livestock use permits with the Forest Plan states that all FS range allotments must comply with NEPA. Further, we suggest that the FEIS reference where the Riparian Standards and Guidelines can be found in their entirety. We also recommend that the Plan include management actions for routine, on-going monitoring of grazing and recreational activities within the riparian zones to determine if damage is occurring and what corrective measures should be instituted. The monitoring plan for riparian quality (under Section 10 of the Plan) indicates a monitoring frequency of "once before and after any project completion." We request that the FEIS include an explanation of what is meant by this frequency statement. We also suggest that it be modified to include routine, on-going monitoring.

ANSWER The BLM and Forest Service understand that riparian habitat is critical to the maintenance of water quality. The riparian vegetation within the river corridors will be managed. (See 11.3 Plan BMP, 1-8 to 1-19 and 8-2 to 8-4). More specific information like AUM allocations within the W&SR corridors will be delineated in the specific range allotment plans. These specific range allotment plans will include lands both within and outside the W&SR corridors because the existing permits boundary lines already exists both inside and outside the W&SR corridors. These allotment implementation plans will follow the NEPA process. This EIS/Plan is not the vehicle to specify the detailed AUM allocations or other detailed recommendations. Forest riparian guidelines have been developed and will be available in both Forest Land Resource Management Plans which are scheduled to be published soon. This Final Plan has been revised to include more on-going monitoring of grazing and recreational activities with the riparian zones. Monitoring is critical to implementation of this Plan.

## 69.2

COMMENT EPA, Water Quality, Section 404 of Clean Water Act (CWA), The DEIS states that under Alternative C and D, bridges would be constructed across the South Fork of the Merced River at the Hite Cove and Devil's Gulch river crossings. If the selected alternative includes these features, the FEIS should discuss whether these activities would require a CWA Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Section 404 regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands, riparian areas, and other special aquatic sites. If these features were selected, we request that the FS and BLM work closely with the COE to ensure that bridge construction activities are consistent with Section 404's statutory and regulatory requirements. The Section 404 regulatory authority is shared between the COE and EPA. EPA reviews proposed activities for compliance with Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites

for Dredged or Fill Materials (40 CFR 230), promulgated pursuant to Section 404 (b) (1) of the CWA. Therefore, if bridges are proposed under the selected alternative, we recommend that the FEIS include detailed information on the following: (1) the type of activities (e.g., fill of wetlands and other special aquatic sites as a result of stream crossings) which would be subject to Section 404 permit review; (2) alternatives to these proposed activities; (3) the estimated number of acres subject to Section 404 jurisdiction that would be filled; (4) the types and quantities of fill material that would be discharged into waters of the United States, including wetlands, riparian areas, and other special aquatic sites; and (5) appropriate and practicable measures to compensate for the unavoidable loss of wetlands and other waters of the United States. To comply with the 404 (b) (1) Guidelines, the proposed activity which is subject to a CWA Section 404 permit must meet the following criteria: 1. The proposed discharge must be the practicable alternative which would have the least adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem (40 CFR 230.10(a)). All practicable alternatives to the proposed discharge which do not involve a discharge into wetlands and other special aquatic sites are presumed to have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem unless clearly demonstrated other wise by the applicant (40 CFR 230.10 (a) (3)). 2. The proposed activity does not violate State adopted, EPA approved water quality standards or jeopardize the continued existence of any species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 230.10(b)). 3. The proposed activity must not cause or contribute to the significant degradation of waters of the United States, including wetlands and other special aquatic sites (40 CFR 230.10 (c)). Significant degradation includes the loss of fish and wildlife habitat and the loss of other wetland habitat values and functions. Significant degradation also includes cumulative impacts. 4. All appropriate and practicable steps have been taken to minimize adverse impacts on the aquatic ecosystem (i.e., mitigation) (40 CFR 230.10 (d)). It is essential that the FS and BLM undertake every practicable effort to first avoid and then reduce the amount of fill placed into waters of the United States. The alternatives analysis in the FEIS should fully document the avoidance and minimize adverse impacts on aquatic ecosystems and should demonstrate that the proposed alignment at specific stream crossings is the least-damaging practicable alternative.

ANSWER The preferred alternative C indicates that bridges across the South Fork Merced River are recommended somewhere at the Hite Cove and Devils Gulch area. The bridges will be designed to accommodate pedestrians and horses only. At the next design phase, another team of agency personnel will determine the exact bridge site locations that are the least-damaging to the sites. (See 11.3 Plan BMP 2-17). This professional design team will include professional civil engineers with experience in foot-bridge design and the 404 permitting process. The team will coordinate with other agencies, prepare the necessary environmental documents, analyze the site impacts, design the bridge facility and monitor the bridge construction. The bridges will meet all established federal and state regulations, including Section 404, that pertains to facilities on Forest Service administered lands and rivers. The BLM will

not be involved in this case since the bridges will be on FS administered lands only.

THESE ARE "FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE" PUBLIC COMMENTS. THE AGENCY ANSWERS FOLLOW THE COMMENTS. THE COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF PUBLISHING THE PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PLAN, EACH COMMENT NUMBER REFERS TO A PUBLIC LETTER WHICH IS ON FILE.

44.5

COMMENT Department of the Interior (DOI), Fisheries, the conclusions for Alternative C are confusing. It is stated both that the existing fishery may be maintained and also that there will be a decrease in fishing quality. Fishery maintenance is not the same as decreased quality. Analysis should be provided and the situation clarified. For Alternative D, a mitigation measure has "the California Department of Fish and Game limiting the flow of people." Normally this is a management action only within the authority of the land management agency. Potential impacts to the fishery from increased sedimentation, prescribed burning, road building, recreational suction dredging, and other forms of recreational mining should be analyzed.

ANSWER Thank you for finding this error concerning the increase and decrease statements in the DEIS. It is corrected in the FEIS. The Alternative D mitigation measure has been edited. Anticipated impacts from project level prescribed burning will be analyzed at the project prescription level. There will be no new road building or recreational mining but these issues are mentioned in the EIS.

61.8

COMMENT The wildlife section does not discuss the status of peregrine falcons in the area. However, Alternative D requires a survey for falcon habitat before implementation. This survey should be conducted regardless of the alternative selected. What is the current status of the area as peregrine falcon habitat?

ANSWER The DEIS and FEIS indicates that "The area offers potential nesting for the endangered peregrine falcon" along the South Fork Merced River. However, there have been no recorded peregrine falcon sightings. Alternative D indicates a survey because more anticipated facilities would be planned along the potential falcon habitat zones. Alternative C recommends no facilities along the potential falcon habitat zones and therefore no surveys are required prior to implementation of this alternative.

69.4

COMMENT EPA, Antidegradation Policy, The DEIS should discuss whether water quality in the management area exceeds levels necessary to support fish, wildlife and recreation. Pursuant to the Federal Antidegradation Policy (40 CFR 131.12), existing in-stream water uses and water quality necessary to protect the existing uses shall be maintained and protected. Furthermore, where quality of waters

exceed levels necessary to support propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and recreation in and on the water, that quality shall be maintained and protected. We believe that the W&SR designation for the South Fork and Merced River has the potential to complement Antidegradation goals. This should be viewed as a potential benefit in terms of protection of existing water quality and maintenance of beneficial uses. We suggest that the FEIS identify (1) the beneficial uses for all waters in the W&SR corridors (e.g., native trout) and (2) any waters within these areas classified as "high quality." We also suggest that the FEIS describe how Standards and Guidelines, Best Management Practices and other measures, designed to minimize water quality impacts from activities such as grazing and mining will ensure consistency with the Antidegradation Policy. Further, we recommend that the FS and BLM coordinate with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board on water quality issues.

