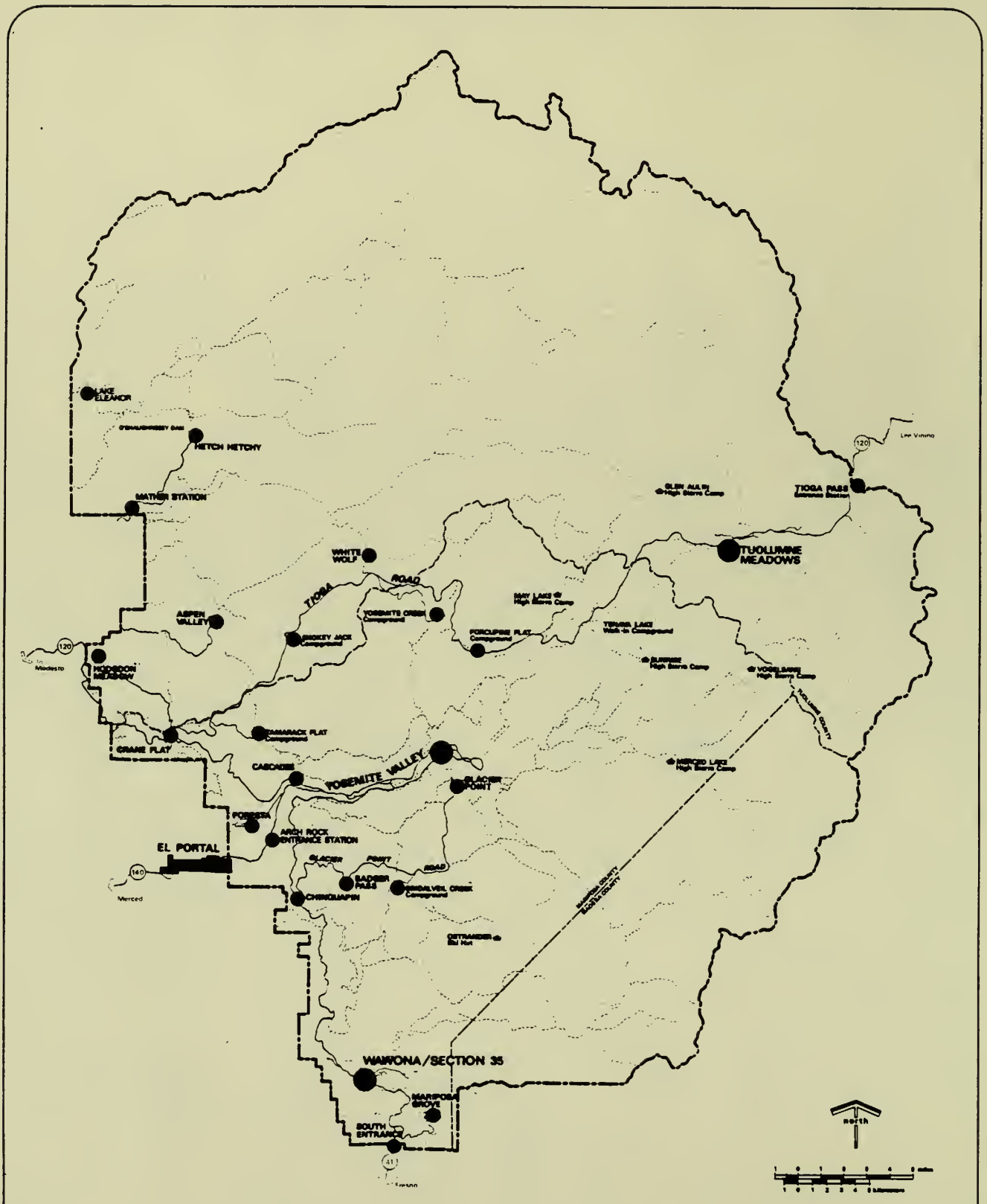
DRAFT YOSEMITE GMP EXAMINATION REPORT:

A REVIEW OF THE 1980 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

PREPARED FOR YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

AUGUST 1989



Existing Developed Areas

Yosemite National Park U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service

BACKGROUND

General Management Plans provide the vision and blueprint for how national park units are to be managed to protect the resource and serve park visitors. The 1980 Yosemite National Park General Management Plan (GMP) was the culmination of an exhaustive, costly planning and public involvement process conducted by the National Park Service (NPS). The GMP represented a set of decisions to be implemented for Yosemite National Park by 1990.

At the heart of the GMP is a vision for Yosemite Valley as a place less congested, less developed and more attuned to the uncluttered, inspirational natural beauty and rhythms that visitors anticipate. Deducting the developed areas in the park, over 89 percent of Yosemite, was given full resource protection as Congressionally designated wilderness in 1986.

With emphasis on Yosemite Valley, the 1980 GMP prescriptions for Yosemite are:

- Reduce Traffic Congestion in Yosemite Valley
- Reduce Overnight Accommodations
- Relocate Non-essential Operational Structures Out of Yosemite Valley
- Relocate Non-essential NPS, Concessioner, and Other Employee Housing Out of Yosemite Valley
- Upgrade/Rehabilitate/Restore Vacated Sites to Allow Natural Conditions to Prevail

To date, $75,547,000 has been invested to realize these prescriptions. The majority of this investment has been for upgrading roads, water, waste treatment, and electrical systems that would have posed threats to the park resources, and the health and safety of visitors if not replaced or rehabilitated. A breakdown of the $75,547,000 expenditure by geographic area and category is listed on page 3.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FISCAL EXPENDITURES: 1980 - 1988

ACTIONS BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA	EXPENDITURES
YOSEMITE VALLEY	
Relocation of Services and Facilities Out Of Valley	$ 3,021,000*
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Replacement	$ 24,608,000*
Safety Improvements	$ 284,000
Bicycle Path Construction	$ 693,000*
Resource Rehabilitation	$ 25,000*
Yosemite Valley Shuttle System	$ 5,000,000*
EL PORTAL	
Location of Services, Facilities and Housing to El Portal	$ 10,831,000
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Replacement	$ 2,057,000
WAWONA / MARIPOSA GROVE / SOUTH ENTRANCE	
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Replacement	$ 20,229,000
Safety Improvements	$ 2,339,000
Resource Rehabilitation	$ 142,000
Planning Studies for South Entrance and Mariposa Grove	$ 212,000
GLACIER POINT	
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation, Replacement, and Planning	$ 117,000
CRANE FLAT / BIG OAK FLAT ENTRANCE / HODGDON MEADOWS	
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Replacement	$ 22,000
TUOLUMNE MEADOWS	
Resource Protection	$ 125,000
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Replacement	$ 259,000
BACKCOUNTRY	
Safety / Resource Protection	$ 411,000
Resource Protection monitoring and planning	$ 92,000*
Pacific Crest Trail Construction	$ 30,000*
PARKWIDE	
Resource Rehabilitation / Protection / Research	$ 403,000*
Facility/Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Replacement	$ 1,986,000*
Safety Improvements	$ 388,000
General Management Plan Coordination	$ 99,000
Merced River Penstock Removal	$ 764,000
Roadway Rehabilitation	$ 1,410,000
TOTAL	**$ 75,547,000**

