

**Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition (YVCC)**

**c/o Brian H. Ouzounian, Co-Founder**

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**Notes and Teleconference with K. Morse and J. Bacon**

**August 12, 2010 – November 17, 2010**

- 8/12/10** FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS for Kathleen Morse from Brian Ouzounian (black type)
- 9/13/10** RESPONSE to B.Ouzounian's Questions by K. Morse (red type)
- 11/17/10** **QUESTIONS/RESPONSES** during Telecon today with Kathleen Morse and Jim Bacon. (blue type)

**1.** Will you provide me with a copy of notes taken at our meeting on 8/11/10 by Mae Frantz and Jim Bacon? I will give you mine. **A copy of their combined notes is attached.**

**2.** What will it take (i.e., the criteria) to get the flood-damaged campgrounds repaired and put back?

We will look at options for addressing the expressed desire to have more and different types of camping experiences in Yosemite Valley. The criteria (guidelines) for installing camping facilities at various locations will be determined through an interdisciplinary process. Considerations will include water quality, wetlands and floodplain, relationship to other uses and land allocations, the type of camping experience provided and the associated facility design. As the alternatives are developed, it is likely that many combinations of design and location will be examined, as well the overall level of camping provided.

**Can you be more simplistic and specific to my question?**

KM believes this can be included as an alternate in the plan and the public will see that it is seriously being considered, whereby in the past the public's perception was that it was not studied. BHO offered to pencil in areas that should be included in an alternative for an expansion of camping beyond the flood damaged campgrounds. Methods of camping, approaches in behavior, and some facilities could assist in preserving the river and its banks, and still allow riverside use of the campgrounds; it just needs to be approached with that collaborative objective in mind. Suggest links online to inform the public and handouts to campers as to the do's and don'ts of camping in an interactive way. Pass out this info at the entrance gates to capture all visitors. Most people have hand held phone devices and a simple post card can have the links on them for various activities on how to camp, climb, horseback ride, hike trails (with ratings), hike half dome, etc. expressing the precautions and the prohibitions. We don't have to ban camping in order to achieve preservation.

**3.** Will you review our YVCC website for all the news and archived letters, media events, etc. so that you will be more familiar with the contributions and positions we have offered, including the petition and related comments? It is constantly being updated. **We periodically review the website.**

## **Have you made subsequent reviews and what have you done with the reviews?**

Very often KM goes to the website and is incorporating the comments as they are available.

4. Will there be another Draft Scoping Report or only a Final Scoping Report issued? One of the first tasks we have given our new environmental compliance contractor is to analyze all scoping comments to ensure that all comments collected from the initiation of scoping in 2007 are considered and clearly and accurately represented in a subsequent final report. This will result in the publication of another draft scoping report for review by the Planning Team and interdisciplinary CORE Team prior to publication of the final report.

**So, there will be another draft scoping report, but only for internal purposes and not for public comment? CORRECT**

## **What is the status of the MRP scoping report? (been 9 months)**

The new contractor, that replaced Parsons, now working since 10-1-10, ESA (Environmental Services Association) from the Bay Area. They have been given the past scoping report for the new draft (summary of all the letters and comments, the Pepsi website, etc.) KM has gone over the original letters vs. Parson's abridged version/summary. KM wants to be accurate for context. Binders of all the letters have been prepared in preparation of a new draft summary to be used for internal review. Final could be issued by the first half of December. It will be a summary of issues.

## **What is the status of the final ORV report?**

The report is pretty much done. KM will have to check on it. It is to be bundled with the ORVs (already done) with conditional assessments, which is now evaluating the existing conditions. January is when planning is going back out for public meetings. BHO has weather concerns for public participation. Team is working on video advances whereby public can dial in by computer or by phone to participate without the need to travel, knowing that January can be dicey (and costly) for travel.

5. Will you please disallow the establishment of "educational" facilities" in the Plan for either fixed roof or the holding of campsites for venues such as the Yosemite Institute, knowing that "education" is not an ORV? The WSRA allows uses of many kinds to occur as long as they can do so in the context of protecting and enhancing ORVs and maintaining free-flowing conditions and water quality. The plan will look at different "kinds and amounts" of use and balancing the demand for access among competing uses through the development of a range of alternatives. As an aside, education is expressly noted as part of the Recreation OR. Also, in response to public comments, we will be adding "interpretation" to this category in an updated version of the report.

## **What will it take to eliminate more fixed roof lodging in the valley for these purposes?**

Possibly make it an alternative? BHO expressed concerns that staffing will and has taken campsites away from the public. Building fixed roof lodging in other areas will reduce the footprint that could be used for camping, a much higher priority. Education is an added bonus and should not take a front seat priority. The YNPS has intruded its way into the pool of campsites, deceptively, by holding sites during the reservation

period for volunteers. It is not right to take these sites away from the public pool of opportunity. This is especially true due to the now 30 million viewers that Oprah Winfrey has alerted in her recent TV special.

6. Are you planning to have your science peer-reviewed by the National Academy of Science?

We will ensure that the latest science is used to support the planning process and that the conclusions reached are consistent with the scientific information available. We are considering many possible forums for obtaining these assurances and have not yet determined the approach to be used in this planning effort. All new research conducted by NPS will be subjected to the proper level of peer review.

### **Is N.A.S. included?**

Per KM the answer is "no." Resources manage science, or RMS, is to conduct an all science workshop on December 3rd. An overview seminar in the valley. A workshop symposium. Each of persons in her division will make presentations on their focus studies. 12 or 13 studies. Part of condition assessment that will be included with the ORV report. BHO disagrees with this and believes N.A.S. should conduct a review or the deciding review.

