



Visitor Access Management Plan Winter 2022-2023 Civic Engagement Summary and Comment Report



Winter 2022/2023 Civic Engagement Summary Report

Yosemite National Park - Visitor Access Plan

Executive Summary

From December 2022 through February 2023, the National Park Service (NPS) held a series of meetings where the public and stakeholders were invited to provide input on issues and opportunities connected to visitor use, experience, and access at Yosemite National Park.

To introduce the planning effort, a variety of print and digital media platforms were used to reach out to the public throughout the civic engagement period. These publications highlighted key issues, the planning timeline, prompting questions, and information on how to participate. Printed media including flyers and postcards were widely distributed throughout the park, at key locations in the region, and made available on the [project website](#). Information was also publicized on social media platforms including the park's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. These publications identified the length of the comment period, dates, times, and provided a link to the virtual public meeting.

NPS staff hosted one virtual public meeting and several stakeholder forums to provide interested members of the public and other stakeholders opportunities to learn more about the planning effort and to share ideas and comments. The first session, which was hosted by Yosemite Gateway Partners, was held on January 12, 2023, and the second session that was open to the public was held on January 17, 2023. These sessions were held virtually via Microsoft Teams platform. The virtual public meeting was attended by 201 people. A recording of the public session was made available on the park's social media platforms. At the close of the comment period on February 2, 2023, more than 4,200 correspondences had been received.

While the comments are summarized here, the following themes appeared in the correspondences:

- Address current concerns and deficiencies with the timed reservation system.
- Consider visitor capacity limits based on vehicles rather than people or limits that are tailored to areas of the park or activities.
- Provide flexibility in the permit system.
- Address the lack of parking.
- Provide for local use.
- Provide twenty-four-hour access to Hetch Hetchy and expand to allow camping and water-based uses.
- Address long wait times at entrance gates.
- Provide multimodal options for accessing the park.
- Provide additional camping opportunities.
- Address congestion via roadway reconfigurations.

These outcomes will inform the next steps in the plan's development. Comments received during this review period related to identification of key issues will set the foundation for discussions related to strategy development in the coming months.

Overview of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement efforts were designed to intentionally engage and consider the views and interests of Tribes, the public, and other stakeholders. The team engaged in conversations with stakeholders, including gateway communities and the public to develop shared understanding of the challenges facing Yosemite National Park that this planning effort addresses. The team also communicated realistic expectations for the plan's timeline and project scope and demonstrated a commitment to implement decisions.

Civic Engagement Outreach and Materials

Information on project details, resources, public presentation, and where to comment were thoughtfully and broadly distributed. To this end, the park and planning team developed a variety of civic engagement materials to share information about the planning effort and civic engagement sessions with the public. These included a StoryMap, which will be updated throughout the project lifespan, a newsletter, and flyer.

The park team used traditional media and social media to share information with the public. *The Mercury News* and *San Francisco Chronicle* were contacted to discuss the purpose and intent of the planning process and to share information on how the public can submit formal comments. A news release was also sent out to provide notice of opportunity for civic engagement and to announce public comment period dates.

The park team shared information about the planning process and civic engagement sessions on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram throughout the civic engagement period. This effort was supported by the Yosemite Conservancy, which shared social media posts on their platforms. Information included the opening of the comment period, reminders about public meetings, a link to the recording of the public meeting, and reminders to comment prior to the end of the comment period.

All materials to support the civic engagement series (StoryMap, meeting notices, newsletters) were hosted on the project homepage at: [Park Planning - Visitor Access Management Plan](#).

Civic Engagement Meeting Summaries

The first virtual meeting was hosted by Yosemite Gateway Partners on January 12, 2023, to allow park staff and the planning team to share information about what they are learning about visitor access, to share information about the planning process, and to provide an opportunity to discuss issues. This meeting was originally intended to occur in-person in Yosemite Valley; however, due to widespread flooding in central California, the meeting was held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

A total of 142 participants attended the virtual meeting. Park staff and the planning team presented information on the project purpose and goals, the visitor use management framework, and the planning timeline. The team used small breakout rooms to allow for open and facilitated stakeholder discussions.

The second virtual meeting was held on January 17, 2023 and was open and advertised to the public. This event was held via Microsoft Teams and attended by 201 participants. The presentation featured introductions from NPS staff, a digital slide presentation covering the scope, structure, and goals of the project, an overview of the visitor use management framework, an introduction on how to submit comments, and a live question-and-answer session. This meeting was recorded and posted on the park's [YouTube page](#) and received an additional 894 views by June 2023.

The park team also made several additional presentations to the public, including a presentation to the Mono County collaborative planning team, the Mariposa Yosemite Tourism Bureau's board of directors, and the Visit Yosemite/Madera/County (Oakhurst) board of directors. These presentations had approximately fifty participants.

Correspondence Overview

The National Park Service received public input from December 9, 2022, through February 3, 2023; 4,232 correspondences were received from fifty US states and nine countries. More than 1,300 correspondences came from California. Other states with more than 100 comments each were New York, Florida, Texas, Washington, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Colorado. The nine represented countries were the United States, Germany, Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Afghanistan, Canada, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

Key Themes from Winter 2023 Engagement

What experiences in Yosemite are most important to you?

Solitude in nature, specific activities such as backpacking in wilderness and rock-climbing, visits to specific locations or landmarks in the park including alpine meadows and waterfalls, and shared experiences with family and friends.

What barriers get in the way of enjoying or visiting Yosemite?

Large crowds, long wait times, and traffic congestion, as well as negative impacts to the natural environment from overcrowding, including litter, air pollution from cars and campfires, noise, and people going off-trail and damaging natural resources.

What suggestions do you have for management practices or strategies to effectively address access challenges?

Provide a flexible permit system to allow for a certain number of walk-up day-use permits, focus permits on specific areas and uses in the park, and consider visitor capacity limits based on vehicles and location rather than number of people alone.

Provide for additional camping opportunities and implement a system to reallocate spaces where people do not show up. Provide for local use while addressing concerns that the reservation system prevents certain user groups from gaining access to the park.

Visitor Access Management Plan Public Comment Summary Report

Yosemite National Park
February 2023

Executive Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) is in the early stages of developing a Visitor Access Plan (the plan) to support sustainable access, high-quality recreation experiences, visitor safety, and resource protection at Yosemite National Park (the park). Providing for and managing visitor use at the park is increasingly complex due to growth in day-use visitation and changing use patterns. The NPS is concerned about the increasing impacts on natural and cultural resources, the quality of the visitor experience, visitor and staff safety, and the heavy strain on the park's facilities and ability to perform daily operations. This plan will address congestion, crowding, and preventing damage to resources within the park.

As a part of this process, the NPS will evaluate different management strategies, including a reservation system. These strategies will help the park manage visitation to meet long-term resource protection, support high-quality public access and visitor experience goals, and protect the park in the future. This planning process will leverage the park's already extensive planning and decision-making portfolio that sets the foundation for considering how to best meet the goals that were identified in these plans.

The park released a newsletter and story map with information about the plan through a press release in December 2022. The story map included background information, purpose and need of the plan, key issues and locations, discussion of their pilot programs, schedule and next steps of the planning process, and information on how to comment. The park encouraged the public to submit comments through the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: [ParkPlanning - Visitor Access Management Plan \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/planning/visitor-access-management-plan) Comments were also accepted by US mail and email.

With the release of the newsletter and story map, the NPS held a public comment period that began on December 9, 2022, and ended on February 3, 2023, and held one virtual public meeting during this period. The date, location, and time of the public meeting are provided below:

- Virtual Meeting
 - Wednesday, December 14, 2022
 - 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. PDT

All comments received (correspondence entered into PEPC by the public, emails sent to park staff, and letters mailed to the park headquarters) were considered and included in the overall record. A total of 4,232 pieces of correspondence were received during the public comment

period. This *Public Comment Summary Report* summarizes the suggestions and concerns expressed during the public comment period. Terms used in this report, including correspondence and comment, are defined in the Definition of Terms section beginning on page 6.

Suggestions from Public Comment

The public provided suggestions on management strategies and actions to inform the development of the plan. The top categories identified by commenters were related to maintaining access to the park, how the reservation system is implemented, the role of park roads and infrastructure in crowding, providing multimodal access, and park staffing and enforcement. Commenters also identified additional issues of concern, including issues related to campgrounds and campground management, access to Hetch Hetchy, concessioner services, and other topics detailed in the Comment Summaries section of this report. Suggestions are ordered based on the most common themes or issues that arose and include the following:

1. Address current concerns and deficiencies with the timed reservation system. This could include allowing for a certain number of walk-up day use permits, focusing permits on specific areas and uses in the park, changing the reservation system managed by recreation.gov to another system or provider, and allowing for reservations to be cancelled and reallocated. Allocations need to consider how far in advance different types of visitors plan their visits. For example, international travelers may plan a trip to the park a year in advance, while local travelers value the ability to visit spontaneously. Address concerns that the reservation system prevents certain user groups, specifically international groups and low-income communities, from gaining access to the park.
2. Consider visitor capacity limits based on vehicles rather than people or limits that are tailored to areas of the park or activities (i.e., rock climbing versus day hiking).
3. Provide flexibility in the permit system to allow for spontaneous use and or uses that need to change based on weather conditions. Provide additional information/education on the permit system. Ensure visitors know how to obtain a permit and what times of year permits are required.
4. Address the lack of parking at the park either through reserved spaces or staffing the parking lots to monitor and direct visitors to parking spaces. Additional parking lots could be added to further address parking problems, with the possibility of gravel or other low impact designs.
5. Provide for local use, including the ability to pass through the park to reach other destinations and for local users to be able to visit the park without having to obtain a reservation.
6. Provide 24-hour access to Hetch Hetchy and expand to allow camping and water-based uses. Allowing this access would reduce pressure from other areas of the park.
7. Address long wait times at the entrance gates through modifications such as improved cellular service, allowing express lines for visitors with passes, additional staff and

entrance booths, allowing reservations to be transferrable, and providing methods for visitors to pay before they reach the gate (e.g., by employing roving entrance station staff or via QR codes).