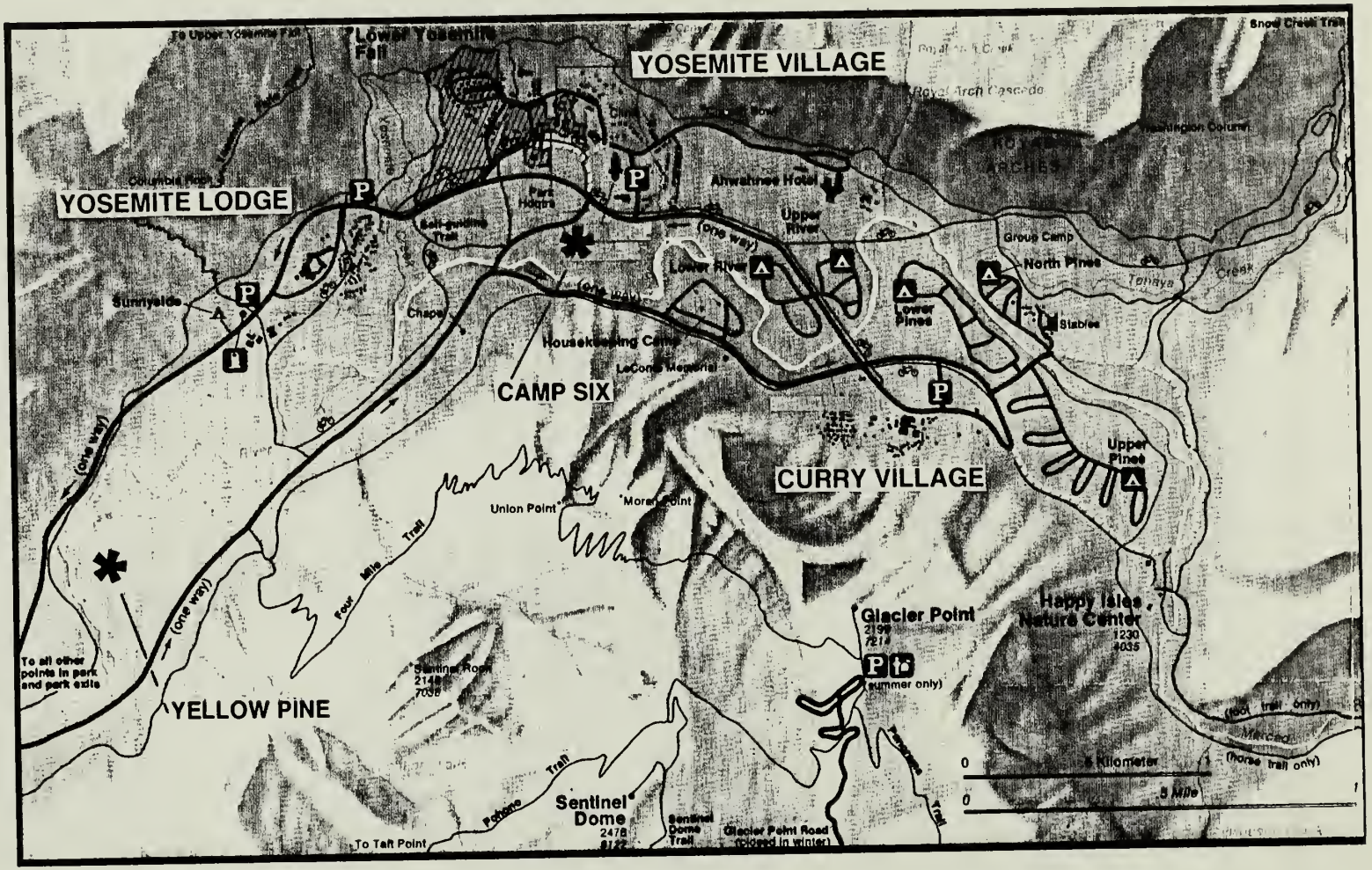
* *Indicates partial or full funding assistance to the NPS by organizations such as the Yosemite Association, the Yosemite Fund, the City and County of San Francisco, and the Yosemite Park and Curry Company.*

In managing the nation's national park system, the National Park Service constantly seeks to balance making parks accessible to visitors with protection of the natural and cultural resources which the park was established to protect. This balance is different for every park depending on the nature of resources and visitation. At Yosemite, the balance has been shifted in favor of the resource. Conditions for the resources in Yosemite Valley have gradually improved from earlier historic times. There is less litter, dust and smoke. Cars have been removed from the east end of the Valley. Sites are being restored to natural conditions.

As we continue to fine tune this balance, we want to allow visitors from this country and from afar the opportunity to experience the natural wonder of Yosemite and especially Yosemite Valley. While we reach the Valley's carrying capacity on peak summer weekends, we have limited additional capacity at most other times. We will continue to hold the line on existing levels by not increasing the number of overnight accommodations, parking spaces, or operational structures in the Valley. We will close the Valley to additional cars whenever the visitation exceeds these carrying capacity limits.

Despite an increase in park visitation from 2,583,000 in 1980 to 3,334,000 in 1988, Yosemite Valley today is in many ways an improved resource offering a better visitor experience. The National Park Service is proud of the accomplishments to date. Year by year GMP accomplishment highlights are listed in the two issues of *UPDATE: Yosemite General Management Plan* included in appendices 1 and 2 of this document. The total Yosemite vision prescribed for 1990 in the GMP, especially as

it focused on the Valley, is far from realized. Spatial limitations and funding realities have slowed, and will continue to slow the full implementation of the 1980 GMP recommendations. It is important for everyone to understand the National Park Service's continued commitment to the 1980 GMP vision, the 1989 realities and the prognosis for the coming years.



Map of Yosemite Valley

Showing locations of:

The Yosemite Village Historic District
Former site of Yellow Pine Campground
Former site of the Camp Six Housing Area