ANSWER (1) The Forest Land Management Plan will identify the beneficial uses for all waters within the forests administrative land boundaries. (2) The waters classified as high quality will be identified within these forest land use documents. This FEIS has referred to the Best Management Practices (See 11.3 Plan) and other measures designed to minimize water quality impacts from activities such as grazing and mining.

69.7

COMMENT The Plan also includes the management action to implement Spotted Owl Habitat Area (SOHA) management plans as developed by the Forests. We understand that the FS is considering implementing the Habitat Conservation Area (HCA) system, as recommended by the May 1990 report prepared by Jack Ward Thomas, et al., entitled "A Conservation Strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl." The FEIS should explain whether the HCA system for the SOHA system is most appropriate for managing spotted owls within the W&SR corridors.

ANSWER Northern Spotted owls do not inhabit the Sierra or Stanislaus Forests and are not found in the W&SR corridor. The owl strategy for the forests will be shown in the completed Land Management Plan scheduled to be published this October 1991.



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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PRIDE IN  
AMERICA  
[Redacted]

1 OF 3

In Reply Refer To:  
ER 90/820

NOV 21 1990

# 44.0  
DID RECEIVE BY NOV 30  
DUE DATE & ACCEPTED  
& RECORDED.

Mr. James L. Boynton  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, California 93612

Dear Mr. Boynton:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River environmental impact statement (EIS) and implementation plan. Our comments follow.

### Procedural Comments

The EIS lacks an identified proposed action for the public and other reviewing agency's to evaluate and analyze. Such an omission hinders informed public participation regarding the draft document (DES). In addition, without a properly defined proposal presented for agency review in the DES, effective and complete evaluation of potential impacts to Department of the Interior (DOI) lands and authorities cannot occur.

No explanation is provided of issues and alternatives identified in scoping, but not considered significant enough for analysis.

No analysis is provided for adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided, the relationship between short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and any irreversible or irretivevable commitments of resources.

It is essential that there be a "Wild and Scenic Values" topic for analysis in the environmental consequences chapter. Without such a topic, as the document now exists, neither the public nor the decisionmaker can succinctly understand potential impacts to wild and scenic river values.

### Qualitative Comments

Management actions for each alternative are unclear, particularly in regard to public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Such planned or potential actions as mineral activity and/or development, timber harvesting, road building, prescribed burning, etc., should be clearly described. There is no analysis of identified threatened or endangered species of plants and/or animals.

The impact analysis discussion would be greatly improved if the relative magnitude of impacts was projected and analysis was provided to support the conclusions made. For example, user estimates, present and projected, would facilitate determining the potential magnitude of visitor impacts.

"Available mitigation" measures are mentioned but a thorough discussion explaining their effectiveness is not provided.

#### Technical Comments

Cultural Resources - Mitigation measures, management user controls and planning controls are all cited as effecting potential impacts to cultural resources. Analysis should be provided regarding the effectiveness of these measures on each of the potential impacts mentioned. It would also be useful to know how each of these categories differ.

Fire - Analysis for each of the alternatives should be provided. A conclusion is simply made that fire policies for the FS and BLM are compatible with all proposed alternatives. Planned and potential fire management actions should be described and their effects on wild and scenic river values for each alternative should be analyzed.

Fisheries - The conclusions for Alternative C are confusing. It is stated both that the existing fishery may be maintained and also that there will be a decrease in fishing quality. Fishery maintenance is not the same as decreased quality. Analysis should be provided and the situation clarified. For Alternative D, a mitigation measure has "the California Department of Fish and Game limiting the flow of people". Normally this is management action only within the authority of the land management agency.

Potential impacts to the fishery from increased sedimentation from prescribed burning, road building, recreational suction dredging, and other forms of recreational mining should be analyzed.

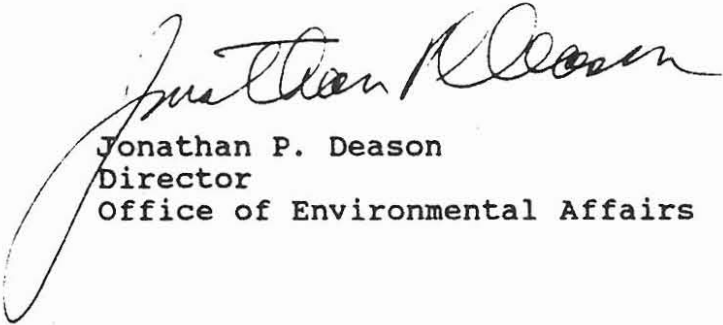
Geology and Soil - Potential impacts from such activities as prescribed burning, road building, timber harvesting and the subsequent increased erosion should analyzed.

Vegetation - Analysis should be provided for the different impacts to vegetation from implementation of each of the alternatives. This analysis should reflect the different levels of visitor use, road building, wild fire potential, ORV use and erosion. Potential impacts to threatened and endangered plant species should also be provided.

Wildlife - Potential impacts to threatened and endangered animal species should be analyzed for each alternative.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Jonathan P. Deason  
Director  
Office of Environmental Affairs

# Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

DISTRICT 1 ..... ARTHUR G. BAGGETT, JR.  
DISTRICT 2 ..... SALLY S. PUNTE  
DISTRICT 3 ..... ERIC J. ERICKSON  
DISTRICT 4 ..... GEORGE P. RADANOVICH  
DISTRICT 5 ..... GERTRUDE R. TABER



# 54.0  
DID RECEIVED, 27 Nov 9  
DUE DATE ACCEPTED &  
JOHN W. McCAMMAN recorded.  
Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS  
Clerk of the Board

P.O. Box 784  
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA 95338  
(209) 966-3222

Mr. Jim Boynton  
U.S. Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
Fed. Bldg. Room 3211  
1130 "O" Street  
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Jim,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Merced Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. Our Board agrees with the basic preferred alternative C with a few exceptions and additions as noted below. Wally, Tom, Bryan, and Nick have done a good job dealing with tough issues and diverse interest groups.

