

Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition (YVCC)

c/o Brian H. Ouzounian, Co-Founder

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June 6, 2007

Honorable Senator Barbara Boxer

C/o Mr. Ameen Khan

2500 Tulare Street, Suite 5290

Fresno, CA 93721

Sent Via Email & US Mail

RE: Yosemite Valley Camping and Yosemite National Park Service

Dear Senator Boxer:

Although we have not been in direct contact with each other, I have had the pleasure of meeting and discussing certain issues with your staff. I am a 2nd generation California resident and I represent four generations of family campers in Yosemite Valley. I believe that I also represent a very passionate and deep concern of your constituents both in our great state and beyond: family campers in Yosemite Valley in Yosemite National Park. The purpose of this writing is to seek your assistance to remedy the endangerment of family camping in Yosemite Valley due to past, present, and future actions by the Yosemite National Park Service (YNPS).

This letter and attachments are being sent to you after much preparation for your urgent attention and consideration after conversations with the Office of U. S. Representative George Radanovich and the Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein. In addition, you must know that this comes after exhaustive and non-productive discussions with both NPS staff in Washington DC, regional NPS staff and YNPS staff for the past 28 years.

- 1** After the recent flood in Yosemite Valley, the YNPS confiscated two and half campgrounds (Lower Pines, Upper River, and Lower River), removed (scarified) all damaged campsites in Yosemite Valley, and failed to repair all existing damaged sites with the money they received from Congress for flood damage, which was approximately 200 million dollars?
 - a.** What did the YNPS do with this money?
 - b.** Were the funds misspent or were "object codes" moved?

- c. Can an investigation commence rather than accept the standard NPS quarterly reports as fact?
- d. Why were the campsites not repaired?
- e. Why was no public procedure, notice, or process prior to closing the campgrounds, removing the facilities, and not repairing the sites?

Attached is a resource, for your information, a report from Steve Hodapp, Professional Staff Member to the U.S. House of Representative, Committee on Resources, dated March 26, 1997. Mr. Hodapp discusses the request of \$200 million dollars and his observations of the flood damage. It is my understanding that Mr. Hodapp was fired after his report and testimony to the committee.

It is believe that this issue warrants a Congressional Investigation!

- 2 One of the three remaining campgrounds, North Pines, in Yosemite Valley is planned (Yosemite Valley Plan) for removal, as well. If I get the opportunity, I would like to discuss the YNPS total disregard of public input unless it supported their pre-determined agenda. The public has been merely a "check off" for the federal planning requirements. Having said that, basically campers have been left and minimized out of the past 28 year planning process, they are upset by the actions of the YNPS, and they are just now becoming aware of the past actions and future devious planning deeds by the YNPS due to private sector actions at hearings, open houses and the media.

Attached to this letter are copies of 455 original signatures on petitions (gathered in just two months) that read as follows:

"We the undersigned have knowledge that the National Park Service, in Yosemite, is planning to remove the "North Pines Campground." We oppose this removal and any campground removal. Further, we request the repair and re-installation of all campgrounds and campsites damaged by the floods."

In addition are there are about 400 signatures with comments from our ongoing epetition (www.yosemitevalleycampers.org). This is a total of near 850 signatures.

- 3 At a public hearing for the Merced River Plan in February, 2005, of which I was the only public person who gave Testimony, the Park Superintendent, Mike Tollefson, stated that studies have shown that 70% of the visitors to the Park are Californians. Recently, members of our organization gave me an important historic resource that directly applies to the issues of family campers: *Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove: A Preliminary Report, 1865* by Frederick Law Olmsted. I can purchase and send you this short book if you would like. It highlights the fact that in 1864, President Lincoln signed an act transferring said land to the State of California "for public use, resort and recreation

forever." This letter is to the first Yosemite Commission giving care, custody and control to the State of California and although it was written over 140 years ago, it speaks volumes of the issues that concern us today and in a way that I have been trying for years to articulate; specifically with regard to open public access for both the privileged and the less privileged. Knowing that your time is precious, I urge you to read it.

- 4 On July 19, 2005, some of the Yosemite stakeholders, of whom I was one, sent a letter to Rep. George Radanovich, 19th District, California, to make certain requests. The Congressman was kind enough to take an hour out of his vacation and meet with us in Yosemite Valley in August '05. We discussed some of same issues with him to which he stated he needed a senator's support. We also requested a study session with Member Pearce (NM) House Resource Sub-Committee Chairman at that time, in Fresno or Yosemite, which never has occurred.

Senator, I have been told by sources that you may be interested in assisting us, which is why I have written to you. There appears to be little or tampered oversight with the decision makers of Yosemite. I am willing and able to meet with you or your staff to move on the above issues at your earliest convenience. Actions by the YNPS are moving rapidly, which will do irreparable harm to family camping in Yosemite Valley. I certainly understand the current and pressing issues of our country that you must deal with and national priorities that you must tend to. I would greatly appreciate any time or actions that you can arrange for assistance.

Best Regards,

Brian H. Ouzounian
Co-Founder
Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition

Cc: Angela Caldera, Co-Founder, Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition

Encl.