8. Provide multimodal options for accessing the park. Expand YARTS (Yosemite Area Regional Transit Service) to the park through additional routes and expanded hours. Consider requiring a shuttle service to reach the park from park-and-ride lots outside the park or shuttles to popular destinations. Other multimodal improvements could include providing EV infrastructure, providing bike paths and additional infrastructure/incentives for bike users, incentivizing hotels in gateway communities to provide shuttles to the park, promoting the use of bikes or e-bikes with rentals in the park, and providing additional pedestrian infrastructure around Yosemite Valley Lodge. Involve outside partners such as YARTS and gateway community businesses in expanding multimodal access to the park.
9. Provide for additional camping opportunities, including horse camping. Similar to the reservation system, spaces should be saved for walk up or there should be a way to reallocate spaces where people do not show up. Also provide additional regulations in the campground related to fire pits and noise levels.
10. Address congestion through roadway reconfigurations including one-way roads, the use of roundabouts, and deconflicting pedestrian walkways with key roadways (i.e., the pedestrian crossing at Yosemite Valley Lodge).

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Comment Analysis

Correspondence Received

The following tables were produced by the NPS PEPC database and provide information about the numbers and types of correspondence received, organized by code and by various demographics. The tables present data on the number of correspondences received by correspondence type, organization type, state, and country.

Also included below is a table detailing the number of comments identified by code. A total of 6,993 individual comments were derived from the 4,232 correspondences. Of the 4,232 correspondences, 1,102 were unique correspondences and 3,130 were form letters.

TABLE 1. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY CORRESPONDENCE TYPE

Correspondence Type	Correspondences
Web Form	4,224
Email	0
Letter	8
Total	4,232

TABLE 2. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

Organization Type	Correspondences
Unaffiliated Individual	4,161
Business	36
Recreational Groups	9
Conservation/Preservation	13
County Government	4
Non-NPS Employee in the Park	3
NPS Employee	2
University/Professional Society	2
Non-Governmental	1
Tribal Government	1

TABLE 3. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY STATE

State	Correspondences
California	1,345
New York	231
Florida	198
Texas	167
Washington	164
Illinois	144
Pennsylvania	140
New Jersey	117
Colorado	112
Arizona	109
Oregon	101
Ohio	100
North Carolina	96
Virginia	93
Michigan	84
Massachusetts	82
Maryland	71
Wisconsin	67
Minnesota	62
Nevada	57
Missouri	50
Indiana	49
Georgia	46
Connecticut	46
Tennessee	41
South Carolina	31
New Mexico	31
Kentucky	30
Utah	30
Maine	26
New Hampshire	25
Unknown	25
Iowa	23
Alabama	21

State	Correspondences
Kansas	18
Vermont	18
Montana	17
Rhode Island	17
Idaho	16
Louisiana	15
Oklahoma	15
Delaware	14
Wyoming	11
Arkansas	11
Hawaii	11
Mississippi	10
West Virginia	10
District of Columbia	9
Nebraska	8
Alaska	8
South Dakota	6
Puerto Rico	2
North Dakota	2

TABLE 4. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY

Country	Correspondences
USA	4,209
Germany	8
Australia	5
United Kingdom	3
Denmark	3
Afghanistan	1
Canada	1
Netherlands	1
Switzerland	1

TABLE 5. COMMENT DISTRIBUTION BY CODE

Code	Comments	%
Issues: Visitor Experience	1100	15.73%
Issues: Crowding	632	9.04%
Issues: Traffic Congestion, Parking Lot Congestion	478	6.84%
Reservation and Timed-Entry System - Challenges	473	6.76%
General Support	414	5.92%
Issues: Park Infrastructure and Operations	403	5.76%
Reservation and Timed-Entry System - Benefits	396	5.66%
Elements - Shuttles	386	5.52%
Elements - Reservations - Allocation	284	4.06%
Miscellaneous - Other Comments	270	3.86%
Elements - Expanded Infrastructure	245	3.50%
Issues: Accessibility and Equitable Access	203	2.90%
Elements - Campgrounds, Camping	188	2.69%
Elements - Education/Enforcement	164	2.35%
Elements - New Elements	132	1.89%
Miscellaneous - Out of Scope	128	1.83%
Elements - Regional Transit	126	1.80%
Issues: Park Enforcement and Park Staffing	103	1.47%
Elements - Reservations - Timing	95	1.36%
Elements - Reservation and Timed-Entry System	84	1.20%
General Oppose	77	1.10%
Issues: Entrance Stations - Queues and Fees	77	1.10%
Issues: Natural Resources	76	1.09%
Elements - Visitor Capacities	71	1.02%
Issues: Economic Impacts	68	0.97%
Elements - Entrance Station Suggestions	56	0.80%
Issues: Wilderness	56	0.80%
Issues: International Visitation	51	0.73%

Code	Comments	%
Duplicate Comment	48	0.69%
Elements - Emerging Technology	29	0.41%
Elements - Big Wall Climbing Permits	25	0.36%
Elements - Reservations - Other	17	0.24%
Elements - Parking Reservations	16	0.23%
Elements - Horsetail Falls Reservations	9	0.13%
Issues: Cultural Resources	7	0.10%
NEPA Issues	6	0.09%
Total	6993	100.00%

Definition of Terms

Correspondence: A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter and includes letters, emails, comments entered directly into the PEPC database, and any other written comments provided to the park.

Comment: A comment is a portion of text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject such as “Natural Resources.” The comment could also question the accuracy of the information provided in the newsletter or story map, question the adequacy of any background information, or present issues other than those presented in the newsletter.

Code: A code is a grouping centered on a common subject, such as “Natural Resources.” Codes are developed during the public comment process and are used to track major subjects found in the newsletter or story map. In cases where no comments are received on an issue, the code is not identified or discussed in this report.

Comment Summary: A grouping that is centered on a common subject. Comment summaries combine similar comments.

Comment Summaries

Prompting Questions and Comment Summary Structure

Five questions were posed to commenters to receive targeted feedback to help better develop the Visitor Access Management Plan:

1. What experiences in Yosemite are most important to you?
2. What have been the best parts of your experiences in Yosemite? What have been the worst parts?

3. What management practices or strategies has the park used to effectively address crowding and congestion?
4. Other thoughts you'd like to share with the project team?
5. What barriers get in the way of enjoying or visiting Yosemite?

Major concepts and unique perspectives are summarized from the public comments received during the comment period.

Issues: Visitor Experience

Positive Visitor Experiences

Commenters shared the experiences they value during their visits to Yosemite National Park, including opportunities to find solitude in nature, specific activities such as backpacking in wilderness and rock climbing, visits to specific locations or landmarks in the park, and shared experiences with family and friends. Many commenters mentioned opportunities to find solitude or uncrowded areas of the park as highlights of their visits. Commenters also mentioned park infrastructure and facilities, such as free shuttle buses, well-maintained trails, and the park's visitor centers and knowledgeable park staff as features that enhanced visitor experience.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 1: "Finding a deep spiritual connection with such of magical place is an unique adventure. I have been exploring the park on weekly basis for the las 4 months, YNP has stolen my soul."

Comment: Topic Question 2: "Suddenly encounter with wildlife and my eye connection with them with given respectful distance, the so well protected forest including magical views at The Valley and from the mountain highs and iconic granite peaks. Access and markings to hiking trail system is awesome."

Comment; Topic Question 2: "Best: seeing Mariposa Grove, waterfalls, lovely meals at the Ahwahnee. Quietly reading a book with a amazing view. Spending quality time with my husband. Trail ride and the free shuttles"

Comment: Topic Question 1: "Hiking on the trails, relaxing in the valley floor, and staying in the valley."

Comment: Topic Question 2: "The best parts of my Yosemite experience have been accessing and sharing beauty with family and friends from afar (Half Dome!!, the view from the Top of Upper Yosemite Falls, snow shoeing through the redwood groves) and taking youth on favorite trails (mist) for the first time. I LOVED Yosemite during 2020 because of the lack of crowds and the animals came out to play in their habitat undisturbed. Going up the Mist Trail re-opening week in June 2020 was magical and connected to the other folks on the trail marveling at the wonder and rejuvenation big nature brings."

Negative Visitor Experiences

Many commenters mentioned negative experiences resulting from encountering other visitors who were violating park rules, creating nuisance disturbances (e.g., being noisy or smoking), or littering. Commenters mentioned the effects of crowds, graffiti, and parking/traveling off-trail or in other unauthorized areas on the park's natural resources. Commenters also mentioned expansion of commercial businesses and services in the park as negatives.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: "Crowds!! Cars!! Tourists!! Gift shops!! Trash!!"

Comment: "In addition to reducing overcrowding, improve and enforce noise abatements (meters at entrance stations and refuse vehicles/motorcycles that exceed limits). Crowds, noise, traffic. Rarely go to Yosemite Valley due to over crowding and excessive noise."

Comment: Topic Question 1: "Camping & hiking, especially in areas other than the valley. I am 78 years old and have been camping & hiking in Tuolumne Meadows & environs since I was 8 years old. Over the years, more and more people have been coming so traffic jams are getting worse and more "bad apples" are not being respectful of nature. By "bad apples," I mean the ones who go off-trail, bring dogs on hikes, get drunk and play loud music in the campground, etc."

Comment: Topic Question 2: "Wandering the backcountry. The worst have been overcrowding, trying to find a place to park, and the perceived commercialization of the Valley."

Issues: Crowding

Impacts of Crowding

Commenters noted that crowds of visitors were one of the barriers to them visiting the park. They noted that large crowds of people diminish the visitor experience (e.g., the feeling of being out in nature), including the surge of visitors resulting from tour buses and the feeling of spending more time waiting in a bus line than experiencing the park. Some commenters noted that crowding is mostly an issue around services and less of an issue in the backcountry. Some commenters noted that overcrowding can cause safety concerns, including along rivers and tributaries. They also noted concern for having large concentrations of people in an area when natural disasters occur such as flooding, earthquakes, rockslides, windstorms, lightning, and fires.