1. By unanimous vote of the Board of Supervisors, the attached resolution was passed which states that after much discussion we believe it to be in the County's and Hites Cove's best interest to close the Hites Cove Road at the gate at Jerseydale.
2. Any bridges built along the South Fork should be designed for equestrian and foot travel with measures to prevent access by motorized bikes.
3. We agree, the designated camping areas along Incline Road are sorely needed. In developing the detailed plans, we ask that you consider the need for water for fire protection, fire safe clearances, additional rest rooms, and protection of the riparian habitat. If we can be of assistance in implementing this plan please contact me.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Art Baggett  
Chairman

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2073

ATTEST:

Margie Williams  
MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

Jeffrey G. Green  
JEFFREY G. GREEN, County Counsel



MARIPOSA COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 90-548

A RESOLUTION TO PROHIBIT OHV ACCESS TO THE  
"SCENIC" SEGMENT OF THE SOUTH FORK MERCED

WHEREAS, the segment of the South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River which includes the Hite Cove area has been classified by the Sierra National Forest Service as "Scenic"; and

WHEREAS, the Draft Implementation Plan for this segment permits continued access by Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs); and

WHEREAS, the DEIS concedes that the preferred Alternative will result in increased instances of illegal activities such as vandalism, grafitti and artifact collecting; and

WHEREAS, the Implementation Plan does not include any provisions for preventing these illegal activities; and

WHEREAS, the BLM has reported many instances of accidents and injuries involving OHV users which required emergency assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Implementation Plan does not include any proposals for providing such emergency services; and

WHEREAS, Mariposa County is not prepared to provide such emergency assistance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, a political subdivision of the State of California, that they petition the Sierra National Forest Land Management Team to alter their proposed plan and prohibit OHV access to the "Scenic" segment of the South Fork Merced.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors this 13th day of November, 1990, by the following vote:

- AYES: BAGGETT, PUNTE, ERICKSON, RADANOVICH, TABER
- NOES: NONE
- ABSENT: NONE
- ABSTAINED: NONE



ARTHUR G. BAGGETT, JR., Chairman  
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, Ca. 94105

# 69.0 10F9  
NOT RECEIVED BY 30 NOV 90 DUE  
DATE BUT ACCEPTED & RECORDED

5 DEC 1990

Mr. James L. Boynton  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, California 93612

Dear Mr. Boynton:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Implementation Plan (Plan) for the South Fork and Merced Wild and Scenic River. We have reviewed this document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our detailed comments on this proposed action are enclosed.

Under Public Law 100-149, signed in November 1987, Wild and Scenic River (W&SR) status was given to 114 miles of the Merced River system, including 71 miles of the Merced River and 43 miles of the South Fork Merced River. The proposed action provides management guidelines to be followed by the Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for 36 miles of W&SR corridors along the Merced and South Fork Merced Rivers on lands administered by these agencies. The remaining miles of W&SR corridors are managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and are not part of the proposed action described in this DEIS and Plan.

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FOREST

The South Fork and Merced W&SR DEIS and Plan identify and analyze four management alternatives. The final Implementation Plan will be tiered to the Land and Resource Management Plans for the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests, and BLM's Merced River Management Plan. These alternatives are: Alternative A, which continues present recreational use; Alternative B, which emphasizes limited and dispersed recreational facilities; Alternative C, which emphasizes moderate recreational improvements; and Alternative D, which emphasizes maximum recreational use. Alternative C is the FS's and BLM's preferred alternative and the basis for the Plan.

The DEIS acknowledges that selection of Alternative B would result in the greatest protection of W&SR values of any alternative. The document also identifies that implementation of Alternative B could result in improvement of water quality; would provide the highest level of protection to biodiversity; and

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- TM \_\_\_\_\_
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- ENGR \_\_\_\_\_
- LANDS \_\_\_\_\_
- LMP \_\_\_\_\_
- RESOURCES \_\_\_\_\_
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- DISTRICTS \_\_\_\_\_
- # REC'D \_\_\_\_\_

would prohibit construction of bridges across the Merced River. Therefore, we recommend selection of Alternative B as the environmentally preferred alternative.

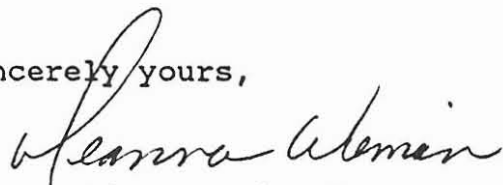
We have classified this DEIS as follows: Alternatives A and B as "LO-1," Lack of Objections, Adequate Information; and Alternatives C (proposed action) and D as "EC-2," Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information.

The proposed Alternative C (moderate recreational use) and Alternative D (maximum recreational use) are rated "EC" because we have concerns about potential adverse impacts to wetlands and other waters of the United States resulting from the proposed construction of bridges across the South Fork of the Merced River at the Hite Cove and Devil's Gulch river crossings. We are also concerned that implementation of Alternatives C and D would have greater potential to reduce natural resource values, including water quality, riparian habitat, fisheries and biodiversity.

Our finding of insufficient information ("2" rating) for Alternatives C and D as described in the DEIS is based on lack of information whether the proposed bridges across the River would be subject to regulatory review under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Also, the DEIS and Plan contain no specific mitigation measures for impacts associated with the proposed river crossings.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. Please send three copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to this office at the same time it is officially filed with our Washington, D.C. office. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 744-1567, or have your staff contact Ruth Pratt at (415) 744-1570.

Sincerely yours,



Deanna Wieman, Director  
Office of External Affairs

Enclosure

- cc: Central Valley RWQCB, Fresno, CA
- Madera Co. APCD, Madera, CA
- Mariposa Co. APCD, Mariposa, CA
- CDFG, Div. of Env. Serv., Sacramento, CA
- Field Sup., FWS, Sacramento, CA

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General Comments

We support the features of the DEIS and Plan which (1) prohibit timber harvesting within all W&SR corridors; and (2) encourage acquisition of private parcels within these corridors as they become available.

Water Quality

Section 404 of Clean Water Act (CWA)

The DEIS states that under Alternatives C and D, bridges would be constructed across the South Fork of the Merced River at the Hite Cove and Devil's Gulch river crossings. If the selected alternative includes these features, the FEIS should discuss whether these activities would require a CWA Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Section 404 regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands, riparian areas, and other special aquatic sites. If these features were selected, we request that the FS and BLM work closely with the COE to ensure that bridge construction activities are consistent with Section 404's statutory and regulatory requirements.

The Section 404 regulatory authority is shared between the COE and EPA. EPA reviews proposed activities for compliance with Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Materials (40 CFR 230), promulgated pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA. Therefore, if bridges are proposed under the selected alternative, we recommend that the FEIS include detailed information on the following:

- (1) the type of activities (e.g., fill of wetlands and other special aquatic sites as a result of stream crossings) which would be subject to Section 404 permit review;
- (2) alternatives to these proposed activities;
- (3) the estimated number of acres subject to Section 404 jurisdiction that would be filled;
- (4) the types and quantities of fill material that would be discharged into waters of the United States, including wetlands, riparian areas, and other special aquatic sites; and
- (5) appropriate and practicable measures to compensate for the unavoidable loss of wetlands and other waters of the United States.

To comply with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines, the proposed activity which is subject to a CWA Section 404 permit must meet the following criteria:

1. The proposed discharge must be the practicable alternative which would have the least adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem (40 CFR 230.10(a)). All practicable alternatives to the proposed discharge which do not involve a discharge into wetlands and other special aquatic sites are presumed to have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem unless clearly demonstrated otherwise by the applicant (40 CFR 230.10(a)(3)).
2. The proposed activity does not violate State-adopted, EPA-approved water quality standards or jeopardize the continued existence of any species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 230.10(b)).
3. The proposed activity must not cause or contribute to significant degradation of waters of the United States, including wetlands and other special aquatic sites (40 CFR 230.10(c)). Significant degradation includes the loss of fish and wildlife habitat and the loss of other wetland habitat values and functions. Significant degradation also includes cumulative impacts.
4. All appropriate and practicable steps have been taken to minimize adverse impacts on the aquatic ecosystem (i.e., mitigation) (40 CFR 230.10(d)). It is essential that the FS and BLM undertake every practicable effort to first avoid and then reduce the amount of fill placed into waters of the United States. The alternatives analysis in the FEIS should fully document the avoidance and minimization of adverse impacts on aquatic ecosystems and should demonstrate that the proposed alignment at specific stream crossings is the least-damaging practicable alternative.