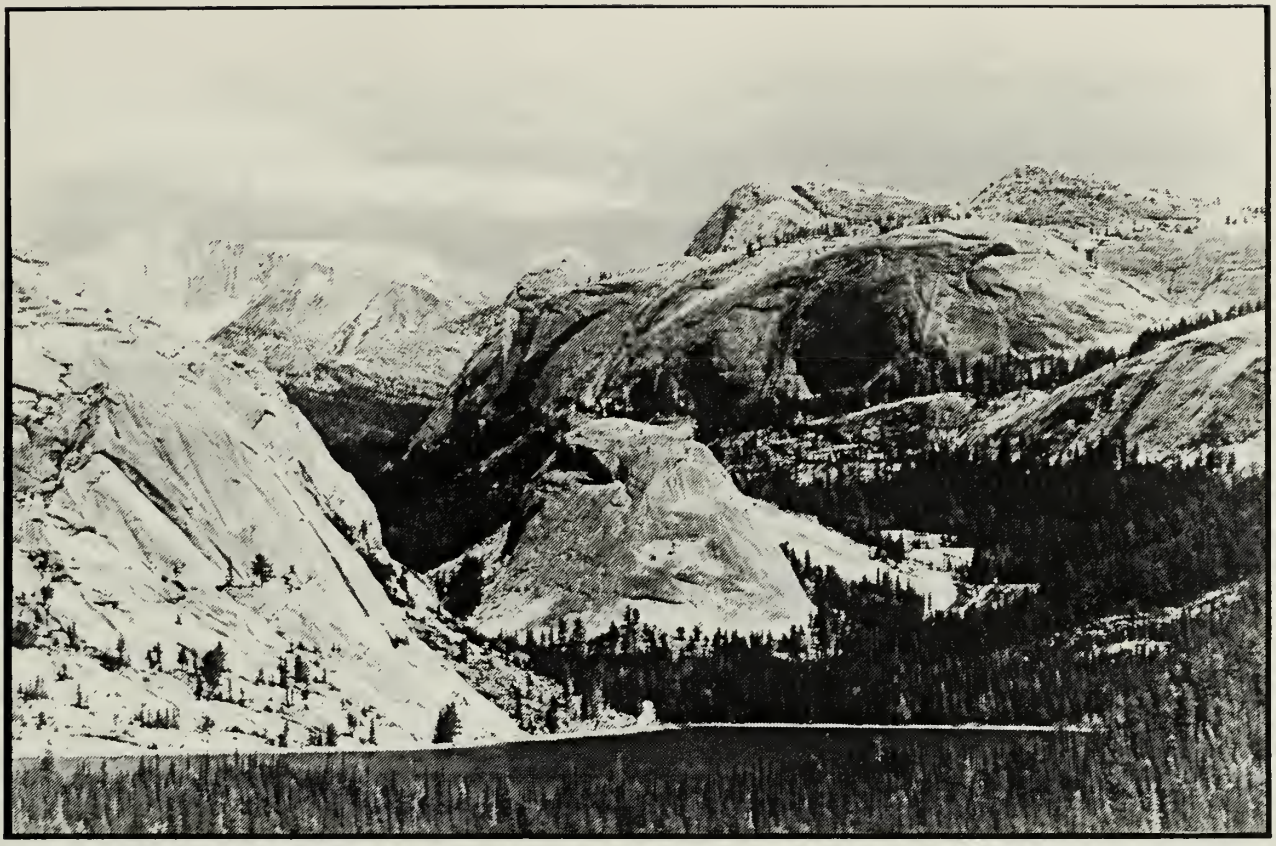
PURPOSE OF THE GMP EXAMINATION

In 1988, a National Park Service team was commissioned to examine the recommendations of the 1980 GMP completed for Yosemite National Park against the current level of implementation and budget realities. The team included representatives from Yosemite National Park, the Western Regional Office, and the Denver Service Center.

The team was asked to assess the feasibility and scheduling realities for implementation of the GMP. The GMP's recommendations were reviewed and an assessment was made of which actions in the 1980 GMP could possibly be accomplished by 1990, by 2000, and beyond.

All GMP-related planning documents, improvements, expenditures, and current issues were evaluated. Meetings were held with members of the Yosemite management team to gather their expertise, current insights, and forecasts. Each recommendation in the 1980 GMP was reviewed against accomplishments to date. Issues were closely evaluated. This GMP Examination Report is a presentation of the team's findings. This report focuses heavily on continuing to implement the GMP prescriptions for Yosemite Valley where visitation and development is centered.

The National Park Service is committed to fulfilling the basic vision of the 1980 GMP and its prescriptions for Yosemite in order to preserve the park's spectacular natural and scenic wonders for present and future generations. As realities have changed in the last nine years, so must the approaches and the timetable we use to achieve the vision for Yosemite. Any new approaches, solutions, or actions taken to implementing the GMP will be contingent upon public input and full environmental review.



REVISITING THE PARK PRESCRIPTIONS

While the National Park Service has come a long way on the Yosemite Valley portion of the 1980 GMP recommended actions, we still have some tough choices to work out. One thing is obvious -- the park prescriptions are interconnected. Some of the 1980 GMP prescriptions impact one another. For example, the 1980 GMP called for a reduction of both traffic and operations in Yosemite Valley in order to restore more sites to natural conditions. As operations and their accompanying structures are

moved out of Yosemite Valley, traffic back and forth between housing and work sites is increased, resulting in more congestion. Due to such cause-and-effect repercussions of the 1980 GMP prescriptions, in some cases a choice must be made between the "lesser of two evils" by deciding what to remove and what to continue impacting. In this section, the main prescriptions of the 1980 GMP for Yosemite are discussed. Highlights of accomplishments to date are included. Limitations and dilemmas are explained.

REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

What Has Been Accomplished:

In the 1980 GMP, reduction and eventual removal of the private automobile from Yosemite Valley was a key thrust. The following achievements have been realized:

- The Valley Shuttle Bus Service has been upgraded and is operated by the Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YP&CCo.) through an arrangement whereby a sales surcharge on visitor purchases from the YP&CCo. underwrites the shuttle operation.

- The newer buses, improved routes, and expanded service have greatly benefited the park experience in the east end of the Valley and the Mariposa Grove. There is less noise, less traffic, and less air quality degradation.

- A plan establishing day-use carrying capacity for vehicles in the eastern three square miles of Yosemite Valley was developed.

- The Mariposa Grove Shuttle System was upgraded by the National Park Service and the YP&CCo. to eliminate cars from the grove of giant sequoias during the peak visitor season. This shuttle system is underwritten by the YP&CCo. sales surcharge.

- A van service linking Wawona with the Mariposa Grove Shuttle System was made available by the YP&CCo.

- A study evaluating alternative transportation systems has been completed by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

- The Federal Highway Administration and Denver Service Center developed a Road System Evaluation. The evaluation is being finalized to inventory and prioritize park roads for maintenance and safety improvements.

- Approximately eight miles of new bike trails in Yosemite Valley have been completed.

- Computerized traffic counters were installed on various park roads to monitor visitor traffic and circulation during busy weekend use periods. A day-use traffic survey was piloted on Labor Day weekend, 1988, and Memorial Day weekend, 1989.

- Road improvements were made and a new bridge was constructed on Highway 140 below Yosemite Valley at Cascade Creek. Road improvements on Highway 120 between Big Oak Flat Entrance Station and Crane Flat helped to stabilize slope erosion and ameliorate unsafe conditions.

- A Badger Pass Shuttle System to reduce congestion on Glacier Point Road during peak ski weekends was implemented by the YP&CCo.

The Dimensions Of The Problem:

A long-term goal of the 1980 GMP envisioned satellite parking lots where visitors would leave their cars behind and enter the Valley by shuttle buses bringing their gear with them. Today there are four basic obstacles to realizing that goal:

- First, the nearby satellite parking areas have proven difficult to locate. Flat sites out of flood plains are very limited and costly.

- Second, the fleet of long distance shuttle buses would be very costly to purchase and operate, and is unlikely to be funded under near-term budget realities. There are three major entry roads to Yosemite Valley. It is estimated that to accommodate existing visitation, buses would be required to leave once a minute from destination and satellite sites.