Commenters noted specific concerns related to overcrowding degrading the natural environment including litter, air pollution from cars and campfires, noise, and people going off trail and damaging natural resources. They noted that current management measures to addressing crowding have mitigated some of the negative impacts, but they are inadequate and more management is needed to address overcrowding.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Being able to enjoy hiking and driving scenic routes without overcrowding. Being shoulder to shoulder with multitudes of people really diminishes the beauty and therapeutic effects of nature."

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The more people that can visit a park, the better the national park system can effectively message to the public. Crowding in my experience has only ever been an issue in close proximity to services. Parking lots, restaurants, restrooms and camping manage crowding by defined capacity limits. I've not had an issue with congestion on trails and in the back country.”

Comment: “The absolute worst is packed shuttle buses passing stops and not being able to pick up passengers. We waited for an hour for a bus with space to get on. During a weekday trip, we thought we would have to wait an hour for a bus and chose to walk instead. What was supposed to be a miles became 3 — we got lost looking for our group.”

Comment: “The worst of times have been recent - the overcrowding, infrastructure backlog, pollution, and trash on the trails as well as watching folks ignore the signs to protect habitats.”

Comment: “the ultimate barrier for enjoyment of Yosemite is the overcrowding and too many people. Becomes a real safety issue as well. All bottled up in the valley like that, flooding, earthquake, rockslides, windstorms, lightning, fires, all are a real safety concern if evacuation was immediate.”

Crowded Locations

Commenters noted specific sources of crowding they wanted to see addressed including addressing large groups of commercial backpackers that have impacts in corridors with small legal backpack sites like Yosemite Creek and the Grand Canyon of Tuolumne. Other areas of concern noted were the large number of visitors on the trail to Vernal Falls.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Another huge, huge problem is the allowance of large groups of commercial backpackers. It has a huge impact on the backcountry especially in corridors with small, legal backpacking sites like Yosemite Creek and the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne.”

Comment: “The amount of people on trail to Vernal Falls is really hindering for some.”

Effects of Previous Crowding

Commenters described negative visitor experiences resulting from crowding and traffic at the park that occurred without reservation systems in place, including impacting their feeling of solitude.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I come to Yosemite to disconnect from it all. I come to enjoy the most beautiful place in the world and immerse myself in the wilderness . It's extremely important to me to feel like going to Yosemite is "getting away." The crowds that result from no reservations systems effectively rob me of that experience. In the summer with no visitor control mechanisms in place, there simply is no solitude in Yosemite valley. I prefer quality of visit over quantity”

Comment: “The worst parts have been the increasing crowds and lack of respect for the natural world that became more and more apparent over the years, to the point that I had stopped visiting the park until the permit system was enacted in 2020. Waiting over an hour to get through the gate at Tioga Pass multiple times killed my love for the Meadows, as did the many instances of people behaving poorly in the park. I can't count how many times I saw dogs in places they very clearly aren't allowed (on the beach at Tenaya Lake most egregiously) - - we (politely!) mentioned to these folks that dogs are not permitted and were met with hostility on every occasion. We too have dogs and would love to bring them with us, but we don't! The permit system really seemed to reduce the number of people who felt entitled to be awful visitors.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The reservation system has been an improvement. In fact, I fail to understand why you stopped it! It allowed for a smoother entrance by more people - - and let people know in advance what was possible and what was not - - You can see from my address that I am a major recipient of car pollution at my front yard - - people sitting in their cars for hours - - with the engine running - - fuming and hollering at their kids because they are frustrated. This is not the way for a person to experience the beauty of nature! It's a lesson in frustration.”

Issues: Traffic Congestion, Parking Lot Congestion

Issues Contributing to Congestion

Commenters identified issues with the park's road network or parking facilities that contribute to traffic congestion. Commenters identified measures such as increasing parking or changing traffic patterns, such as the 2022 changes or using roundabouts, that may have reduced congestion. One commenter suggested studying the effects of these changes on traffic congestion.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Finally, getting around the park is limited by the limited turn around points, you sort of have to keep going if you miss a turn. While I don't want more roads added, reducing crowd size per day and limiting the number of vehicles per day could fix this issue.”

Comment: “Worst: 1) Redesign of the traffic flow during summer of 2022.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “My Yosemite Valley Pet Peeve is the cars parked along the road near the Yosemite Falls shuttle shelter. When you're out in the meadow, the view from there of Yosemite Falls is one of the best in the valley, and one of the only places you can view upper and lower falls at the same time. I have beautiful photos from years ago taken from the meadow, looking across the lily ponds with the falls in the background. Now that same view has parked cars, lots of them. Taking away the parking lot at the base of the falls and putting in the picnic area and restroom was nice, but it created a parking problem. I'd like to see that area closed to all parking (and no orange cones please), forcing people to park in the designated lots and walk to the falls,”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The roundabouts seem to be working but it's hard to tell as I have so little access to the park anymore to experience the changes. I think the new parking area near the store will help a lot so that people aren't driving in circles through the whole valley trying to find somewhere to park.”

Comment: “- I think we also need to see how congestion has changed since the changes to modify stop lights , and congestion control most recently”

Congestion Effects on Visitor Experience

Commenters identified traffic congestion, delays, inability to find parking, and reckless or aggressive driving as issues that have impacted their experiences at the park. Comments noted that traffic congestion may be caused by the number of vehicles on park roads, construction-related delays, decreases in available campsites, changes in traffic patterns, or delays caused by pedestrians.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Worst- crowds. In May 2021 before the reservation system took place, it took us 2.5 hours to drive 2 miles to our valley campground. I still cannot wrap my head around how that could even be possible. That is just one example of how crowds are ruining the park experience.”

*Comment: “*When you take someone to the park for the visit time and want to show them all the special places but you can't find a parking spot and thus can't even get out of the car”*

Comment: “However, the summers are very, very challenging. Ever since the reservations system was in place, the park has been amazing and as enjoyable as other seasons. But the summer months without crowd control can be miserable. From the honking of cars horns at tunnel view, the cars illegally parked in the bus zones, the lack of parking for large vans and busses (Valley View, el Capitan meadow, Sentinel Bridge), with people dangerously crossing streets, traffic jams.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “During construction along Tioga road, there was no clear signage of where parking was allowed. Signs were confusing, sometimes contradictory. In the Valley, some roads were often blocked with “parking full” signs, while there were plenty of vacant spots in the lots they led to. So drivers were circling the valley, looking for parking and increasing congestion, while some lots with available parking were artificially made inaccessible.”

Comment: “The reduction in valley floor overnight accommodations and campsites has created the need for visitors to drive in and out of the park each day. This combined with removal and relocation of parking lots at Yosemite Village and Yosemite Falls have created greater congestion from vehicles and pedestrian crosswalks.”

Issues: Park Infrastructure and Operations

Communication on Infrastructure Projects

Commenters identified the need for additional communication regarding the status of park services and concessions or park infrastructure projects. Commenters noted impacts to visitor experience and access to park resources resulting from lack of information regarding which trails or other facilities were open or changes in traffic patterns. Several commenters noted that information on parking for stock users is lacking or confusing.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Lack of communication/warning about the specifics of the Tioga Rd construction this past summer. There was no clear information on which trailheads were open, where parking was allowed, or warnings that if you missed a turnoff you were stuck in 40+ mins of mandatory one way! Obviously the construction itself is disruptive and gross but I get that that's necessary - better comms would have really helped avoid real bummers (I was in the park a bunch over the summer and the rangers at Tioga Pass said literally nothing - it wasn't even on the board!). I still haven't figured out where to park to hike Cathedral Crag now lol.”

Comment: “I wouldn't call it “worst” but it would be nice if it were easier to know what services were open when up by Tuolumne (why has that livecam been broken for years? haha).”

Comment: “Attention to detail is woefully lacking by management. For example, a sign at the booth by Curry check-in could let guests know it will only be open 15 minutes prior to each skating session. The sign could also let guests know TICKETS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT THE SKATING RINK.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Parking rigs with horses is unclear. The 11yosemite website states that stock can be unloaded and loaded at any stock camp, designated stock area, or any concession stable. I am not sure where any of these legal parking areas are. Wawona says “No day use parking”. I get conflicting information from rangers as to where to park. Most of the time, I am told to park in the bus parking section across from Camp 4 or in the dirt area by Camp Curry. We used to be able to park at the Curry stables, but it is now used by the shuttles and other park vehicles.”

Comment: “Hiking to a see a lake and to find out it was completely dry, maybe a notice would have helped so we can skip that hike. Long lines into park”

Infrastructure and Operational Improvements

Commenters identified the need for improvements to park infrastructure, facilities, or operations. Commenters noted the need to redesign or better maintain the park's public restrooms, minimize litter, and either improve other services or reduce services across the park to reduce the impact of development and visitor demand. Commenters noted that additional management of traffic is needed in locations including the Yosemite Falls/Yosemite Lodge area. Commenters also provided suggestions regarding forest management to address wildfire risks or restore meadows in Yosemite Valley.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Fixing the horrible toilet facilities at Glacier Point parking (I understand this is being fixed with the Glacier Point rehabilitation).”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “Having people direct traffic, more shuttles, reduce the tour buses, limit day use passes. Raising prices to camping and lodging does not reduce crowds or stop people from coming it just limits access to the rich and that is not the intent of parks.”

Comment: “You need to rebuild all the bathrooms at the HWY 120 East and West entrances as well as the HWY 140 and HWY 41. Those bathrooms are a joke. Get HOT WATER in the bathrooms, all bathrooms, to wash your hands to make sure they are clean.”

Comment: "Manage your forests so people can see thru once again, so overgrown you are just asking for disasters. Remove burned trees. Maintain trails, constantly monitor trash and restroom situations to avoid overflow. These forests belong to the people, we allow you to manage them, and you are failing."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "While the Pilot Traffic Pattern has greatly helped with traffic with vehicles leaving the park in the evening but, there still is an issue at the Yosemite Falls and Yosemite Lodge area which needs to be addressed in some other manner. With funneling traffic through Curry Village, there is a increase chance of hitting pedestrians in the area, especially at the shuttle stops due the amount of people in the area and the fact that people are walking in the road."