#### Wild and Scenic Rivers

The CWA is designed to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's waters (Section 101(a)). In California, programs to implement the CWA have been delegated to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB) under Section 208, Water Quality Management Planning, and Section 319 Non-point Source Management Program. Furthermore, pursuant to Section 1283(c) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the FS and BLM are required to cooperate with EPA and the appropriate State water pollution control agencies for the purpose of eliminating or diminishing the pollution of waters in these rivers. The FEIS should discuss: (1) how CWA program implementation will be coor-

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dinated with EPA, SWRCB, and RWQCB; and (2) the proposed W&SR designation's effect on compliance with state water quality management plans and the Central Valley Basin Plan, including EPA-approved water quality standards and designated beneficial uses.

### Antidegradation Policy

The DEIS should discuss whether water quality in the management area exceeds levels necessary to support fish, wildlife and recreation. Pursuant to the Federal Antidegradation Policy (40 CFR 131.12), existing instream water uses and water quality necessary to protect the existing uses shall be maintained and protected. Furthermore, where quality of waters exceed levels necessary to support propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and recreation in and on the water, that quality shall be maintained and protected. We believe that the W&SR designation for the South Fork and Merced River has the potential to complement Antidegradation goals. This should be viewed as a potential benefit in terms of protection of existing water quality and maintenance of beneficial uses. We suggest that the FEIS identify (1) the beneficial uses for all waters in the W&SR corridors (e.g., native trout) and (2) any waters within these areas classified as "high quality." We also suggest that the FEIS describe how Standards and Guidelines, Best Management Practices and other measures, designed to minimize water quality impacts from activities such as grazing and mining will ensure consistency with the Antidegradation Policy. Further, we recommend that the FS and BLM coordinate with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board on water quality issues.

### Riparian Habitat

We suggest that the DEIS and Plan include more specific information regarding how riparian habitat along the W&SR corridors will be managed to protect it from grazing and recreational (e.g., rafting access) activities. Riparian habitat is critical to the maintenance of water quality and beneficial uses, and this type of wetland habitat has been significantly reduced in California. The Plan includes protective measures such as providing water developments for cattle outside riparian zones to facilitate their dispersion, and completing or updating grazing allotment plans following NEPA directions "when necessary." The FEIS should explain how grazing use would be managed (e.g., animal utilization levels and riparian zone protection strategies) to assure that riparian habitats are maintained or improved. The FEIS should also indicate how the FS and BLM will re-issue range allotments within the W&SR corridors. The April 17, 1990 memorandum from the Chief of the FS regarding conformance of grazing and livestock use permits with the Forest Plan states

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that all FS range allotments must comply with NEPA. Further, we suggest that the FEIS reference where the Riparian Standards and Guidelines can be found in their entirety.

We also recommend that the Plan include management actions for routine, on-going monitoring of grazing and recreational activities within the riparian zones to determine if damage is occurring and what corrective measures should be instituted. The monitoring plan for riparian quality (under Section 10 of the Plan) indicates a monitoring frequency of "once before and after any project completion." We request that the FEIS include an explanation of what is meant by this frequency statement. We also suggest that it be modified to include routine, on-going monitoring.

### Air Quality

The DEIS (under Section 3.1, Management Direction Common to All Alternatives) states that prescribed burns will be used for wildlife enhancement and fuel reduction. The Plan (under Section 5.4, Management Actions) states that all planned fuel management burns will comply with current air quality regulations.

We recommend that the FEIS identify the California and Federal Clean Air Act requirements for meeting air quality standards for public health, and local plans for maintenance of air quality standards. We also recommend that you coordinate with the Madera and Mariposa Air Pollution Control Districts for compliance with Federal and State air quality standards and to adopt measures to minimize adverse impacts to air quality, if necessary. The FEIS should demonstrate that sufficient mitigation measures will be implemented to assure attainment and maintenance of air quality standards. We also recommend that the FEIS include the following additional information:

- (1) where the prescribed burns would be located, including elevation and proximity to sensitive areas such as roads and recreational areas;
- (2) how many acres would be burned at a time;
- (3) what active measures, if any, would be taken to reduce emissions from prescribed burning (e.g., backing fires, evaluation of moisture content, and mop-up procedures to minimize smoldering);
- (4) the time(s) of year when prescribed burning is anticipated (we recommend that any burning of forest products occur only under favorable meteorological conditions required for smoke dispersion and attainment of air quality standards);

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and

- (5) permit conditions likely to be required by the Madera or Mariposa Air Pollution Control Districts for prescribed burning.

#### Biodiversity

The Plan (under Section 5.4, Management Actions) indicates that hunting will be allowed within the W&SR corridors, but not around developed recreational sites. We suggest that the FEIS identify what general types of hunting use occurs in the area and whether hunting will be disallowed in any of the W&SR areas.

The Plan also includes the management action to implement Spotted Owl Habitat Area (SOHA) management plans as developed by the Forests. We understand that the FS is considering implementing the Habitat Conservation Area (HCA) system, as recommended by the May 1990 report prepared by Jack Ward Thomas, et al., entitled "A Conservation Strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl." The FEIS should explain whether the HCA system or the SOHA system is most appropriate for managing spotted owls within the W&SR corridors.

#### Miscellaneous Comments

We suggest that the DEIS discuss how management of the 36 miles of W&SR under FS and BLM jurisdiction will be coordinated with management plans by the NPS for the remaining 78 miles within the Merced W&SR corridors.

The pages of the DEIS and Plan were not numbered. We recommend that the pages of the FEIS and final Implementation Plan be numbered to allow ready reference to specific sections of the documents.

IO--Lack of Objections

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC--Environmental Concerns

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EO--Environmental Objections

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU--Environmentally Unsatisfactory

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality, public health or welfare. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1--Adequate

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2--Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3--Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

\*From: EPA Manual 1640, "Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment."