I'm told (on Twitter) that Niki Nicholas (resp for whole science division) is leaving. How does that affect the science review / component? When is she leaving? She is leaving in January to be the superintendent at the OBED wild and scenic river area in Tennessee.

Below you will see an e-mail from Mae summarizing the Park's efforts to outreach to campers, as requested. Unfortunately, the database used was not the most efficient or cost-effective approach. The return rate was probably only 30% due to old addresses. Nevertheless, we wanted to ensure that you knew the attempt had been made and the results are captured in our public involvement records.

[Hi Jim,

*I was just reviewing the Draft Scoping Report and came across this quote. The bold font outlines some of the effort made in public outreach to campers.*

*"Public input on the plan was gathered at 16 public workshops, in which members of the public could submit comments regarding the MRP through a variety of methods. Postcards with a schedule of public scoping meetings and instructions for submitting comments on the plan were mailed to 30,416 addresses, 70 percent of which were retrieved from the campground reservation website administrator (reservation.gov). Information regarding the public meetings was also advertised on the park's website. The public meetings consisted of an introductory presentation on the planning process, followed by discussions with the NPS planning team from Yosemite National Park. These public meetings also provided an opportunity for individuals to learn more about the process for developing the MRP. A list of questions was also available for the public to guide their comments at the meetings. During the meetings, ideas and concerns from the public were captured on flip-charts that were then posted for all in attendance to read. The flip chart notes have been incorporated as comments into this scoping report. Throughout the public scoping period, comments were accepted by e-mail, fax, letter, and on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website." Thanks, Mae]*

what is the status of this effort and why can't you reach back to a bigger database as 30k is not enough or representative. people i know were not contacted and they had reservations in '09 and '10.

No further work on this has been done. per KM, One idea is to make the website available with the notices of upcoming meetings. KM asked if we could put it on our website. BHO recommends not and that the info should be sent directly to the public so that it is perceived by the public to be authentic and that if changes occur, the public is quickly notified. BHO recommended postcards or handouts be given at the gate and kiosks. The gate is a good idea for those who wanted to camp and be involved but could not get a Reservation yet want to participate in the study. The present system is not representative of the wide demographics. BHO suggested that the Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition petition be given more weight in the process; it has great demographic responses including European, Asian, and South African participation as well; a very good representation of comments that need to be taken more seriously.

We are still researching the location of the family photo book you submitted during scoping. At this time, we have every reason to believe it is archived in the hard-copy scoping administrative record. When time permits, we will confirm this.

**Have you found the book?** Not yet but KM will keep looking.

**NOTE: The reason for emails is to be able to communicate with both the Congressman and Senator as they have an interest in these subjects. Also, we want to post important information on our website and I want to be accurate in my translation to all those who are interested. Certainly this would be to your advantage as there is an open process underway.**

**This was understood. KM requests a copy of this at the conclusion of our telecon.** agreed.

**Looking at the org. chart that you provided, Jim Donovan and Mae Franz were public outreach and communications; why have there been no updates?**

Correct. There has been none. KM is awaiting accuracy before releasing information so as to have a clear direction. Hiring of replacement contractor was necessary first.

**What is the status of the Scenic Vista management plan and .release of the E.A. for public comment?**

km doesn't know more. Resource Management Science (RMS) does this.

**What is the status of the Curry Cabin Rockfall EA/report?**

KM stated that discussion has been added regarding the alternative to remove the endangered cabins completely due to safety concerns. It is the preferred option by staff. Don't know date of issue of report. Close however.

**In the daily report, someone looking for lodging said: "My name is Sabrina Stadler", said she is working in the Planning Division for the MRP. No formal introduction, background; who is she and what is her role?**

She is a new project manager to develop schedules and budgeting, to keep the project on track. for now. She is the voice of Kristine Bunnell or replacement eventually. She is the one for timeline answers but just for the MRP.

**Now the Oprah Show certainly has brought camping to the national front. With respect to the zoning decisions for the river plan, camping has now been encouraged to the masses (30 million viewers). So what does the Park Service do with this event from here? If the park does not increase camping accommodations, it has misled the public. Director Jarvis had memos going out to encourage the staff to praise it to the public. Imagine Scott Gediman going on TV after the airing saying that “We got her a nice river site!” This when the campers are being barred from riverside camping with split rail fences and told to stay back from the river banks, even in planning the future!!! When all the Oprah followers go to Yosemite to camp, they will only have concessions for a pay-to-play opportunity. Was that the intent of the director’s promotion ... because it would minimize vacancy rates for the concessionaire?**

KM stated that it was not the intent of the NPS to mislead the public but is sure there will be people who follow Oprah that will be active in trying to camp. The purpose was to promote our national parks and emphasize the lesser numbers of African-Americans who visit Yosemite. The national parks do ethnic surveys and the issue of Shelton Johnson’s mission for more people of color to camp was the impetus. BHO sees inaccuracies in this. He stated that we need to be color blind as a park policy; to do otherwise would be divisive. How can those of any race of lesser means camp for a low cost when there are no sites available? BHO believes that this is all problematic but the best news is that Oprah illustrated that camping is very challenging and being prepared is very important. She mentioned that the plumbing in her “pop-up” trailer was damaged in her arrival accident and rendered the camper’s bathroom unusable. When BHO asked KM if Oprah really camped in the trailer, using the public restrooms, or did she stay in the Library Suite at the Ahwahnee, KM had no comment (BHO assumes yes she did stay at the Ahwahnee Hotel).