Concessioner Concerns

Commenters identified issues related to concessioners or other commercial operators at the park. Commenters noted declines in the quality of food service, limited hours and dining options, long lines, increased prices, and increased commercialization of the Valley as concerns. Commenters also mentioned closure of the High Sierra Camps as a concern.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "The worst parts, particularly with the new concessionaire, are services. Before the pandemic shuttle service seemed more hit and miss. Food service is not as reliable or the food as good."

Comment: "The second thing is that first Delaware North and now Aramark have been more concerned with making as much money as possible instead of preserving Yosemite. That has resulted in the over-commercialization of nearly all facilities under concessionaire control. The sense of Yosemite Valley being a scenic version of Disneyland needs to change. During peak visitor season, Yosemite is transformed into more an overcrowded playground than the "crown jewel" of the National Park system."

Comment: "Also, food service has suffered tremendously since Aramark took over. The Ahwahnee Hotel was historically a 5 star dining experience. It is no more. Again, partly due to employee concerns, but I believe it is poor management on Aramark's part. This concessionaire has had ample time to improve upon the visitor experience, and has failed."

Comment: "I'm uncertain if this was intentional or not, but many of the concessionaires, Awahnee, Curry Village Pizza, and one of the Valley markets, were closed fairly early and during several of our visits which seems like a sure fire way to discourage more Valley traffic and overcrowding."

Comment: Topic Question 2: "As a repeat visitor for over 50 years I enjoy hiking throughout the park, both in the valley, high country, and wilderness. My favorite areas and experiences have always been in the Wilderness portions of the park. As an older person it is becoming more difficult to hike into the wilderness and I have been unable to do so for the past few seasons because the concessionaire (Aramark) has failed to operate the High Sierra Camps."

Infrastructure and Operational Issues

Commenters identified issues related to park infrastructure and operations, including closure of the restrooms at the Highway 120 entrance to the public, maintenance of restroom facilities, closure of facilities or inconsistent hours, and the extent of development in the park in general. Several commenters noted issues experienced by stock users, including lack of parking for trailers, closure of the park stables, and confusion surrounding camping. Commenters noted that parking restrictions and changes in traffic patterns have not been helpful in reducing congestion. Commenters also noted issues related to forest management practices, such as impacts from smoke from controlled burns and visual impacts.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 2: "The worst part is when the employees closed off the bathroom at 120 entrance and made it only for employees. There are 3-10 employees at the gate and it is not right that they have their own private bathroom. It needs to be open for the visitors coming in and leaving the park. For some crazy reason, employees felt they had the option of closing public restroom facilities. They have even blocked off being able to pull in there to watch the river and picnic. The visitors are the ones who pay to come into the park, and the restroom facilities should be available to them. Many drive a long ways to get there/ and to drive to the Valley and find parking takes another hour (because of the parking) . I know the employees think it is only 15 minutes...which without traffic it maybe is/ but to find parking near the bathrooms is very difficult and takes another hour."

Comment: "Worst Too many roads. Too many high-quality lodging areas. Too many stores. Too much employee housing. Too much "visitor-support" in lieu of visitor experiences"

Comment: Topic Question 3: "They rerouted the roads - - but not sure it is better. They also removed the parking between ahwannee and Yosemite falls/ and now no one can park anywhere. It's not like they removed the parking spaces - - they are still there. So they should let the public park there. The management also made the public restrooms at the 140 entrance so no one can use them except for the 3-5 employees who manage the gate. Since it is a publicly funded park, and the restrooms need to serve the public, many of which drive a long ways...these restrooms which have always been open to the public, have been blocked off by the employees over the past year and a half. They tell us it is 20 minutes to the valley - - but because of the parking and traffic, it takes much longer than that ...and we have been in the car for over 4 hours. These restrooms at entrance 140 should be open for the public. Also the nice picnic spot overlooking the river there can no longer be used by the public...only a few employees who do not sue it/ as they also do not let us the public park in the lot there to picnic, use the bathrooms and view the river. It's very selfish for the park to allow this."

Comment: Topic Question 5: "Not enough buses. Things being closed, or being "open with modifications" instead of actually functioning properly. Hours listed not being true - for example, reading that a certain restaurant is open X hours, then showing up and it's closing early, AND/OR is out of most things on the menu or is only offering a limited menu. When's the last time the Loft was open? I have good memories there from years ago but in recent years it's always closed."

Comment: "Smoke from 'controlled' burns."

Issues: Accessibility and Equitable Access

Accessibility Issues

Commenters stated that they hesitate to visit because they are not sure what will be accessible if they come visit and the crowds are an issue to accessibility.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Using the infrastructure (entrance gates, parking, restrooms and other facilities) should be simple. I would like hassle-free accessibility to these basic needs so that I can enjoy my Yosemite time hiking, site seeing, and taking pictures. Unfortunately, sometimes it is impossible to do such simple actions such as park the car or move around the valley on the roads. Therefore, I don't get to do what I came to the park to do: namely hike, swim in the river, take pictures and ride my bike."

Fees

Commenters noted that increasing fees to the park would be a barrier for accessibility. They also noted that requiring visitors to have hotel or camping reservations is another financial barrier to visitation. They pointed out that high lodging costs may contribute to day-use crowding and suggested that tourism revenue or commercial use fees be used to improve the affordability of park lodging, particularly for low-income visitors. Commenters suggested other groups be allowed to visit for free, such as tribal members. Some commenters felt that the permit system was also a barrier, favoring white, middle-class visitors who have the ability to spend long amounts of time on a computer to get the advance permit. They also noted the requirement of the park to comply with Executive Order 13985 to ensure access to underserved communities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: "COST!!! You can't just keep jacking up the prices and still continue to try and say that your goal is to create more accessibility. At this point, none of us believe you anymore."

Comment: "To ensure that opportunity, barriers to get into the park and to experience the park in different ways should be minimized as much as possible, particularly for historically marginalized or disadvantaged community. This latter point aligns with Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. It may sound conflicting with the notion that the priority for the park should be the protection of resources, but we believe it is possible to be strategic in balancing the protection of resources and reducing barriers for visitors."

Comment: "The permit system used previously was incredibly ham fisted. It was extremely effective in keeping Latino families from the central valley out of the park while allowing financially well off white people from the bay area and retired people in. The park chose to favor visitors based on who was willing to spend an inordinate amount of time on a computer, rather than any other more fair system (like very simply first come first served). The park reveled in the positive feedback it got from the traditional white, middle to upper class visitors regarding the

permit system, while designing public comment systems that will get NO COMMENTS from Latino, poor, working class families who visit the park and have no clue what PEPC is.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Tribal members should be able to visit the park for free with no permit and no reservation. Why is it just military and disabled? Its like the least the NPS should do after kicking them out if their home.”

Comment: “And the cost is probably prohibitive to some so there should be some kind of financial assistance programs that could be applied for or something like that. While I'm not wealthy myself I do know how to save up for things like a vacation!”

Accessible Facilities

Commenters noted the importance of having accessible infrastructure in the park, such as handicap parking lots, to allow for visitor experience. Commenters requested more places be accessible to visitors with disabilities. Commenters suggested additional elements that would improve accessibility, including guided exploration opportunities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “The best experience in Mariposa grove was the handicapped parking lot at the top of the trail. My father would not have been able to experience the grove if this had not been made accessible.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “I wish more places were more handicap accessible. I get that changes the wilderness, but when you have access issues, any accessibility makes such a difference.”

Comment: “Also as I get older, it is more challenging to get into the backcountry as I can't shoulder a 40 pound pack any longer. Enabling technology to improve access, or providing more and better options for guided exploration like for example through the High Sierra huts guided excursions.”

Comment: “Access is an issue. If your old and can't walk far it is very difficult to get to any services in the park such as restaurants, restrooms, stores etc. Better bus service, and more parking are needed.”

Comment: Topic Question 1: “Access to all parts of the valley for those with disabilities. Hiking trails included. In addition, more handicapped parking availability near restrooms at each trail.”

Opposition to Limits on Access

Commenters requested no limits on access to the park. Some commenter stated that the local population has minimal impacts compared to other visitors and should be allowed access to the park. They also noted that losing access to the park from previous management actions has negatively impacted their experience.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Nation parks should be open to all without having to plan ahead."

Comment: "You cannot deny access to local surrounding populations. Their impact is minimal compared to the tourists that come from a distance."

Equitable Access for Tribes

Commenters stated that the American Indian tribes should have access to the park for all activities, including ceremonies, and the planning process should ensure that they are engaged, communicated with, and their concerns are being heard.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "We support access to Yosemite for tribes for all activities, ceremonies, and preservation. Keep them at the table, listen to them and give them an active role in park management. We are the visitors, this was their home."

Comment; Topic Question 4: "I attended one of the virtual meetings and I support the team's stated priorities and goals overall, and really appreciate the opportunity to share comments and questions. I hope that efforts are being made to reach indigenous communities and really listen; and also to reach low-income and people of color who haven't had the chance to learn about or visit Yosemite, especially those who are California residents."

Issues: Park Enforcement and Park Staffing

Law Enforcement Presence and Interactions

Commenters stated they had negative interactions with law enforcement in the park, including drug checks of vehicles exiting the park on the 4th of July. One commenter requested that law enforcement is provided with additional training on when to use force.

Other commenters felt that law enforcement presence in the park was not enough, and that issues like off-trail use, resource damage, vehicle speeding, illegal campsites, illegal fires, and dogs in the backcountry and on trails needs to be addressed, as they take away from the visitor experience. Commenters suggested funds should go towards the hiring of more enforcement staff rather than infrastructure improvements.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 2: "2) ANY interaction with LEOs; they tend to be arrogant and needlessly aggressive in stopping people (I was stopped by an LEO for not using my left turn signal turning into the valley grocery parking lot. His attitude was gruff, arrogant, needlessly verbose) A great deal needs to be done to improve the attitude of LEOs in the park."

Comment: "Instead of building HUGE toilets, hire more Park Patrol to monitor the people."