#69  
9089

Les L. Boynton, Forest Supervisor

Organization : Sierra National Forest

Mail Stop :

Fax No. :	Area Code	Number
		209 487-5716

Verification No.:	Area Code	Number

FROM

Name : Ruth Pratt

Office of External Affairs  
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
 Region 9  
 75 Hawthorne Street  
 San Francisco, California 94105



Section : OFA

Branch :

Mail Stop : E-3

Phone No. :	Area Code	Number
	415	744-1570

Fax No. :	Area Code	Number
	415	744-1605 FTS 484-1605

Verification No.:	Area Code	Number
	415	744-1570

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SIERRA NATIONAL  
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- RESOURCES \_\_\_\_\_
- CD \_\_\_\_\_
- DISTRICTS \_\_\_\_\_
- # REC'D \_\_\_\_\_

DATE

December 6, 1990

PAGES

(Including Cover) 9

SUBJECT

DEIS Implementation Plan South Fork and Merced Wild Scenic River

NOTE

LANDS

LMP

RESOURCES

CD

DISTRICTS

DISTRICT OFFICE

400 N. MONTEBELLO BLVD.  
SUITE 100  
MONTEBELLO, CA 90640  
(213) 722-7731

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER  
AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING  
AND EMPLOYMENT

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH  
AND FAMILIES

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

### Washington, DC 20515

#### MATTHEW G. MARTINEZ

30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA



WASHINGTON OFFICE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5464

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

CHAIRMAN,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ELEMENTARY,  
SECONDARY AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

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DUE DATE BUT INFO'S ALREADY  
EXPRESSED BY OTHERS & HAVE  
BEEN RECORDED.

1 OF 1

# 1014

December 5, 1990

Mr. Jim Boyton  
Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, CA 93612

Dear Mr. Boyton:

I am writing to express my support for Alternative "C" when the Forest Service considers the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft EIS and Management Plan. I am concerned about possible closure of the Hite Cove Trail.

It is my understanding that, of the four alternatives, "C" would provide for OHV access on the South Trail only to Hite Cove. This "moderate" plan is the most equitable to all concerned and is in keeping with the multiple-use concept.

The California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of Parks and Recreation has identified establishment of a Statewide Motorized Trail as a priority. The route through Hite Cove presents the best prospect for this route. As you know, Wild and Scenic designations can exist as barriers and insurmountable detours to potential long distance OHV trails.

It is also not appropriate to make a final determination on the North Hite Cove OHV Route at this time. This route is not entirely within the scope of the management plan. Excluding the North Hite Cove OHV Route out of the Statewide Off Highway Vehicle Plan would be premature without more detailed study.

As you know, only a small percentage of the visitors to the lands in question do not use vehicles within the forest. The Sierra National Forest already offers ample opportunities for non-motorized recreation. Therefore, I urge you to consider the rights of the thousands of road enthusiasts before further reducing the already limited number of trails available to two and four-wheel vehicles. Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marty".

MATTHEW G. MARTINEZ  
Member of Congress

NANCY PELOSI  
5TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

1005 LONGWORTH BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0505  
(202) 225-4965

DISTRICT OFFICE  
FEDERAL BUILDING  
450 GOLDEN GATE AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3460  
(415) 556-4862

COMMITTEES  
BANKING, FINANCE  
AND URBAN AFFAIRS  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0505

January 10, 1991

NOT RECEIVED BY NW SUPPLY  
DUE RATE, BUT CONSTITUENTS  
INDICATING SOME "C" HAVE &  
WERE RECEIVED.

1 OF 1

Jim Boynton  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, California 93612

Dear Mr. Boynton:

I am writing in reference to the Merced and South Fork Merced  
Wild and Scenic Rivers Draft Plan.

Residents of the district which I represent in Congress have  
expressed support for the Forest Service's Alternative "C." I  
have enclosed copy of their letters for your review.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Nancy Pelosi*  
NANCY PELOSI  
Member of Congress

NP:rvl  
Enclosures

FILE COPY  
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FOREST

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# REC'D 1

JULIAN C. DIXON  
28th DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEES  
APPROPRIATIONS  
CHAIRMAN,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
MEMBER,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
DEFENSE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION  
CHAIRMAN,  
COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS  
OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

2400 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-7084  
FAX (202) 225-4091

ANDREA TRACY HOLMES  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

DISTRICT OFFICE:

LA CIENEGA SLAUSON BUSINESS PARK  
5100 WEST GOLDLEAF CIRCLE, #208  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, 90056  
(213) 678-5424  
FAX (213) 678-6026

PATRICIA MILLER  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

January 10, 1991

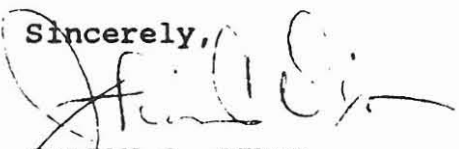
Mr. James L. Boynton  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, CA 93612

Dear Mr. Boynton:

I am writing to share with you the views of two of my constituents, Mr. Jerry Valdez and Ms. Arlene Valdez, regarding trail plans and off-highway vehicle use. Enclosed please find copies of their letters. I would appreciate your keeping their views in mind throughout the Sierra National Forest trail planning process.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

  
JULIAN C. DIXON  
Member of Congress

JCD:et

Enclosures

NOT RECEIVED BY NOV 30, 1990 DUE  
DATE, BUT CONSTITUENTS' LETTER FROM  
VALDEZ ALREADY RECEIVED & RECORDED  
BY FOREST

1 of 1  
# 1015

WALLY HERGER

CONGRESSMAN CALIFORNIA

PLEASE REPLY TO:

WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
1108 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
(202) 225-3076

DISTRICT OFFICES:

20 DECLARATION DR., SUITE B  
CHICO, CA 95926  
(916) 893-8363

2400 WASHINGTON AVE., SUITE 410  
REDDING, CA 96001  
(916) 241-9568  
(916) 241-9473

951 LIVE OAK BLVD., SUITE 10  
YUBA CITY, CA 95991  
(916) 873-1917



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 1990

Mr. Jim Boynton  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, California 93612

Dear Mr. Boynton:

I have received the enclosed correspondence from constituents in my congressional district, and would like to pass their views along for your careful consideration.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

*Wally*  
WALLY HERGER  
Member of Congress

WH/aa

FILE COPY  
SIERRA NATIONAL  
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DISTRICTS \_\_\_\_\_  
# REC'D \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON  
MERCHANT MARINE AND  
FISHERIES

SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON NARCOTICS  
ABUSE AND CONTROL

SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON HUNGER

NOT RECEIVED BY NOV 30, 1990  
DUE DATE, BUT CONSTITUENTS  
LETTERS FROM FRISBIE,  
WOOLWORTH, SEIGLE, GREENE,  
CHESTNUT, MOORE, FASANO  
& HILL ALREADY RECORDED &  
SENT TO FOREST.

1 OF 1  
# 1016

JON KYL  
4TH DISTRICT, ARIZONA  
DEPUTY REPUBLICAN WHIP  
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
INVESTIGATIONS  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
LEGISLATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY  
HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 1990

REPLY TO:  
WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
□ 313 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
PHONE: (202) 225-3361  
DISTRICT OFFICE:  
□ 4250 EAST CAMELBACK ROAD  
SUITE 140-K  
PHOENIX, AZ 85018  
PHONE: (602) 840-1891  
TELEPHONE FOR  
THE HEARING-IMPAIRED  
(802) 840-8863

NOT RECEIVED BY NOV. 30 90  
DATE, BUT A. DICK PRUETT'S LETTER  
WAS ALREADY SENT TO FOREST &  
RECORDED.

1 OF 1

# 1017

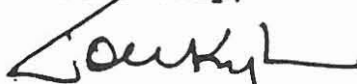
Mr. Jim Boynton  
Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, California 93612

Dear Mr. Boynton:

A constituent of mine, Mr. Dick Pruett, asked that I convey to you the concerns he expressed in his enclosed letter regarding the Merced and South Fork Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers Draft Plan.