- Third, Highway 140 into Yosemite Valley along the Merced Canyon is almost at capacity for two-way bus, automobile, and limited commercial traffic. Additionally, on the uphill trip, buses would be slow, adding to traffic congestion on the road. Buses, especially the newer, wider sizes, can barely be accommodated by the existing narrow traffic lanes. It would be necessary to widen Highway 140. The only way to physically do this would be to cantilever the highway out over the canyon. The financial cost and environmental impact would be major.

- Fourth, visitor resistance would be a challenge. Most people prefer the convenience and scheduling flexibility offered by a private automobile, especially in a changing outdoor environment where a variety of recreation gear and clothing are needed. While this visitor preference was considered and overridden in the recommendations of the 1980 plan, it has evolved as more of an issue today.

Yosemite has become a year-round visitor destination. Since 1980, there has been a 50 percent increase in visitation December through March. Yosemite is on visitors'

travel itineraries as a destination, a stop over, or part of a day's trip. Yosemite Valley receives 70 percent of the park's annual 3.3 million visitors. The Valley's road system is seriously impacted a minimum of 5 to 6 weekends each year. The park has issued press releases before major holiday weekends announcing that access to the Valley will be closed once all the parking spaces are full. On several occasions in the last three years, the park has had to turn away visitors to the Valley for brief periods on peak days. The park is continuing to refine a traffic management plan for Yosemite Valley to address traffic congestion on busy weekends. Data gained from computerized traffic counters and peak day surveys will be applied to further improve the plan, establishing a realistic carrying capacity and reduce traffic congestion. Traffic congestion intensifies if the weather takes a sudden turn for the worse, such as a rainstorm, because people return to the shelter of their cars and drive. For the most part, visitors who value the uncrowded versus the social park experience avoid the Valley or the park on the predictably busy, peak holiday weekends. The park is continuing to actively de-market peak weekends through press releases that anticipate crowding and warn of closures.

Currently, 18 percent of the overnight park visitors arrive by bus on commercial tours. Overall, the bus tour business in California is expanding and there is pressure for allocating larger blocks of overnight accommodations to bus tour companies. However, park management has held the line at 18 percent. An increased allocation would reduce the use of private

automobiles but would result in a limited park experience for the many visitors who cannot plan their trip far in advance or are unable to sign up for a bus tour based on expense, limited time, or the nature of their trip. For the most part, the overnight lodgers do not significantly contribute to traffic congestion. Once overnight lodgers find their lodging assignment and unpack, they don't rely as much on their car. They walk, bike or use the shuttle buses.

The major cause of traffic congestion in the Valley is the day-use visitor. Clearly, the need is to get the day-use visitor parked as quickly as possible and on to alternative transportation.

REDUCE OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

What Has Been Accomplished:

Part of the vision for a less crowded park in the 1980 GMP called for a 10% reduction in overnight visitor lodging parkwide and a 17% reduction in Yosemite Valley. To compensate for the more severe reduction in the Valley, the plan recommended that additional accommodations could be developed at Wawona and White Wolf. A small percentage of the called for accommodations have been developed outside of Yosemite Valley by the YP&CCo.:

- The second floor of the Wawona Hotel was returned to guest service.

- The Moore and the Little White cottages at the Wawona Hotel were returned to service.

- Seven tent cabins were added at White Wolf Lodge.

The Dimensions Of The Problem:

Since the 1980 GMP was released, overnight lodging has been maintained essentially at status quo for a variety of reasons. Today, there are 1770 lodging units in Yosemite Valley. The proposed addition of lodging units at Wawona is stymied primarily by the lack of an adequate water supply and complicated by the designation of the Wawona Hotel complex as a Historic District. The flows of the South Fork of the Merced River are being fully utilized. Test wells have been drilled and additional groundwater supplies have proved elusive. Unless an adequate groundwater supply can be found to support the proposed additional lodging at Wawona, a full 17% reduction of lodging in Yosemite Valley will be difficult to reach and needs rethinking.

Seventy percent of the park's visitors come to Yosemite to experience the Valley -- preferably a 24-hour experience. Demand exceeds supply. Lodging reservations must be made well in advance of a visit. "Turn-aways" are common.

As mentioned in the previous section, 18 percent of the rooms are presently allocated to commercial bus tours which further increases the competition for available rooms.

In the Valley, there is a variety of overnight lodging accommodations ranging from the unique, upscale Ahwahnee to the rustic housekeeping camp units along the Merced River and the without-bath cabins (WOBS) and tent cabins at Curry Village. These more rustic accommodations have become the last choice of most park visitors who prefer quality accommodations to complement their quality park experience. With the graying of America, comes the graying of the park visitor with a strong preference for more private lodging with a bath available in all four seasons. Given these considerations, there are a large number of people who object to reducing the status quo in numbers of overnight lodging units.

Perhaps the biggest change in overnight accommodations since the 1980 GMP has been the substantial increase in motel accommodations in the gateway communities on Highways 41, 140 and 120 outside Yosemite National Park at Fish Camp, Yosemite West, and El Portal. These new lodging units are a 30 to 60-minute drive away from Yosemite Valley.

RELOCATE NON-ESSENTIAL OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES OUT OF YOSEMITE VALLEY

What Has Been Accomplished:

The 1980 GMP vision called for relocating all NPS and YP&CCo. operational structures not needed for daily operations out of the Valley. Achievements to meet this goal include:

- The NPS has relocated its Valley Waste Treatment Plant and some maintenance and administrative functions to El Portal.

- The YP&CCo. has relocated its major warehousing, laundry, purchasing and reservation operations to Fresno.

- The Yosemite Association has relocated its administrative offices and storage to El Portal.

- Engineering and preliminary designs have been completed for construction of the new warehouse and maintenance complex at El Portal. This structure will replace the four antiquated, overcrowded structures in Yosemite Valley.

- The penstock was removed and the power plant closed down on the Merced River below the mouth of Yosemite Valley. The park converted to commercial power purchased from outside the park.

- Both the Masonic Lodge and the Melton House located east of the Community Chapel were removed and the sites restored to natural conditions by the YP&CCo.

- Four water wells were drilled in El Portal to supply replacement housing.

- A compressor building at the Curry Village Ice Rink was removed by the YP&CCo.

Dimensions Of The Problem:

Primary constraints slowing the relocation of both NPS and YP&CCo. operational facilities out of the Valley are:

- First, contrary to some perceptions, the definition of which operational functions are essential to stay in the Valley or which should be removed, as allowed by the 1980 GMP, has not been fully resolved. Continued changes in

visitor use patterns and upgrading of support systems require an ongoing re-evaluation of essential services.

- Second, the shortfall of funding has severely limited new construction and relocation of facilities. Safety and health related improvements have consumed most of the available funds.

- Third, some operational functions are housed in historic buildings which should be retained by law and therefore pose a conflict with the 1980 GMP recommendations for removal of these buildings. These historic buildings may be able to absorb functions now located in non-historic structures.

The NPS has been working on the planning and design for the construction of a new $17 million Central Maintenance Facility at El Portal. Park headquarters and additional administrative functions are still slated for relocation to El Portal. The primary limitation is getting the needed appropriations to build the new facilities.