Comment: "Can we have more Park Rangers patrolling the campsite and hiking trails? Can we have more clear signs where dogs are not allowed. Maybe some education on why dogs are not allowed? There has been an increase in the number of 'illegal' dogs on backcountry hiking trails."

I've seen them on the way to Cathedral Lakes and on the way to Glen Aulin. Could we educate park visitors that dogs bother wildlife, change wildlife patterns, carry diseases and parasites in the waste matter, trample fragile vegetation, chase small animals, contaminate water sources, bother other hikers, get lost, etc, I think it would help pet owners understand this rule.”

Comment: “We have been sad with the number of visitors trampling out in meadows and off trails, stepping over fences, climbing up areas (rocks under lower Yosemite Falls) where they put themselves at risk and sadly put rangers and rescuers in less-than-ideal situations. Seems to be a real increase in the number of dogs around the park- off leash, not being picked up after, on trails that say no pets. Seems to be a disregard for following the rules. Perhaps signage regarding animals should be more prevalent and in multiple locations.”

Comment: “Continue to arm and train Rangers in conflict resolution and when to use lethal force.”

Inadequate Staffing Other Than Enforcement

Commenters stated an overall satisfaction with park staff, but one issue of concern is inadequate park staffing across all areas of the park, from ranges to resource specialists. Commenters stated that printed information is a poor substitute for interpretive rangers. Commenters noted that some experiences, such as White Wolf Lodge and the Sierra Camps, are unable to operate because of staffing shortages.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “The NPS must increase park staff, rangers and resource specialists, to improve public contact and resource protection.”

Comment: “Yosemite is eliminating the live presentations and using printed information on posts - a poor substitute. Yosemite is eliminating interpretive rangers - what a shame!”

Comment: “In 2022, White Wolf Lodge and the High Sierra Camps did not open due to staffing shortage.”

Comment: “The worst parts? Staffing as I have been told is at 50% of what is needed. That leads to less services. For example, the grill next to the Curry grocery store was not open during one of our visits due to the lack of employees. For a long while the Seven Tents didn't serve anything but breakfast. They have added dinner but no lunch.”

Park Staff Behavior

Commenters expressed concerns with park staff, noting they feel there is not a sense of public service and they have witnessed concerning behavior.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “very noisy, drunk employees at Housekeeping and White Wolf”

Comment: "The biggest frustration is with the parkies. I do not think they- generally- have a sense of public service."

Staff Augmentation/Concessioners/Volunteers

Commenters provided suggestions on how park staffing issues can be addressed without NPS staff. One commenter noted they would like to see less reliance on park volunteers or concessioners and more on paid NPS staff.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Renew your agreement with the Inyo National Forest to assist in staffing the Mono Basin Visitor Center. Rangers staffing the facility in Lee Vining are able to enhance the visitor experience in Yosemite and the area. NPS staff provides much needed accurate info to visitors and the partner agencies staff of the east side. Staffing the VC takes pressure off of the limited staff at the entrance gate as well. Continuing the collaborative agreement with the Inyo also provides additional resources, i.e. beds, campsites, and office space for Yosemite staff; which may be critical in high snow years when Tuolumne opening is delayed. An agreement with the Inyo has provided 2 additional beds for Yosemite staff and office space throughout the summer and shoulder season. Yosemite staff at the Mono VC will be able to answer the 75% of questions about how to get to Yosemite in winter that will come in prior to the Tioga rd opening."

Comment: "I think more park rangers should be hired and less concessionaires."

Comment: "Less reliance on park volunteers and more paid staff. I know this is a funding problem. Our government needs to spend less on defense and more on public lands."

Comment: "If you get rid of the reservation system please hold the concessionaire accountable for hiring appropriate amounts of staffing. this helps the guest experience."

Staff Retention

Commenters noted concern about the ability to retain park staff due to a number of reasons, including the availability of housing in the surrounding area, and requested the park develop a plan to house employees. Other commenters noted that as staff have to take on multiple duties and deal with aggressive visitors, the resulting staff burnout and high staff turnover is a concern. Commenters noted a desire to have staff diversity reflect visitor diversity. Visitor use of staff facilities such as parking and showers was also noted as a concern.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Another impact that is too often overlooked is the toll overcrowding takes on the morale of NPS staff and others who work in the park. It is well documented that in recent years across the park service growth in visitation has occurred at a similar rate to declines in park staffing due to under-investment by Congress. This has left parks like Yosemite with less and less personnel to oversee growing numbers of visitors. For instance, between 2011 and 2019 park

visitation increased nationally by 17% while over the same time the Park Service lost 16% of its staff capacity, or approximately 3,500 positions. As a result, NPS staff and other employees working in the park are forced to take on duties outside of their job descriptions and expertise. This often results in high levels of staff burn out, turn over, and impact to park employee's mental health. This situation is only worsened by the parallel crises facing Yosemite and surrounding community relating to high cost of living and the lack of availability of affordable housing.”

Comment: “Staffing capacity is a critical component of any true management of visitors. And yet even when significant funding is available to hire more staffing, Park officials have frequently pointed to a lack of gateway community rental housing that is needed in order to actually expand the Park staff. There are other logistical challenges such as the seasonal boom and pause of tourism use - making for seasonal staff positions that may not match the financial needs of many job seekers.”

Comment: “Worried about how to attract and retain a diverse staff that reflect the populations that are visiting the park. Concerned about cost of housing for employees in the area.”

Comment: “worst, visitors filling up resident employee parking areas, and using employee facilities such as showers, kitchens and laundry rooms”

Comment: “The pre-reservation stories of frustrated visitors taking out their dissatisfaction on park employees are sometimes appalling. While I am thankful to have avoided most of these negative situations personally, I've heard stories of people trying to help with traffic control being screamed and cursed at or spit at. I even heard one story of someone throwing their drink at a park employee dousing her in the middle of her shift. While the most egregious stories have to do with frustrated motorists, there are many more situations where employees might experience microaggressions - glaring, eye-rolling, and worse - to say nothing of the shuttle bus driver that was stopped by a human chain of people across the street, and pulled from her bus because the shuttle buses were over-capacity, and people were frustrated at not being able to get to their destinations. The people that I know who have worked in the park are exemplary when facing these negative situations. However, I believe that the park has some responsibility to these people, and future employees, to avoid putting them in those positions as much as possible. Protecting employees also preserves part of the park experience because unhappy employees are less able to provide excellent experiences for the visiting public.”

Emergency Response

Commenters noted concern that there are inadequate staffing levels for emergency response activities. One commenter suggested that the park charge visitors who are rescued.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “The park is short on employees and emergency personnel. As an employee at the Glacier Point shop, I was impacted by the inundation of medical emergencies in a remote setting due to the sheer number of guests. My coworkers and I did our best but were not equipped for this. This was during 2021 when there were daily quotas for entry.”

Comment: “From what I know, the park does not have the staff or resources to accommodate much increase in emergencies. And the traffic on roads and trails could impact the ability of first responders to move quickly.”

Comment: “Stop rescuing people without charging them for the rescue. You can't fix stupid but you can charge for it when you take up good peoples time and endanger them just because of the stupidity and selfishness of others.”

Issues: Entrance Stations – Queues and Fees

Entrance Station Queues

Commenters expressed frustration about the lines at entrance stations and said the long wait times negatively impact their visitor experience. Some commenters said that the wait times at gates are longer with the reservation system. However, one commenter said that the wait times prior to the reservation system being implemented were longer. Commenters specifically referenced the south entrance and the Oakhurst entrance as areas where wait times are an issue.

Commenters had specific concerns about long entrance station queues. Commenters worried about the exhaust and emissions produced from idling cars waiting at the entrance stations. One commenter was concerned about the lack of restrooms for visitors waiting in the entry line. Another commenter said that waiting in line stresses horses inside trailers that are being driven into the park, particularly in hot weather.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I don't think they have been managed very well in the past. By limiting access to those with reservations has created a huge traffic issue at the entrance gates. Too much time is taken with each car.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “They have, at least for now, rescinded the visitor reservation system, which in my view was a complete debacle. Waiting for HOURS just to get in the gate discourages people from enjoying the park. I stopped going during the reservation time....to say nothing of a good mile and a half of idling vehicles causing far more pollution than a car that is able to move. As good as my horses are on the trail, standing in an immobilized trailer for an hour and a half stresses them out....by the time you get in the park, there is precious little time left to ride.”

Comment: “However, the traffic congestion and long lines at the entrance station often ruin what should be a pleasant experience. Without a doubt the worst part of visiting Yosemite is getting through the long lines at the entrance gates and then trying to find a parking space.”

Comment: “The worst part is the traffic. I recently spent 3 hours in the line to enter the Oakhurst entrance. The El Portel entrance was closed but the team at gate at the Oakhurst gate didn't seem to realize that or care. Weve seen agents point pass holders to a special lane to get in and that would have helped but the just handled one car a time. Its was backed up to Fish Camp. Need to de better”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The reservation system seemed to help with congestion once in the park. However, the lines seem to be much longer at the entrance gates.”

Entrance Station Fees

Commenters provided feedback on fees assessed at entrance stations. Commenters said that the entrance fee is too high for some people and can pose a burden for lower-income families. A commenter pointed out that lower-income visitors often cannot afford to stay in the park or nearby, so they cannot take advantage of the multiple days of access the entrance fee provides. One commenter disliked that they had to pay an additional three dollars to drive through the park. One commenter said the entrance fee was too high but could be justified by the free shuttle buses.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "The entrance fee is a bit high for some people, and these are often the same people who cannot afford to stay at the park, or even nearby, so they can't take advantage of the multi-day feature of the entrance fee."

Comment: "For my husband and me, holders of lifetime passes, the entry fee is not an issue. But I'm concerned about low-income families for whom it's a hardship to pay the escalating entry fees. I would like our national parks to be available to everyone, regardless of income."

Comment: "Paying an additional \$3 to get a permit to just drive through the park."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "The entrance fee to the park is a little too expensive, but I guess is alright considering we enjoy free shuttle buses."