Thank you for your consideration of Mr. Pruett's views.

Sincerely,



JON KYL  
Member of Congress

JK:tg  
Enclosure

**APPENDIX H,**

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN EIS/PLAN**

## Appendix H

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN EIS/PLAN

#### ADMINISTRATIVE

Management functions belonging to Forest Service or BLM personnel.

#### ALLOTMENT

A land area where one or more operators graze their livestock. It generally consists of public land but may include parcels of private and state-owned lands. The number of live stock and season of use are stipulated for each allotment. All allotment may consist of one or several pastures.

#### ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (AMP)

A livestock grazing management plan for a specific allotment, based on multiple use resource management objectives. The AMP considers livestock grazing in relation to other uses of the range and in relation to renewable--watershed, vegetation, and wildlife. An AMP establishes the seasons of use, the number of livestock to be permitted on the range and the rangeland developments needed.

#### BLM

Abbreviation: Bureau of Land Management

#### BMP's

See Best Management Practice

#### BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Management actions that are designed to maintain water quality by preventive rather than corrective means.

#### CDFG

California Department Of Fish and Game.

#### CFR

Code of Federal Regulations

#### CONCERN

An apprehension or point of dispute involving a resource management activity or land use where the relationships between the activity or use and undesirable results is not well defined.

#### CONFINEMENT

To restrict the fire within determined boundaries established either prior to the fire, or in an escaped fire situation analysis. The normal tactic is surveillance only.

#### CONSTRAINT

Limitation: Action which cannot be taken or which most be Taken.

#### CONTAINMENT

To surround a fire, and any spot fires therefrom, with control line, as needed, which can reasonably be expected to check the fire's spread under prevailing and predicted conditions. The normal tactic is indirect attack and burn to human-make or natural barrier with little or no mop-up.

#### CONTROL

To complete the control line around a fire, and spot fires therefrom, and any interior islands to be saved, burn any unburned area adjacent to the fire side of the control line, and cool down all hot spots that are immediate threats to the control line, until the line can reasonably be expected to hold under foreseeable conditions. The normal tactic is direct attack on the fire, if possible, and mop-up.

#### CORRIDOR

A linear strip of land in which existing or planned transportation, utility facilities are or will be located. A strip of land like a wild and scenic river area that is or will be administered as a linear zone.

#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resource are the tangible and intangible aspects or cultural systems, living and dead, that are valued by a given culture or contain information about the culture. Cultural resources include but are not limited to sites, structures, buildings, districts, and objects associated with or representative of people, cultures, and human activities and events. Cultural resources are commonly discussed as prehistoric and historic values, but each period represents a part of the full continuum of culture values from the earliest to the most recent.

#### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Impacts occurring as a result of a succession of activities over a period of time.

#### DEIS

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (see Environmental Impact Statement).

#### DEVELOPED RECREATION SITE

A defined or small area of public lands where facilities are provided for concentrated public use (e.g., campgrounds, picnic areas, etc.).

#### DEVELOPED RECREATION

Outdoor recreation which occurs within the area where constructed and maintained facilities are provided.

#### DISPERSED RECREATION

Outdoor recreation which occurs outside of constructed and maintained recreation facilities, e.g. scenic driving, hunting, hiking, nordic skiing, etc. Visitors engaging in a various activities of enjoyment or refreshment stand spread widely over large areas of public lands: activities are less structured and settings are less developed.

#### DISTRICT RANGER

The official responsible for administering the National Forest System Lands on a ranger district.

#### DIVERSITY

The distribution and abundance of different plant and animal communities and species within an area.



**EA**

See Environmental Assessment.

**EIS**

See Environmental Impact Statement.

**ENDANGERED ANIMAL SPECIES**

Any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. This definition excludes species of insects that the secretary of the Interior determines to be pests and whose protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 would present an overwhelming and overriding risk to humans.

**ENDANGERED PLANT SPECIES**

Species of plants in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges. Existence may be endangered because of the destruction, drastic change or severe curtailment of habitat or because of over - exploitation, disease, predation or even unknown reasons. Plant species from very limited areas e.g., the type localities only, or from restricted fragile habitats, usually are considered endangered. See also Threatened Plant Species.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Plant or animal species identified by the secretary of the interior and listed in the federal register as in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

An analysis of alternative actions and their predictable short - and long - term environmental consequences.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

A public document required by the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The document provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether or not to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCE**

(Effects or Impacts)

The physical, biological, social, and economic results of implementing a given alternative.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

A public document required by the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The document is a statement of the environmental effects which would be expected to result from proposed alternative management actions.

**EPHEMERAL STREAM**

A stream that flows only briefly after a storm or during snow melt. See Perennial Stream.

**EROSION**

The detachment and movement of soil from the land surface by wind, water, or gravity.

**EVC**

See Existing Visual Condition

**EXISTING VISUAL CONDITION**

Refers to the degree to which the natural appearance of a landscape has been altered.

**FEIS**

Final Environmental Impact Statement (See Environmental Impact Statement).

**FSH**

Forest Service Handbook.

**FY**

Fiscal Year - October 1 through September 30.

**FIRE PRESCRIPTION**

Advance, written direction which defines the environmental parameters within which fires will be managed and the methods which will be used.

**FORAGE**

All browse and non - woody plants that are available to feed livestock or game animals.

**FOREGROUND, MIDDLEGROUND, BACKGROUND**

Foreground - the portions of a view between the observer and up to 1/4 mile or 1/2 mile distance.

Middleground - the space between the foreground and the background: the area located from 1/4 - 1/2 to 3-5 miles from the viewer.

Background - the view beginning 3-5 miles from the observer and extending as far into the distance as the eye can detect the presence of objects.

**FOREST LAND and RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN SIERRA (STANISLAUS)**

The planning document which provides management direction for the National Forest.

**FOREST PLAN**

See Forest Land and Resource Management Sierra(or Stanislaus).

**FOREST SUPERVISOR**

The official responsible for administering the National Forest System lands in a forest service administrative unit (one or more National Forests).

**FOUR WHEEL DRIVE**

A vehicle equipped with drive wheels on both the front and rear wheels. Such vehicles are equipped for use off-highways, on non-maintained roads, and in some cases, cross country.

**FUELS**

Any material capable of sustaining or carrying a forest fire, usually material both dead and live.

**FUELWOOD**

Wood cut into short lengths for burning.

**GOAL**

A concise statement that describes conditions to be achieved sometime in the future. It is generally expressed in broad, general terms and usually does not have a specific date for completion.

**GRAZING**

Consumption of forage by animals: typically used to describe domestic livestock use (under permit) of National Forest System Land.

**GRAZING ALLOTMENT**

See Range Allotment.

**GRAZING PERMITTEE**

See Range Permittee.

**HABITAT**

The sum of environmental conditions of a specific that is occupied by an organism, a population, or a community. A specific set of physical conditions that surround the single species, a group of species of a large community. In wildlife management, the major components of habitat are considered to be food, water, cover and living space.

**HACKING**

A method of gradually releasing birds of prey into the wild.

**HUMAN CAUSED IGNITION**

Fire ignited by agency personnel to accomplish desired objectives for vegetative communities.