Sixty-nine historic structures in the Valley have been designated as part of a historic district and must be monitored under provisions of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In some cases, the buildings, if vacated, cannot be removed. This would constitute a duplicate maintenance cost when new, out-of-Valley structures are built to house the relocated functions.

RELOCATE NON-ESSENTIAL NPS, CONCESSIONER, AND OTHER EMPLOYEE HOUSING OUT OF YOSEMITE VALLEY

What Has Been Accomplished:

There has been some progress on this prescription since the 1980 GMP. Fueled partly by the decision for moving housing to El Portal, along with a desire and ability on the part of certain employees to gain equity through home ownership, some employees have purchased private homes in El Portal and other communities beyond. As of 1988, approximately 48 percent of NPS employees now live outside the park in non-government housing. This is a substantial increase since 1980. Last summer (1988), the NPS completed 24 apartment units at El Portal for park employees. This is the first phase of a multi-phase housing complex consisting of apartments and some single family homes to be added to the Mission 66 era employee houses at El Portal. Accomplishments to date include:

- Twenty-four 1 and 2 bedroom apartments were completed during 1988 in El Portal.

- Forty-five NPS seasonal employee tents have been removed from Camp Six.

- Congress passed legislation permitting the park to grant 99 year leases at El Portal.

- One residence near the Curry Village Ice Rink, and the Degnan residence (adjacent to the Community Chapel) were removed by the YP&CCo. Both sites were restored to natural conditions.

The Dimensions Of The Problem:

Depending on funding, it could be at least 1994 before it will be possible to start vacating park housing in the Valley currently occupied by families that require three and four bedroom size units. Even at that point, there will still be the constraint that many existing employee houses in the Valley are within the Yosemite Village Historic District and may not be able to be removed as discussed in the previous issue section. Fifty of the designated 69 Historic District structures are now used as park employee housing.

El Portal has proven to have severe limitations on how many new structures can be accommodated there. Steep slopes, limited water supply, the presence of toxic tailings from barium mines, high levels of radon gas emission, and a presence of archeological sites in the flatter portions of the area, all pose constraints on acceptable building sites. In addition, the limited supply of water in Wawona precludes the relocation of employee housing from the Valley to Wawona as proposed by the 1980 GMP.

The needed definition of essential services cited in the previous section will also determine which NPS and YP&CCo. employees need to continue to reside in the Valley for emergency response, security, and cost efficient operations. In addition, many employees, especially seasonals, earn low wages or work split shifts. It would be economically difficult for them to cover commute costs and living costs in the outlying communities, and it would add to the traffic going in and out of the Valley. The needed definition of essential services is being addressed in the employee housing survey and environmental impact statement (EIS) currently underway. The EIS will also review alternative sites outside the park as well as consider a range of housing density levels at El Portal.

Regardless of where employee housing is to be located, both the NPS and the YP&CCo. are anxious to minimize housing footprints and upgrade employee living conditions, conditions which in too many cases are marginal in quality. Substandard housing was an issue in the recent employee strike against YP&CCo. The NPS will continue to seek funding to design and construct additional housing in phases at El Portal.

UPGRADE/REHABILITATE/RESTORE VACATED SITES TO ALLOW NATURAL CONDITIONS TO PREVAIL

What Has Been Accomplished:

There has been substantial progress under this 1980 GMP prescription. Notable successes include:

- Rehabilitation of Stoneman Meadow, north of Camp Curry. One and one-half miles of volunteer trails were obliterated by the direct transplant of meadow sod.

- Creation of Yosemite Research Center for cultural and natural sciences.

- Restoration of Bighorn Sheep to the backcountry. As of autumn, 1988, the herd numbered 33 animals.

- Removal of the 250 car asphalt parking lot in front of the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center. The area was converted to a pedestrian plaza.

- Removal of the old Valley waste treatment plant from the Bridalveil Creek area. The three-acre site was returned to natural conditions.

- Rehabilitation of Black Oak habitat, west of Yosemite Village.

- Development of a 100-car parking lot at Summit Meadow and a 50-car parking lot at Bridalveil trailhead on the Glacier Point Road have been abandoned due to the potential impact on Great Gray Owl nesting. The Badger Pass parking has been expanded instead to provide for nordic skiing activity.

- Bear-proof food lockers were fabricated and installed in many campgrounds throughout the park.

- A pilot wilderness revegetation program rehabilitated twenty-seven backcountry campsites to natural conditions using native sub-alpine vegetation.

- Twenty-five backcountry sites were cleaned up with the removal of abandoned weather stations, metal bridges, six airplane wrecks, unneeded fencing, corrals and the remains of old buildings. This project was the result of a joint effort by the Sierra Club, the YP&CCo. and the National Park Service.

- The chainlink fence surrounding 15 acres of the Ahwahnee Hotel was removed. Storage of vehicles and building materials on the Ahwahnee grounds was discontinued by the YP&CCo.

- The YP&CCo. discontinued golf at the Ahwahnee Hotel and returned the space to natural conditions.

- Forty-five miles of overhead telephone wire were removed from the backcountry by Pacific Telephone. They installed a solar powered radio communication system at the High Sierra Camps.

- One acre of land west of Yosemite Lodge was restored when the YP&CCo. removed its woodyard.

- The Big Trees Lodge in Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias was removed by the YP&CCo.

- Twenty-seven abandoned fuel tanks were removed parkwide. Ten additional tanks were repaired and an additional 29 were tested and remain in service.

- The Tuolumne Meadows sewer line was lined to reduce infiltration of sewage into the watershed and meadow.

- One and one-half miles of overhead electrical powerlines were placed

underground from Union Point to Glacier Point.

- Eradication projects to remove exotic plant species were implemented in Yosemite Valley.

- Seven structures were removed from Wawona and Foresta and the sites restored to natural conditions.

The Dimensions Of The Problem:

Funding has been limited to effectively manage resources in Yosemite, as within most of the national park system. Within current fiscal limits:

- Efforts to implement the Yosemite Resource Management Plan, which reflects 1980 GMP goals on natural resources, are continuing as funds are available. Both public and private funding sources are being utilized.

- Initiatives underway include: opening up historic scenic vistas and restoring Black Oak habitat in Yosemite Valley as non-essential facilities and housing are removed; restoring abandoned road beds, backcountry meadows, and backcountry trail impacts as funding is made available; rehabilitating giant sequoia habitat with mitigation efforts focusing on removal of impacts such as parking areas and volunteer trails from within the groves; studies on the

Bighorn Sheep and Great Gray Owl and their specific habitat requirements; and implementation of the Merced River Study to channel public access to the river and restore riverbanks to natural conditions in the east end of Yosemite Valley.

THE FUTURE

CAPITAL FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS TO CONTINUE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1980 GMP

As mentioned earlier, $75,547,000 has been invested in capital projects and park improvements since release of the 1980 Yosemite GMP. Most of these investments have focused on correcting basic infrastructure needs related to solving resource protection and visitor safety problems in the Valley.