Issues: Natural Resources

Impacts to Natural Resources from Visitation

Commenters noted the importance of the natural resources at the park, including the giant sequoias, and the negative impact that human-caused disturbance have on their visitor experience. They noted that people going off trail, leaving trash, campfire smoke, impacts from hose use, impacts from dogs on trails, and feeding the wildlife are all creating negative impacts.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: "Barriers are crowds, traffic, exhaust, trash, swimming with sunblock scum, knowing that cars pollute roadways and the stormwater pollutes the streams and rivers. We need to limit vehicles to a sustainable level."

Comment: Topic Question 3: "3- Feeding wildlife- observed people feeding squirrels at the top of Nevada Falls, one gorgeous and fat squirrel was so sneaky that managed to breach my pack while resting, grabbing a free meal (my trail mix), funny but it explains learned behaviors from negligent visitors about this important aspect."

Comment: "What can be done to mitigate spring flower growth at Northside drive and the open meadow with Church Rock access. The variety of blackened Susan's that grow here are trampled by ambitious selfie taking."

Comment: “The ever increasing amount of toilet paper and human feces adjacent to the trails in the Yosemite wilderness is truly disgusting”

Comment: “I love dogs, but I don't think they belong on the paths or trails in Yosemite. I see them more and more dogs or the little plastic bags they use to pick up poop that they leave it beside the trail.”

Air Pollution

Commenters noted that there is a problem with air pollution in the park and suggested the park implement measures that reduce car idling and require all NPS and concessioner vehicles to be electric powered or powered by natural gas or hydrogen. They also suggested this issue be solved by replacing traditional open fire pits with solo smokeless bonfire pits and paying for this improvement through increasing the price of wood sold in the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Problem: Air pollution. Solution: Move everyone into the Valley with two lanes of traffic, taking them directly to their assigned parking spot so they can turn off their engines as soon as possible. All NPS and Concessionaire vehicles should either be Electric or powered by Natural Gas or Hydrogen. (Disposal of EV batteries will eventually cause significant environmental problems. Current gasoline-fueled engines can be relatively cheap and easily converted to Natural Gas or Hydrogen.)”

Comment: “Problem: Air pollution. Investigate replacing all the traditional open fire pits with 'Solo Smokeless Bonfire Fire Pits. I (Smokeless Fire Pit at Amazon.com) These smokeless fire pits can be financed by adding an additional 25¢ to every bundle of wood sold by the concessionaires.”

Suggested Monitoring and Mitigation

Commenters required that the planning process provide information on the funding that will be dedicated to monitoring resource conditions in the park. One commenter suggested that in order to reduce the impact of oil and other fluids from cars, visitors should have assigned parking spaces that are slightly sloped so fluids can drain into a catch basin and be skimmed off the top.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “We believe the park has taken major steps forward by setting visitor capacity to protect river values. The Merced and Tuolumne River Plans have established capacities to ensure that desired conditions of keystone and sensitive resources are maintained at set thresholds. As a group dedicated to concerns regarding national parks, we encourage the planning process to include past monitoring data regarding these current indicators and standards and any actions the park has taken after thresholds have been exceeded as part of the public process. In addition, we encourage the planning process to disclose park operation funding levels to ensure monitoring is being conducted and critical resource conditions are being met.”

Comment: Topic Question 2: “2. Problem: Automobile fluids seeping into the ground and down to the water table. It is destroying the soil and eventually reaching the water table below. Dripping fluids is not done on purpose; it is just the nature of engines of all kinds. If someone were to purposely pour oil, transmission fluid, and hydraulic fluid onto the ground, they would be severely fined or worse. Solution: Assign everyone a place to park in an asphalt parking lot that is slightly sloped. This way, all the water will drain into a catch basin where the oils can be skimmed off the top. (All parking lots in Florida are required to be sloped into a catch basin.)”

Issues: Economic Impacts

Pressures from Commercial Interests

Commenters stated they felt park management decisions prioritized commercial interests due to pressures from commercial interests and concessioners. They stated this has potential to increase crowding and cause harm to park resources.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Yosemite does not exist to support the local economy. The local economy exists in support of Yosemite. Any comments by local businesses that a Visitor Access Management Plan would negatively impact their financial viability should be summarily dismissed and not considered. The mission of NPS/Yosemite is to protect and preserve Paradise for everyone; not to protect and preserve Profits for a limited few.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “After joining into the first scoping session with the Gateway Partners, I was annoyed by a common theme that “the park should do something about this- - more parking, more access, no reservation system, etc” from the group focused on protecting their financial interests. I feel the gateway communities need to somehow realize that unlimited development does not guarantee unlimited access, just because restrictions in the park “hurt their business”. I think it will be important for the team to make sure we manage for the long run with intact and unharmed non-human resources regardless of the economic impact to those whom I feel are using the park for their financial gain.”

Comment: “I understand that outlying communities have continued to expand visitor facilities (hotels, etc..) and are lobbying to totally open up the park to unlimited visitors so that their investments will become profitable. However, it is NOT the responsibility of the National Park Service to guarantee the profits of area investors! By allowing unlimited visitation and not protecting the park, it is abdicating its responsibility to be a “Good Stewart” of the beauty that we know as Yosemite National Park. I understand the nature of political pressure in our current “profit-driven world”. However, caving in to these political pressures will end up cheapening and destroying the very thing the Park Service has been charged to protect.”

Comment: “When looking at the number of beds currently available in gateway hotels, short term rentals, camping, and other lodging properties located outside of the park it is obvious that, for many years now, visitor lodging opportunities in gateway communities outside the park have far exceeded Yosemite’s vehicle carrying capacity. Despite this reality, communities outside of the park continue to greenlight more and more lodging projects based on a mistaken belief that business decisions to operate new properties in a saturated market will always and irrevocably be rewarded with unfettered access to the park no matter the cost. NPS should use this planning

process to make clear to relevant elected county officials and other gateway entities that unrestricted access to the park is not a viable option, and the profitability of private business entities outside of the park does not take precedence over the park service's central mission to protect park resources.”

Comment: “I also noticed a lot of comments from nearby communities that reservations impact their businesses. But protecting Yosemite should be the guiding principle, not maximizing revenue for outside businesses”

Potential Economic Impacts in Gateway Communities

Commenters noted that park management decisions may have economic impacts on gateway communities. In particular, many commenters expressed concerns that reservations and other management actions have led (and would continue to lead) to a decrease in tourism revenue in gateway communities. Commenters suggested management actions to alleviate negative economic impacts, such as allowing vehicle traffic on Tioga Road without reservations, permitting park entry with proof of lodging in gateway communities, having cars park in the gateway communities, adding avalanche tunnels so that Tioga Road can open earlier, and restricting the number of vehicles that can enter the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Additionally thru traffic from the West to the East should be allowed without reservation. HWY 120 is a critical access route for tourists to get from the central valley to the eastside and then back again. The reservation system put in place during the pandemic dramatically reduced the number of tourists we had in the small local communities as the travel time to drive around was too great. This really hurt our economies, to avoid this a vehicle should be allowed to drive thru Yosemite without the need for a reservation.”

Comment: “9) Equity for lodging operators outside the park gate should be considered, such as methods of providing them SOME permits for their guests automatically, vs NONE that is currently being provided. As a community we are unfairly helping to put lodging businesses outside the park out of business, while businesses inside the park are harmed (because guests actually think they need a permit, so overall demand is suppressed, even inside the park), but they are not harmed as much as businesses outside the park.”

Comment: “The imposition of a reservation system to access Yosemite National Park is likely to have unfortunate repercussions for Tuolumne, Mariposa, and Mono counties. Limiting access to the park through a reservation system will reduce the number of visitors overall. This has the potential to negatively impact the general fund revenues for the counties that serve as gateways to the park through the reduction of transient occupancy taxes and sales taxes. This is especially impactful on these counties because parts of that revenue go to providing necessary services (Roads, Fire, Emergency services) to the tourists that the park attracts to the area. It is our hope that the NPS will seek to implement solutions that support the health and safety of park visitors, the continued protection of the park itself and its resources, and the counties that are supported in part by the tourism the park generates.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “A reservation system similar to the one that has been in place in Yosemite for the last three years is damaging to the gateway communities that rely on outside

visitation to Yosemite National Park. As a resident of a gateway community, I see the impacts of limited visitation to the people that live here and rely on visitors to Yosemite to support their families. When I speak of the people impacted - its not just business owners, its servers in our restaurants, tour guides with our tour operators, housekeepers at hotels and retail associates in our stores. Fewer people in our gateways mean fewer shifts for those people who are most reliant on incoming tourism dollars to make ends meet. Those are the people most hurt by this reservation system locally. I know some that have chosen to move away from the region because they have not been able to make ends meet due to losing shifts or losing their work altogether.”

Comment: “We feel strongly that the reservation alternative being contemplated by Yosemite National Park Service will negatively impact communities whose economies depend upon visitors to Yosemite National Park. A permanent implementation of the entry reservation system will drastically reduce the number of visitors allowed into the park during the economically critical peak season (May- September).”

Issues: Wilderness

Wilderness Permitting System

Commenters expressed concern about the wilderness permit system with some noting that this system is a barrier to their ability to visit. There was concern that all permits are reserved too quickly, and that people may not use them or buy more needed; and also concern that you need to pay to be in the lottery and still may not get a spot. To address some of these concerns, commenters suggested raising the price of permits. Commenters also noted concern about having to get to the park before permit stations close to pick up their permit for the next day or not being able to obtain permits from a ranger in person, versus online. Commenters also noted concern that having to plan their trips so far in advance with the permit system detracts from their experience.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Not real crazy about the new wilderness permit system. For instance people on the first day for June permits instantly fill all the permits for Glen Aulin. If you are a few minutes late you lose as I know people are buying more permits than they need for multiple days. It happens way too soon. I suspect and you know how many actual people use the permit and how many are not used so it gets abused. RAISE THE PRICE BIG TIME to stop the abuse. Yes you can get a walk in permit a few weeks in advance, and I have been going to Glen Aulin for 30 years and never had an issue with a permit. Under the new system with the abuse I have been forced to go through the walk-in permit process more than I care to do.”