**ID TEAM**

See Interdisciplinary Team.

**IGNITION (NATURAL AND OTHERWISE)**

The action of setting aflame combustible material: either by natural cause (lighting or human cause).

**INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM (ID TEAM)**

A group of individuals with different training who solve a problem or perform a task through frequent interaction so disciplines can combine to provide new solutions.

**INTERMITTENT STREAMS**

Streams that do not contain water year-round.

**INTERPRETIVE SERVICES**

Activities and displays that interpret the natural and social history of the National Forest environment for the visiting public and informs them about National Forest goals, programs, and services.

**INTERPRETATION**

The act of interpreting the natural and social history and informing the visiting public.

**INDICATORS**

Specific variables that, singly or in combination, are taken as indicative of the conditions of the overall opportunity class. These variables allow the manager to unambiguously

define desired conditions and to assess the effectiveness of management practices.

**ISSUE**

A subject or question of widespread interest identified through public participation and which relates to the management of National Forest System lands. A matter of controversy or dispute over resource management activities or land use that is well defined and / or topically discrete. Usually the causal relationship between the activity or use and undesirable results are well defined or documentable. Statements of the planning issues orient the management planning process.

**LIMITS OF ACCEPTABLE CHANGE (LAC)**

The amount of human-caused change to biophysical or social components which is tolerable, without the loss of desired environmental conditions.

**MANAGEMENT DIRECTION**

A statement of multiple-use and other goals and objectives, the management prescriptions, associated standards and guidelines, and action plans for attaining them.

**MANAGEMENT ZONE**

A segment of the Wild and Scenic rivers corresponding to natural features that is managed as a single unit. The WSR was divided into several management zones.

**MECHANIZED EQUIPMENT**

"Mechanized equipment" means any machine activated by a non-living power source, except small battery-powered, hand carried devices such as flashlights, shavers, geiger counters and cameras.

**MINING CLAIM**

That portion of the public estate held for mining purposes in which the right of exclusive possession of mineral deposited is vested in the locator of the deposit.

**MITIGATE**

Actions to avoid, minimize, reduce, eliminate, or rectify the adverse impacts of a management practice.

**MODIFICATION**

See visual quality objective.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The periodic evaluation on a sample basis of management practices prescribed by the implementation management plan. Monitoring determines how well objectives have been met, how closely management standards have been applied, and whether actual environmental consequences are similar to those predicted.

**MOTOR VEHICLES**

"Motor vehicle" means any vehicle which is self-propelled or any vehicle which is propelled by electric power obtained from batteries. For wilderness purposes "mountain bikes" are included in this definition.

## **MULTIPLE USE**

"...the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people: making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions: the use of some land for less than all of the resources: a combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources, including, but not limited to, recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural scenic, scientific and historical values, and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output." (From Section 103, FLPMA).

## **NEPA**

See National Environmental Policy Act.

## **NFS**

See National Forest System Land.

## **NP**

Abbreviation: National Park.

## **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)**

The 1969 Act of Congress that represents a basic national charter for protection of the environment.

## **NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS (NFS)**

Lands administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

## **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES**

A listing maintained by the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service of areas that have been designated as historically significant. The National Register includes places of local and state significance, as well as those of value to the nation.

## **NATURAL FIRES**

Fires ignited by lightning and which burn under conditions that are or have not been influenced by man.

## **ORV**

See Off-road vehicle.

## **OBJECTIVE**

A time-specific statement of measurable results that respond to preestablished goals.

## **OFF-HIGHWAY (OHV)**

Vehicles that are constructed to operate off of highways. Example include 4-wheel drives, dune buggies, and some motorcycles.

## **OFF ROAD VEHICLE (ORV)**

Any motorized vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland or other natural terrain, excluding (a) any registered motorboat, (b) any fire, military, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle when used for emergencies and any combat or combat support vehicle when used for national defense, and (c) any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the respective agency head under a permit, lease, license, or contract.

## **OPPORTUNITY CLASS**

A hypothetical but qualitative description of the range of social and resource conditions desired for management of an area. The opportunity class definition provides a rationale against which the appropriateness of indicators, standards and management actions can be tested: it also establishes management objectives for the area.

## **PAOT**

See Persons-at-one-time.

## **PSW**

Pacific Southwest (Region 5 of the Forest Service).

## **PERENNIAL STREAM**

A stream that flow throughout the year and from source to mouth.

## **PERMITTEE**

An individual, organization, or agency that conducts activities on National Forest System land under the stipulations of a Forest Service permit. Examples of permitted activities are grazing, research, water lines, and utility systems.

## **PERSONS-AT-ONE-TIME (PAOT)**

The unit of measure for recreation capacity defined as the number of people that can use a facility or area at one time.

## **PRESCRIBED FIRE**

Intentional use of fire under predetermined weather and fuel conditions to achieve specific objectives: e.g. to rejuvenate or type-concert vegetation. A fire that burns within the parameters established by a fire.

## **PRESCRIPTION (RX)**

The set of management practices applied to a specific area to attain specific objectives.

## **PRESERVATION (VQO)**

See Visual Quality Objectives.

## **PUBLIC LAND**

Formal name for lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management.

## **RD**

Abbreviation: Ranger District.

## **ROS (ROS CLASS)**

See Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.

**RVD**

See Recreation Visitor Day.

**RANGE**

Area grazed by domestic livestock.

**RANGE ALLOTMENTS**

An area designated for grazing prescribed number and kind of livestock.

**RANGE IMPROVEMENT**

A structure, development or treatment used in concert with management to rehabilitate, protect and improve public land and its resources to arrest rangelands deterioration; and to improve forage conditions, fish and wildlife habitat, watershed protection and livestock protection, all consistent with land use plans.

**RANGE PERMITTEE**

An individual or association who has been granted written permission (a grazing permit) to graze livestock for a specific period on a range allotment.

**RANGER DISTRICT**

An administrative unit of a National Forest supervised by a District Ranger who reports to the Forest Supervisor. Portions of the Merced Wild and Scenic River are administered by the Mariposa and Groveland Ranger Districts which are on the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. Portions of the South Fork of the Merced River is administered by the Mariposa Ranger District. The remaining portions of the designated wild and scenic river are administered by the BLM and National Parks

**RAPTORS**

Birds of prey.

**RARE SPECIES**

One that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is in such small numbers throughout its range that it may be endangered if its environment worsens: the "rare" category is a state category, not a federal category.

**RECREATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (RIM)**

The Forest Service System for recording recreation facility condition and use.

**RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM (ROS)**

A means of classifying and managing recreation opportunities based on physical setting, social setting, and managerial setting. The characteristics of each setting will influence the type and diversity of recreation opportunities that can be provided within a given ROC class. Several dimensions, including development levels, remoteness, user density, degree of managerial control, ease of access, and type of service offered are a result of the ROS class. Although several of these dimensions are related, each is distinct and can independently affect recreation choice and management actions.

Five ROS classifications are described here:

**Primitive (P)** primitive settings are characterized by essentially unmodified natural environments. Their size and configuration assure remoteness from the sights and sounds of human activity. The use of motorized vehicles and equipment is discouraged except in extreme emergencies, or protecting the resource when no other practical method is available. The user will probably experience a high degree of isolation, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance.