Park, Regional, Denver Service Center, and Federal Highways Administration staff have examined and established project funding and construction priorities for the next 10 years. This most recent project phasing and priority plan is listed by project

in priority sequence on page 31. A minimum investment of over $145,795,000 (in 1987 dollars) will be required to complete these projects. That investment is almost twice the amount of funds already invested for GMP related projects since 1980. This estimate is based on present day values. Actual costs will definitely be higher based on inflation rates and any congressional funding shortfalls.

The high priority 1980 GMP projects of the next decade are programmed, but not yet funded. The funding appropriations will come from a variety of sources, some more certain than others. Allocation of federal highway funds is more predictable based on a ten-year project priority list. The line-item construction budget of the National Park Service is contingent upon the yearly federal budget appropriations process. Those GMP projects for which funding is most likely are designated by an asterisk in the list on page 31.

VISITOR SURVEY

A visitor monitoring program to evaluate visitor demographics, use patterns, needs, and concerns, will be established. The program will survey both visitors and non-visitors to support National Park Service managers in assessing services, management policies, visitor trends, and resource management issues as the park enters its centennial decade of the 1990's.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAMED (BUT NOT YET FUNDED) PROJECTS: THE 1990's

PRIORITY	PROJECT TITLE AND PHASING	ESTIMATED COST
I	Employee Housing Construction, Phase 2	$ 5,580,000
II	El Portal Maintenance and Warehouse Complex, Phase 1	$ 8,000,000
	Sentinel Bridge and Glacier Point Road Rehabilitation, Phase 1	$ 13,800,000*
III	El Portal Maintenance and Warehouse Complex, Phase 2	$ 8,000,000
	Glacier Point Road Rehabilitation, Phase 2	$ 3,600,000*
IV	El Portal Roads and Utilities Improvements, Phase 1	$ 1,141,000*
	El Portal Housing Construction, Phase 3	$ 2,760,000
	YP&CCo. Employee Housing Utilities Rehabilitation	$ 1,220,000
	Repair and Replace Underground Fuel Tanks	$ 400,000
	Big Oak Flat Entrance Station Complex Improvements	$ 210,000
	Wawona Boiler System Replacement	$ 450,000
	South Entrance Road Rehabilitation (Chinquapin to Wawona)	$ 6,500,000*
V	El Portal Housing Construction, Phase 4	$ 4,000,000
	El Portal Roads and Utilities Improvements, Phase 2	$ 1,100,000*
	El Portal Administration Complex Improvements	$ 2,500,000
	South Entrance Road Rehabilitation (Wawona to South Entrance)	$ 3,600,000*
VI	South Entrance and Mariposa Grove Improvements	$ 4,300,000*
	Lower Pines Campground Rehabilitation	$ 1,200,000*
	Ansel Adams Gallery Improvements	$ 600,000
	South Entrance Road Rehabilitation (Chinquapin to Yosemite Valley)	$ 5,200,000*
VII	Waste Water Treatment Plant, White Wolf and Tuolumne Meadows	$ 2,000,000
	Yosemite Valley Operations Complex Improvements	$ 3,000,000
	Tuolumne Meadows Campground Rehabilitation	$ 1,200,000*
	Yosemite Valley Museum Improvements	$ 750,000
	Mariposa Grove Road Improvements	$ 3,500,000*
VIII	El Portal Roads and Utilities Improvements, Phase 3	$ 1,100,000*
	Rivers Campground Rehabilitation	$ 3,904,000*
	El Portal Road and Tioga Pass Road Rehabilitation, Phase 1	$ 11,750,000*
IX	El Portal Roads and Utilities Improvements, Phase 4	$ 1,100,000*
	Glacier Point Improvements	$ 1,400,000
	Upper Pines Campground Rehabilitation	$ 1,200,000*
	Big Oak Flat Ranger Station Improvements	$ 500,000
	Picnic Area/Shuttle Bus Stop Improvements Within Yosemite Valley	$ 500,000*
	El Portal Road and Tioga Pass Road Rehabilitation, Phase 2	$ 15,000,000*
X	Yosemite Valley Sewer System Rehabilitation	$ 4,500,000
	Tuolumne Meadows Improvements	$ 2,300,000
	Wawona Complex Improvements	$ 5,500,000
	El Portal Roads and Utilities Improvements, Phase 5	$ 1,100,000*
	El Portal Road and Tioga Pass Road Rehabilitation, Phase 3	$ 11,300,000*
	TOTAL	**$145,795,000**

** Denotes projects for which full or partial funding is most likely.*

CAPITAL FUNDING PRIORITIES BEYOND THE YEAR 2000

As exemplified by the 1980 GMP progress to date, it is difficult to make realistic prioritization and budget projections beyond 10 years due to all the budgetary and other uncertainties involved.

The National Park Service continues to be dedicated to the vision and prescriptions of the 1980 GMP. The prescriptions will be accomplished in incremental improvements over a longer time frame. Public interest and desire to visit the Valley and other park places that offer remarkable natural beauty and wilderness challenges continues to grow. While there are limits as to how many people can enjoy these experiences without damaging the park's natural resources, the National Park Service continues to seek the best management and technological strategies to maintain an acceptable balance. As a bottom line, park visits will be limited to a manageable threshold consistent with protection of park resources.

Yosemite Valley in the future will have less traffic and fewer structures. More original scenic vistas and habitats will be restored. The number of visitors year-round will be controlled. Future technologies may help us reach a more sweeping solution of the private automobile dilemma. Perhaps a light rail system, operated by 21st Century technologies such as electromagnetic conduction, could make it physically and economically feasible to move larger volumes of people more quickly and quietly into and out of Yosemite Valley. Transportation from a longer distance away and from remote parking complexes, or lodging outside the park, may become more manageable.

The National Park Service and concessioner will relocate more non-essential facilities and housing to El Portal and other locations further out of the Valley as quickly as budgets and technological improvements allow.

Visitor accommodations will be upgraded and consolidated to take up less square footage. A regional visitor information, accommodations, and transportation network will be established and coordinated to make the best use of accommodations outside the Valley.

The Yosemite National Park of the future will fulfill the promise of the 1980 General Management Plan.

APPENDICES

1. *Update: Yosemite General Management Plan,* Summer 1987

2. *Update: Yosemite General Management Plan,* Summer 1988

update: YOSEMITE General Management Plan

united states department of the interior / national park service

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.....

It's been sometime since we discussed the Yosemite General Management Plan (GMP) with you. I know that many of you were actively involved in the planning process and are personally concerned about the future of the park.

The GMP remains the single most important document in guiding the present and future management of Yosemite National Park. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform you of the progress we have made in the last six years since the plan was approved.

The following is a list of major actions of the plan and highlights of projects accomplished to date.

MAJOR ACTIONS CALLED FOR BY THE PLAN

- Designation of 90% of the park's three-quarter million acres as wilderness, forever free from development.
- Removal fromYosemite Valley of sub-standard National Park Service and concessioner staff housing and relocation of warehouses, maintenance and storage buildings, administrative offices, and other non-essential facilities outside the park in El Portal.
- Reduction of concession-operated lodging facilities in the park by 10%, including a 17% reduction of overnight facilities in Yosemite Valley.
- Reduction in use of private vehicles in Yosemite Valley as alternate transportation options are expanded with a long-range goal to eliminate vehicles from Yosemite Valley.
- Identification and enforcement of specific carrying capacities within the park for both day and overnight occupancy.
- Improvement and expansion of information and reservation services.