Comment: “The main barrier for our family, and for many others like us, is the prohibitive Recreation.gov W.P. system. We all greatly value the flexibility to enter the Park on shorter notice than the Recreation.gov system allows. We greatly valued the experience of going into a ranger station to see where we could enter, on the same day! We do not appreciate being required to use the laborious, and often inefficient online Wilderness Permit system, and having to plan our Park experiences far into the future.”

Comment: “For wilderness permits, the \$10 lottery fee even when no spot is awarded is exceptionally burdensome. This strongly discourages even attempting to visit Yosemite wilderness.”

Comment: “Worrying about getting to the park before the wilderness permit stations close to pick up a reserved permit for the next day.”

Limited Access to Wilderness

Commenters felt that the park directs people into certain areas or trails to limit access to the wilderness and disapproved of this practice.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “Trail work. Let the people access the park. stop forcing people into certain areas because you purposely limit access to the wilderness.”

Wilderness Experiences

Commenters noted that the wilderness experience is an important component of their visitor experience, with front country congestion detracting from the experience. Some specific experiences noted were winter snowshoeing on the south rim and utilizing summer trails.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 1: “A wilderness experience, whether day-use or overnighting, is most important to me. This does not necessarily mean being alone on a trail, but front-country congestion is often a noticeable detracting factor to a positive park experience.”

Comment: Topic Question 1: “Back country experiences are most important, including winter snowshoeing on the South Rim and all summer trails.”

*Comment: Topic Question 1: “Wilderness, *wild* wildlife, quiet spaces in nature are the most important, and are what you were created to protect.”*

Comment: Topic Question 1: “I enjoy the wilderness experience in the context of the beautiful environment of Yosemite National Park. I like to relax and let my mind wander over the forces which have combined to bring us this Park. By that I mean both the geologic natural forces, and the visionary forces of the Muirs, Mathers, Roosevelts, etc. who preserved this Park for us to enjoy.”

Management of Wilderness Qualities

Commenters provided suggestions for changes to wilderness experiences at the park. Commenters had opposing views regarding the High Sierra Camps. Comments included suggestions to allow access to High Sierra Camps, while other comments requested not having developed areas in the backcountry at all, specifically noting the High Sierra Camps.

Commenters additionally suggested limiting the use of helicopters to life-threatening emergencies (not using them for routine maintenance and firefighting).

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Please bring back access to the High Country camps!”

Comment: “Limit use of helicopter rescues to truly life-threatening injuries. Do not use them for trail maintenance projects or fire fighting in wilderness areas. Obey the letter and intent of the Wilderness Act.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I believe that it's well past time to get rid of the High Sierra camps. The concept of having developed areas in the backcountry is archaic and outmoded. It might have made some sense when there were fewer than half as many people in the US as there are now, and when backpacking equipment was cumbersome...but at a time when the Sierran backcountry is increasingly crowded and when California faces continuing threats of wildfire and drought, the camps make a huge and unnecessary impact on fragile backcountry areas such as Sunrise and Vogelsang. They also serve as an “attractive nuisance” for humans and wildlife alike, concentrating all kinds of use in small areas. Water and septic systems in the backcountry?? Linens? Hot showers? Total travesty.”

Wilderness Condition

Commenters noted concerns with current conditions in wilderness including having high encounter rates, the overuse of pack animals, and inexperienced users ignoring wilderness ethics. One commenter requested the park consider no more pack animals on all trails in the backcountry.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “astronomical encounter rates in designated Wilderness - - upper Yosemite Valley, top of Falls trail, some areas accessible from Tuolumne Meadows.”

Comment: “WORST 1. Overuse of pack animals in the northern wilderness, particularly at Benson Lake, 2. Inexperienced backcountry users coming in by horses and ignoring wilderness ethics. We witnessed people using soap in Tilden Lake and horses overrunning the meadow on the shore. 3. Being forced off the trail by a large pack train on the trail between Lember Dome and Glen Aulin.”

Comment: Topic Question 2: “2. Consider no more pack animals on all trails in the backcountry.”

“Donahue Quota” System

One commenter stated that the “Donahue Quota” has not changed total permit allocations to affected trailheads and has created more impacts than benefits. This quota system has not changed the number of users leaving the park by way of the John Muir Trail. It was suggested that the park address this by creating a separate John Muir Trail trailhead at Tuolumne.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “The Donohue “Quota” This is actually a proxy for examination of the greater quota system for wilderness permits and some fundamental aspects of wilderness management, from the hiker's perspective. Bu I will start with the specific. In early 2015, the Park through the Wilderness chief implemented what has become known as the “Donohue Quota”, a rule under which only a limited number of Yosemite Wilderness trailhead permits included permission to leave the park via Donahue Pass. As Wilderness Manager Ed Dunlavey explained at the time, the purpose of the restriction was twofold: To limit impacts on overused sections of trail, i.e Lyell Canyon and Sunrise, and to allow more use by hikers staying within the park by limiting numbers leaving the Park by the John Muir Trail. The thought was the long distance John Muir Trail hikers were limiting the trailhead opportunities of other hikers who were seeking to spend more time in the Park, in effect hogging all the Happy Isles, Glacier Point, Sunrise and Lyell Permits to hike the JMT. This approach has worked considerable mischief. To some of us, it was apparent from its inception that the “Donahue Quota” rationale was an internal contradiction: How does increasing in-park hiker days decrease in-park impacts. The total permit allocations to the affected trailheads were not changed at all. The only adjustment was to the numbers of hikers on those permits who were expected to leave the Park by the JMT and those who would spend their entire trip within the park.”

Comment: “I would also encourage you to complete the process of establishing the true JMT trail head, its Northern terminus, at Tuolumne. There is overwhelming evidence that the true founders of the High Mountain Route that became the JMT intended, and felt deeply, that Tuolumne was its true starting place. It was only an accident of history and politics that established the official start in the Valley, but even then it was at Mirror Lake and up Tenaya Canyon, and not at Happy Isles and up the Merced. I will spare you the full dissertation, but would welcome the opportunity at the appropriate time to present the full case establishing the JMT trailhead at Tuolumne. It has also not escaped my notice that the Park has been moving in this direction for some time now, steadily increasing the Donohue trailhead allocation to Tuolumne (now at 2 to 1 over Happy Isles) and never having installed a JMT trailhead sign at Happy Isles. I encourage you to complete the process: it would solve much of the problem of degradation of the Sunrise section, would it not? In turn, designated use should be examined and considered for wider application in other appropriate areas of the Yosemite wilderness. It is expected that such areas would be few, but at least the intensely used Sunrise/Lyell Canyon corridor should be included.”

Issues: International Visitation

Barriers to International Visitation

Commenters noted the unique burden the reservation system can put on international visitors. Many commenters spoke about how international visitors need to make their travel plans well in advance of the reservations being released, adding uncertainty to their itineraries. Commenters asked the park to consider an entry permit exception for international visitors since it could be their only chance to visit. They also asked the park to ensure there are enough permits for international visitors to come to Yosemite. One commenter said that international visitors typically spend fewer days in the park, leading to less of an impact on natural resources. Requests were made to increase communication on the reservation system and other restrictions so that international visitors can adequately plan, and tour operators can manage

expectations. Commenters also noted that tour companies with international clients struggle with the reservation system, which creates an economic burden. One commenter asked for better communication about the park's features to international visitors, including information about ephemeral waterfalls.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: "As a local I've learned how to "negotiate" problems pretty well; when to go, where to go, etc. But for one-time visitors, especially foreign visitors, I think it can be overwhelming. I've met people who came to this country to see our national parks, only to be turned away or forced to leave early, because of lack of information about reservations and crowding. I think this is tragic."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Although the entry permit has been beneficial for those of us who know about it and who can plan ahead for it, I worry about those visitors from around the world who might arrive at the gates for their one and only opportunity to see our magnificent Yosemite, only to be turned away because they weren't aware that they needed an entry permit. During the periods when entry permits are required, I wonder if an exception can be made for those coming from other countries, who might only visit once in their lives?"

Comment: "Also, there's nothing listed anywhere on the website to let visitors know that all the waterfalls are ephemeral. This also causes disappointment, when visitors have come a long, long way to see them."

Comment: "Reservation systems with short booking windows and inconsistent procedures are not workable for international travelers and international tour operators, many of whom plan for their travel a full year in advance. To be very blunt, any reservation system is a hurdle and leads to a lot of extra work on our end, and a lot of additional communication between us and our clients."

Comment: Topic Question 5: "Our customers make the decision to travel 1 to 2 years before the actual travel period. For good reasons (prices, availability, security of planning), the booking is usually made between six to twelve months before the trip. At this time, it must be guaranteed that the trip can be carried out as the customer wishes. Main attractions must therefore be reliably accessible, especially because the itinerary is determined at the time of booking, thus with a large lead time, and there is thus little room for spontaneity to shift activities during the trip."

Fees for International Visitors

Commenters suggested that the park charge international visitors and tour groups higher fees since they do not pay taxes in the United States. One commenter proposed that the extra fees collected from international visitors could be used to pay for an expanded bus system.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "In Europe, foreigners are charged a lot more to enter national parks than local citizens. I think it should be the same in the USA, American citizens pay so much in taxes and yet are charged the same as foreigners."

Comment: “Since all Americans are paying for the park already through their taxes, how about having a different price for people that aren’t Americans like they do in other countries. Maybe this additional income could help subsidize and expanded bus system.”

Priority for United States Taxpayers

Commenters asked for the park to prioritize United States taxpayers in the reservation system, including for campgrounds. Commenters argued that the park is too crowded and that taxpayers should have priority in access.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “When I have camped in the campgrounds in the past, I noticed that a great many campers were from foreign countries. I believe that AMERICANS should have priority in getting campground reservations. We pay for these parks and should have priority in the reservation system.”

Comment: “I believe residents of the USA should have priority in booking campsites and day use passes. I’ve met several families from around the world while in Yosemite and I love that, BUT, it’s unbelievably crowded nowadays and our national parks are supported by citizen tax dollars. It’s very unfair that someone from Austria on a computer can book a campsite or day use pass just as easily as USA residents. It’s like trying to buy a house in California and getting outbid by a Chinese investor.”