**Semi-primitive motorized (SPM) and semi-primitive nonmotorized (SPNM).** Both the semi-primitive motorized and nonmotorized classes are characterized by predominantly natural or natural-appearing landscape. The size of these areas gives a strong feeling of remoteness from the more heavily used and developed areas. Within these setting, there are ample opportunities to practice wildland skills and to achieve feelings of self-reliance.

The most significant difference between the semi-primitive motorized and nonmotorized setting is the presence or absence of motorized vehicle. In the nonmotorized setting, roads are permitted provided they are closed to public use but are used infrequently for resource protection and management. In the semi-primitive motorized ROS class, roads are present but access is generally by 4-wheel drive vehicles. Users within the SPM with the addition of motor vehicles.

**Roaded Natural (RN)** - The roaded natural class is characterized by predominantly natural appearing setting, with moderate sights and sounds of human activities and structures. The over all perception is one of naturalness. Evidence of human activity varies from area to area and includes improved roads, generally suitable for 2-wheel drive access, developed campgrounds, and range or watershed management activities. Roads and motorized equipment and vehicles are common. Density of use is moderate except at specific developed sites, and regulation on user behaviors are generally less evident than in the roaded modified class. Users would experience isolation and interaction with other parties in roughly equal proportions.

**RECREATION VISITOR DAY (RVD)**

Twelve hours of recreation use in any combination of persons and hours: e.g. one person for 12 hours or 3 persons for 4 hours.

**REGION 5**

The Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service: includes primarily the National Forest in California, with small additional acreage in Oregon and Nevada.

**REGIONAL FORESTER**

The official responsible for administering a single Region of the Forest Service.

**RETENTION (VQO)**

See Visual Quality Objectives.

### **RIGHT-OF-WAY**

An accurately located land area within which a user may conduct operations approved or granted by the land owner. May also refer to a permit, easement, lease, license, or memorandum of understanding (MOU) used to authorize such use.

### **RIPARIAN**

Situated on or pertaining to the bank of a river, stream or other body of water. Riparian area and associated vegetation are often found along intermittent streams in high desert and plateau regions. Normally used to refer to the plants of all types that grow along streams or around springs.

### **RIPARIAN AREA**

Land situated along the bank of a stream or other body of water and directly influenced by the presence of water. Riparian areas are generally defined as: a) areas that are a 100 foot horizontal distance from the edge of standing bodies of water; b) areas that are a horizontal distance of 100 feet on each side of perennial or intermittent stream channels; and c) all wetlands, including ephemeral or intermittent streams which support riparian vegetation, wet meadows, springs, seeps, and bogs.

### **ROADLESS**

The absence of road that have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.

### **SF**

Abbreviation used to save space. In this document refers to the South Fork of the Merced River.

### **SENSITIVE SPECIES**

Species that have appeared in the Federal Register as proposed additions to the endangered or threatened species list, and those that are on an official state list are recognized by the Regional Forester as needing special management in order to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened.

### **SNAG**

A standing dead tree from which the leaves and most of the branches have fallen.

### **SOLITUDE**

The state of being along or remote from habitations in a lonely, unfrequented, or secluded place.

### **SPECIAL-USE PERMIT**

A permit authorizing the occupancy and use of National Forest land in the manner specified.

### **SPECIES**

A fundamental category of plant or animals classification.

### **SUCCESSION**

The gradual changing of a biological community over time (including the replacement of one community by

another) until that change comes to a halt and the climax community is reached.

### **SUPPRESSION**

Actions taken to extinguish or confine a fire.

### **STANDARD**

Measurable aspects of indicators which provide a base against which a particular condition can be judged as acceptable or not.

### **T&E**

Threatened and endangered species (See Threatened species, Endangered species).

### **THREATENED SPECIES**

Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future and which has been designated in the Federal Register as a threatened species.

### **THREATENED ANIMAL SPECIES**

Any animal species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant part of its range. See Endangered Animal Species.

### **THREATENED PLANT SPECIES**

Species of plants that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges, including species categorized as rare, very rare or depleted.

### **TIERING**

Refers to the practice of analyzing general alternatives and environmental consequences in broader environmental impact statements and more detailed alternatives and consequences in site-specific environmental documents. The more specific environmental document is then tiered to the analysis found in the more general one.

### **TRAILHEAD**

A designated parking or stopping area at the end of a road or trail where directions and information are available.

### **UNDERSTORY**

Low-growing vegetation (e.g. grasses, shrubs, or small trees) growing under a stand of trees. Also, that portion of trees in a forest stand below the overstory.

### **UNDISPERSED RECREATION**

Visitors collectively engaging in various activities for enjoyment or refreshment-activities are structured in developed setting.

### **UNNECESSARY OR UNDUE DEGRADATION**

Surface disturbance greater than what would normally result when an activity is being accomplished by a prudent operator in usual, customary, and proficient operations of similar character and taking into consideration the effects of operations on other resources and land uses, including those resources and uses outside the area of operations. Failure to initiate and complete reasonable mitigation measures, including reclamation of disturbed areas, or creation of a

nuisance may constitute unnecessary or undue degradation. Failure to comply with applicable environmental protection statutes and regulations thereunder will constitute undue degradation.

#### **VQO**

See Visual Quality Objectives

#### **VALID CLAIM**

A claim on which the discovery of a valuable mineral deposit has been made. In this usage, valuable is used in an economic sense, meaning that the deposit could be worked as a profitable mining operation.

#### **VARIETY CLASS**

A classification system with three visual landscape categories:

**Distinctive (Variety Class A) - Unusual and/or outstanding landscape variety that stands out from the common features in the landscape.**

**Common (Variety Class B) - Prevalent, usual, or widespread landscape variety: also refers to ordinary or undistinguished visual variety.**

**Minimal (Variety Class C) - Little or no visual variety in the landscape: monotonous or below average compared to the common features in the landscape.**

#### **VISUAL CONDITION**

The state of visual alteration measured in degrees of deviation from the natural appearing landscape.

#### **VISUAL QUALITY OBJECTIVES (VQO)**

A set of measurable maximum levels of future alteration of a characteristic landscape. These levels are:

**Preservation - Ecological changes only.**

**Retention - Human activities are not evident to the casual visitor.**

**Partial Retention - Human activity may be evident but must remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape.**

**Modification - Human activity may dominate the characteristic landscape but must, at the same time, follow naturally established form, line, color, and texture. It should appear as a natural occurrence when viewed in the foreground or middleground.**

#### **VISUAL RESOURCE**

The composite of basic terrain, geologic features, water features, vegetative patterns, and land use effects that typify a land unit and influence the visual appeal the unit may have for visitors.

#### **WATERSHED**

The entire area that contributes water to a drainage system or stream.

#### **WILD TROUT STREAM**

A stream designated by the State of California to be managed exclusively for the propagation of wild trout (those hatched in the wild) : such streams are not stocked with hatchery-stocked trout.

#### **WITHDRAWAL**

Withholding an area of Federal land from settlement, sale, location, or entry allowed under the general land law to reserve the area for a particular purpose or program.

#### **ZONE**

See Management Zone

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