HIGHLIGHT OF IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

1980

- The 250 vehicle asphalt parking lot in front of the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center was removed and converted to a pedestrian plaza. Forty species of native trees and shrubs were transplanted from within the park to the plaza.
- The Masonic Lodge and Degnan's residence were removed; the bakery was relocated to the Pioneer Yosemite History Center at Wawona.
- Four water wells were drilled in El Portal.
- A modular office building was constructed in El Portal and several administrative functions were relocated from park headquarters.
- The former CCC mess hall at Tuolumne Meadows was coverted into a visitor center.

1981

- A study evaluating alternate transportation systems was completed by the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- The Pohono Gift Shop was converted to an Art Activity Center.
- The historic Mariposa Grove Museum was reconstructed.
- The final phase of converting parking to a pedestrian plaza at Yosemite Village was completed.
- Draft land use controls, allowing for limited residential development in Section 35, Wawona, were published.
- Electrical service was partially upgraded in Yosemite Valley, Cascades, and the El Portal mobile home park.

1982

- Phase I construction of a bikeway (Camp Curry to Yosemite Village) was completed.
- A prototype cabin was constructed at Tuolumne Meadows for housing employees.
- Handicapped accessible trail and reconstruction of the scenic overlook at Glacier Point were started.
- The old Glacier Point restroom was removed, a new septic system was constructed, and an interim mobile restroom was installed in the parking lot.
- The railroad exhibit at El Portal was relocated and 360 feet of track was installed at the site of the original turntable.
- Nine new shuttlebusses were purchased to replace the existing fleet of double decker busses.
- Construction began on the El Portal Wastewater Treatment Plant to provide for tertiary sewage treatment.
- Orientation exhibits were installed at the Valley Visitor Center and at the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.
- Environmental controls and a Space-Saver storage unit were installed in the Valley Museum Collection Room.

1983

- A showerhouse for NPS employees and a public restroom were constructed at Tuolumne Meadows.
- One and one-half miles of overhead electrical powerlines were placed underground from Union Point to Glacier Point.
- The Yosemite Park & Curry Co. relocated their warehouse and reservation functions to Fresno.
- The first phase of replacing the Lower River Campground amphitheater was completed.
- The "Insituform" sewer lining project at Tuolumne Meadows was completed and effectively eliminated the infiltration problem.
- The Phase II segment of the Yosemite Valley bikeway (Yosemite Village to Yosemite Lodge) was completed.
- The Wawona covered bridge, providing access to the Pioneer Yosemite History Center, was reconstructed.

1984

- The California Wilderness Bill passed designating 89% of Yosemite as wilderness.
- The Yosemite Research Center for cultural and natural sciences was established.
- Phase III of the Yosemite bikeway was constructed (Yosemite Lodge, south across swinging bridge, east along the Chapel, then back to the Phase II segment at the former residence of the Superintendent).
- Forty-five NPS seasonal employee tents were removed from Camp 6.
- Bear-proof food lockers were fabricated and installed in Tuolumne Meadows Campground.
- The final phases of constructing the amphitheater at Lower River Campground were completed.
- The Thomas Hill Studio at Wawona was restored and made accessible to the disabled.

1985

- Phase IV of the bikeway was completed (Camp Curry 4-way intersection to the shuttlebus road at "Boy's Town").
- A plan, which established a day-use carrying capacity for the vehicles in the eastern three square miles of Yosemite Valley, was developed.
- The hydro-electric plant and penstock in Yosemite Valley were permanently shut down.
- A study of the Great Gray Owls was initiated.
- Road improvements were made and a new bridge was constructed on Highway 140 below Yosemite Valley at Cascades Creek.

- Three cabins for seasonal employees were constructed in the Tuolumne Meadows employee housing area.
- A new water treatment facility was constructed at Tuolumne Meadows.
- Overhead electrical service was placed underground at the Tuolumne Meadows sprayfield.

1986

- Twenty-seven California bighorn sheep were introduced into the park. Nine sheep died, however, nine lambs were born that spring.
- Legislation passed Congress permitting the park to grant 99 year leases at El Portal.
- Seven structures were removed from Wawona and Foresta and the sites restored to a natural condition.
- Renovation and construction of the Mariposa Grove trail system began.
- Twenty-seven abandoned fuel tanks were removed parkwide. Ten additional tanks were repaired, and an additional 29 were tested and remain in service.
- May Lake High Sierra Camp sewage treatment facility was reconstructed.
- Three wayside exhibits were installed.
- The Yosemite Association relocated its administrative offices to Bagby Station in El Portal.
- Pacific Telephone removed 45 miles of overhead telephone wire from the back-country and installed a solar powered radio communication system at the High Sierra Camps.

1987

- This year the vehicle carrying capacity for Yosemite Valley will be reevaluated.
- Preliminary architectural plans for the new warehouse/maintenance complex at El Portal will be completed.
- A Development Concept Plan for Tuolumne Meadows was initiated and will specifically address the concerns expressed in the legislation designating the Tuolumne River wild and scenic.
- A walk-in campground will be constructed at Hetch Hetchy Reservoir.
- Construction will begin at Vogelsang High Sierra Camp to replace the sewage system.

Summary

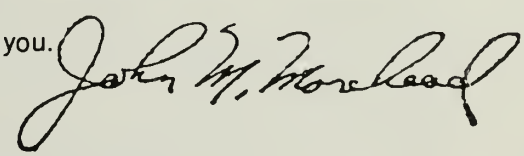
Seven years have now passed since the General Management Plan was finalized. The approved GMP represents the largest participatory planning effort ever undertaken by the National Park Service. We are proud of the accomplishments that have taken place, grateful for the funding that has been made available, and eagerly looking forward to the future.

We have to point out, however, that there have been some problems, and several major decisions are being forced upon us. As an example, you are all aware that one of the key GMP concepts was to eliminate private vehicles in Yosemite Valley by constructing satellite parking at El Portal, Crane Flat, and Wawona. As design and construction progresses, we are now becoming painfully aware that there is not enough buildable land at El Portal to accommodate all the proposed facilities and the proposed parking lot. Rethinking, and perhaps replanning, is unavoidable. Another example is the situation where the GMP calls for parking and sanitation facilities to be provided in the winter at Summit Meadow and the Bridalveil Campground area on the Glacier Point road. Preliminary research of the endangered (California) Great Gray Owls seems to indicate that these two areas should not be plowed and used for winter parking. A change in the GMP concept for these areas will most likely be proposed in the coming year.

We assure you, if changes in the GMP are proposed, the proper environmental assessment and documentation will be provided, and public review will be insured through the National Environmental Protection Act process.

We know from the numerous inquiries we have received since 1980 that you are concerned about the implementation process. This newsletter is the first annual UPDATE we intend to publish. We hope you have found it informative.

Thank you.



John M. Morehead

update: YOSEMITE General Management Plan

SUMMER 1988

united states department of the interior / national park service

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.....

This issue of UPDATE will inform you of National Park Service activities which have taken place during 1987 and are planned for this year. Also included is information on steps taken by the park's major concessioner to help implement the General Management Plan.

HIGHLIGHT OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PROGRESS DURING THE LAST YEAR

The abandoned wastewater treatment plant at the west end of Yosemite Valley was demolished during October 1987, and the three-acre site is returning to a natural condition. This significant effort was conducted by the National Park Service and U.S. Army with major support from YP&C-Co. and the Yosemite Association (Yosemite Fund).

Twenty-four 1 and 2 bedroom apartments are being completed in El Portal. These units will replace some of the employee housing lost in Yosemite Valley due to a 1984 wind storm.

Rehabilitation of the Yosemite Valley water system was completed. This major project includes a new 2.5 million gallon storage tank and conversion from surface water to wells in conformance with California State water quality regulations.

New water and sewage treatment plants at Wawona were completed last fall. Sewer service was extended to 70 homeowners within the Wawona area, in addition to all NPS and concessioner facilities.

Phase I of the Valley electrical system rehabilitation was completed and Phase II is underway. This major project will place electrical systems underground throughout Yosemite Valley.

Eleven self-contained waterless sanitation systems are being installed along the Tioga Road to replace pit and chemical toilets.

Computerized traffic counters were installed on various park roads to monitor visitor traffic and circulation during busy weekend use periods. Data will be applied to the Valley Traffic Management Plan and used to develop a realistic carrying capacity and reduction in traffic congestion.

The Federal Highway Administration is preparing a Road System Evaluation. This document inventories and provides a planning tool for maintenance and safety improvements on existing park roadways.

Reconstruction of the Big Oak Flat Road (Highway 120, west) is currently underway. This project involves resurfacing and revegetation only with no change in alignment.

Construction began in late May to improve vehicle circulation and parking for visitors at Glacier Point. A bus loading and unloading area will be built, pedestrian circulation will be improved, and the area will be revegetated.

The plan to develop a 100-car parking lot at Summit Meadow and 50-car parking at Bridalveil trailhead on the Glacier Point Road has been abandoned due to potential impact on Great Gray Owl nesting. The Badger Pass parking lot will be expanded instead to provide for nordic ski activity, and a carrying capacity for Badger Pass downhill skiing is now enforced through limiting lift ticket sales to 2300 skiers per day. This GMP modification was fully reviewed through the NEPA process.

A Wilderness Management Plan was completed in January of 1988. Mandated by the 1984 California Wilderness Act, the Plan estabilishes limits on public and administrative use within the wilderness area by describing the condition in which wilderness lands are to be maintained.

Ninety-one wayside interpretive exhibits were installed last year at trailheads and roadside pullouts.

A pilot wilderness revegetation program was initiated last summer at Tuolumne Meadows. Twenty-seven backcountry campsites were restored to a natural condition using native sub-alpine vegetation.

During October 1987, Stoneman Meadow in Yosemite Valley was restored. One and a half miles of volunteer trails were obliterated by the direct transplant of meadow sod. The work was accomplished by the San Francisco Conservation Corps and the National Park Service with funding

from the Yosemite Fund and Chevron Oil Company.

At the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, 300 feet of new foot trail were constructed adjacent to the visitor parking area. A 23 foot long bridge was installed to complete a new pedestrian walking trail to the Grizzly Giant Tree and provide for resource protection and interpretation.

A contract was awarded in October to provide seeds and cuttings from Yosemite trees and shrubs propagated for future revegetation projects.

The U.S. Magistrate's Office was redesigned and relocated to the area behind the YP&CCo. warehouse. The space previously occupied by the court has been restored to a historic museum entrance and public gallery for the Yosemite art collection.

A wastewater sprayfield at White Wolf was relocated last summer to a hillside away from the nearby creek.

Over one mile of abandoned wooden penstock, which previously supplied water from the Merced River to Cascades Hydroelectric Plant, was removed this winter.

Eleven additional bighorn sheep (8 ewes and 3 rams) were relocated from the southern Sierra to augment the reintroduced Yosemite herd. This brings the total number of animals in the herd to 33.

The Wawona Town Plan was approved. This document provides for cooperative land use management between the NPS, California State and Mariposa County.

Engineering and preliminary design are being completed for the park maintenance/warehouse complex. When built, this facility will replace four antiquated, overcrowded structures in Yosemite Valley with an efficient, cost effective complex at El Portal, 14 miles west of Yosemite Valley. Based upon funding, construction of an interim maintenance facility is scheduled to begin in the fall of 1988.

PARK CONCESSIONER GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The Yosemite Park and Curry Company, at its own expense has completed numerous projects which are a part of the GMP.

Prior to 1981, YP&CCo. removed its woodyard, west of Yosemite Lodge, restoring one acre of land.

Cooperative projects involving the Sierra Club, National Park Service, and YP&CCo., funded by the Curry Company, cleaned up 25 sites in Yosemite's backcountry by removing abandoned weather stations, metal bridges, six airplane wrecks, unneeded fencing, corrals and remains of old buildings.

The chainlink fence surrounding 15 acres of the Ahwahnee Hotel was removed and storage of vehicles and building materials on the Ahwahnee grounds was discontinued.

Winter grazing of YP&CCo. stock at Wawona and Empire Meadows was discontinued and stock subsequently wintered outside the park.

In 1981, a residence near the Curry Village Ice Rink and the Degnan residence, adjacent to the Community Chapel, were removed. Golf was discontinued at the Ahwahnee Hotel and the space returned to a meadow-like condition.

In 1982, the YP&CCo. Big Trees Lodge in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias was removed. The Melton House located east of the Chapel was removed and the site restored.

In 1983, YP&CCo. relocated its reservation and purchasing offices from Yosemite Valley to Fresno.

In 1984, the gas stations at Chinquapin and Yosemite Village were closed and the pump islands removed.

In 1986, a compressor building at the Curry Village Ice Rink was removed.

In 1987, YP&CCo. completed testing 44 underground fuel tanks to prevent any possible leaks to the environment. Thirty unneeded tanks were removed and the sites restored.

YP&CCo. provided major support for the Merced Canyon Committee's successful effort to have the Merced River protected from hydro-electric projects by inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System.

LOOKING AHEAD

It now is eight years since the GMP was approved. While major progress has been made, some elements of the Plan have not been implemented and can not be within the near future. Lack of development funding and available land have forced us to realize that the original goal of implementing most of the major elements of the GMP by the park's centennial in 1990 is unrealistic.

The long range intent of the Plan remains valid. Congestion and impacts must be lessened and non-essential operational functions need to be relocated outside the park. GMP projections of how to achieve these goals and when they will be accomplished now must be re-examined.

We will review the recommendations of the GMP and establish a realistic schedule for implementation based upon current budget realities and existing spatial limitations.

We hope to present a revised schedule of remaining and/or new actions and a list of funding needs before next year.

Be assured that any recommended changes in the GMP will receive proper public review and documentation. Environmental impacts will be assessed through the National Environmental Policy Act and public comment will be invited on all final proposals.

We are optimistic and continue to move forward with implementing the General Management Plan. We appreciate your continued interest and support in Yosemite's future.

John M. Morehead