Comment: “Have a priority for US citizens and only allow other Nationalities in the Park if there is room.”

Issues: Cultural Resources

Appreciation for Cultural Resources and Programs

Commenters expressed appreciation for the park’s cultural resources and the unique experiences they provide to visitors. Commenters noted the importance of historic preservation in the park along with new and continued cultural and historical programs. Specific areas the commenters mentioned enjoying included the Ansel Adams Gallery, the visitor center, and the Ahwahanee Hotel. Commenters worried about cultural sites being “loved to death.”

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 2: “Best parts are the historic preservation and renovation of original buildings, upkeep of history and new cultural and historical programs.”

Comment: “I also enjoy cultural, art and architecture, ie The Ansel Adams Gallery, The Visitors Center, and The Ahwahanee Hotel.”

Comment: “Yosemite is totally unique among the National Parks and special destinations in this country. Nowhere else contains the history, traditions, opportunities, combinations of opportunities, and breadth of experiences that Yosemite embodies”

Comment: "The worst part of an experience in YNP is finding the landscape and resources "loved to death" or desecrated such as historical resources being manipulated or taken."

American Indian Tribes

Commenters expressed the importance of having a park experience that is authentic and respectful toward Indigenous peoples and locals. Commenters asked for the park to pay tribute to Indigenous peoples who have stewarded the land in the past and present. One commenter worried that the current management of the park would limit access for American Indians.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "WITH YOUR RULES JOHN MUIR OR NATIVE AMERICANS COULD NOT USE THE PARK."

Comment: "It is important to me that Yosemite National Park gives an authenticity that benefits everyone. An experience that pays a respectful tribute toward local, indigenous stewards and honors historical relationships."

Cultural Importance to Rock Climbing Community

One commenter noted the cultural and historical importance of the park to the rock climbing community.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "As climbers, we want to climb classic routes, push our sport, and do so in a historically important and beautiful setting. In addition to its status as a world-class climbing destination, Yosemite plays a central role in North American climbing lore. Unique not only for its rock formations from the big walls of El Capitan to the towers of Tuolumne, Yosemite is also continually at the cutting edge of modern climbing, from the first ascent of the Salathé Wall in 1961 to the first free ascent of The Dawn Wall in 2015."

Reservation - Challenges

Overall Concerns

Commenters expressed concern with the inability to make spontaneous reservations and identified competition for reservations as a barrier, and some commenters stated the reservation system prevented them from accessing the park. Some visitors noted that they were not aware of the need to obtain a reservation in advance, while others worried that the process to obtain a reservation would be overly burdensome. Additionally, many commenters expressed that a lack of availability and bots designed to book reservations prevented them from obtaining reservations. Some commenters noted issues the reservation system poses for motorcyclists,

whose travel plans may be weather dependent, as well as for local residents and those who wish to pass through the park to access eastside communities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I enter the park on a motorcycle. It is hard for me to make an appointment to enter all the parks due to weather restraints. Motorcycle entry should not be time/appointment regulated.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “If you move forward with the restrictive reservation system, please allow for locals to cut through, or family to cut through to see us without reservation. Can you imagine having a child with a chronic health condition that affects your daily life, then not being able to get her to her grandparents house because you never know when she'll feel good enough to do the drive, and there's some crowd control system in place on the days when you could make it? Its like having to make a reservation to drive across the Golden gate bridge, not knowing what day to choose in advance, then being forced to drive all the way around to the bay Bridge instead, with a sick kid in the car.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “This is my answer to “4. What barriers get in the way of enjoying or visiting Yosemite?” Your web form switches the order of questions 4 and 5 as they are presented elsewhere. As a Tuolumne County resident who moved to the county to be closer to recreation opportunities in the Sierra—and especially in Yosemite—the biggest barriers I've faced have been the reservation systems for getting into the park. Rather than simply being able to drive to Yosemite when I have a free day and when the weather and, more recently, my health are cooperating, I first have to figure out whether a reservation system is currently in place and, if so, what it requires of me. When there is a reservation system in place, barriers include (1) the amount of advance planning I have to do to enter the park in my own county of residence, (2) the possibility that I missed the window for making a reservation for the day I would like to visit, (3) limitations on my availability to seek a reservation through the online system on the precise date and time it opens for the next set of reservations, and (4) intense online competition for reservations that can prevent me from getting one altogether.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “Question 5: The primary barrier is if you can't get a reservation to stay there or get a day pass when you are able to go. Again.. That can come down to someone's server or computer just not being fast enough on a click.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “The reservation system has ruined my experience. I live nearby. I like being able to go hike outside of the valley in the summer and winter. I didn't get to go once during the reservation because the sold out so fast. Same goes for the horrible lottery for half dome. It used to be easy to get a permit to hike it, but I haven't had the ability to do so for 10 years”

Gate Access Challenges and Congestion

Commenters noted difficulties verifying their reservations at the entrance gate, resulting in increased congestion at entrance stations. They noted challenges with poor cellular service and with groups entering under a single reservation in different cars, as well as an inability to transfer reservations. Commenters felt that the reservation system has increased traffic in less busy parts of the park and failed to adequately reduce congestion.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "I also saw people who purchased a permit, but couldn't pull it up from their email as they came in because of poor reception in that area. If there was a list that park employees could check, that would be helpful."

Comment: "All we would ask is for a simpler system at the gate for groups traveling under a single reservation. Obviously the person who made the reservation cannot be in three cars at once. We would like it to be simpler to get in without having to convince the ranger we are allowed."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Day entry permits seems to almost get it right, but not quite there. If the goal is to reduce cars inside the park, it doesn't make sense that tickets are not transferrable. Why would it matter to the park if it's me going in or my husband going in, if it's the same amount of cars at the end of the day? As a result sometimes I buy _two_ tickets, one under each name, as contingency. Which is awful and wasteful, but what else can I do if I need the flexibility? I can't even return my ticket for a refund so someone else can take it, which also doesn't make sense. Makes me feel like I'm paying those \$2 to Booz-Allen for not finishing the job of making a system that makes logical sense."

Comment: "In fact, I think that the management strategies have only made it worse in recent years. In particular, at the east end of 120 (towards Lee Vining), traffic and congestion have noticeably increased since the pandemic started, and the reservation system has been instituted. Prior to the reservation system, we never saw the lines of cars that we do now. Putting the eastern 120 gate under the same restrictions as the valley was a mistake."

Reservation - Benefits

Benefits of the Reservation System

Commenters noted that the reservation system(s) previously used at Yosemite National Park were successful in reducing traffic congestion, crowding, and the negative effects of crowding, such as increased littering and damage to natural resources, and improving the visitor experience. Commenters noted the ease of using the system and obtaining a reservation ahead of a visit to the park. Commenters additionally noted that it was possible to access the park outside of peak hours if people were not able to or did not want to obtain a reservation. Other commenters noted that the ability to pass through the park on Tioga Road was a benefit of the reservation system(s) that were previously used at the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Reservation system. I've been to the park several times in a non reservation environment and also several times with reservations in place. The difference in enjoyability is so vast. With reservations in place, the park is actually enjoyable. If there are no reservations in place this year, I likely will not come and will select other locations for my outdoor adventures. It makes me sad that it has come to that"

Comment: Topic Question 3: "The reservation system was absolutely fantastic. It was easy to obtain, and guaranteed that the park could be enjoyed the way it was intended. Going forward, there should be no changes for the reservation system. Let the park be enjoyed properly."

Comment: “The reservation system has been a godsend. It’s made my time in the park much smoother and more enjoyable. I can’t imagine a world where we go back to unregulated masses swarming the park. Most of us plan these trips for months in advance, and it would be absolutely brutal to have it be more crowded than it already is.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The peak hour reservation system is a practice or strategy that Yosemite National Park has implemented to effectively address crowding and congestion in the park. With an increasing number of visitors over the years, it has become increasingly difficult to balance accessibility with preservation of the park’s natural resources. The peak hour reservation system addresses this problem by allowing a controlled number of visitors during peak hours, reducing congestion and ensuring that everyone can enjoy the park’s natural beauty without overcrowding. This system also helps to preserve the park’s natural resources and wildlife by reducing the impact of human activity during peak hours. The system also provides a better experience for visitors by allowing them to plan their visit and reserve a spot in advance, which can be especially beneficial for those with mobility issues, families with small children or anyone who wants to avoid long wait times. This way, visitors can have a more enjoyable and peaceful experience, while also protecting the park’s resources. The peak hour reservation system is an effective strategy used by the park to address crowding and congestion. It allows visitors to have a better experience in the park, while also preserving the natural resources and wildlife for future generations. It is a win-win situation, visitors and park can benefit from it.”

Topic Question 3: “The bus system, reservation system to limit # of visitors in the park at a time. I realize there is no easy fix for the issue.”

Elements: Shuttles

Increasing Shuttle Use

Commenters noted that shuttles have been effective in reducing traffic congestion and suggested that private vehicle use in all or parts of the park be limited or restricted and shuttles be used to bus day use visitors or all visitors into the park or Valley. Commenters suggested that access via shuttle be required during peak visitation times. Some commenters suggested park staff look to Zion National Park as an example. Commenters suggested that additional parking areas should be constructed outside of the park to allow visitors to park their cars and board a shuttle.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I suggest you study how they manage Zion. I visited this past September and it was the best! They don’t allow cars at all in the main section. Everyone rides the bus. It’s wonderful.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “Private vehicles are the top barrier to the enjoyment of Yosemite. By eliminating private vehicle traffic, the park by could implement a much more efficient and eco-friendly shuttle system. By operating shuttles and eliminating private vehicle traffic, all visitors could have the opportunity to enter and enjoy the park by shuttle, on foot, or on bicycle. Congested traffic, idling vehicles, and overflowing parking lots would be completely eliminated with this model. Access to the park would not be restricted at all, unlike with the reservation

system. Please develop and implement accessible, efficient shuttle busses for all visitors, and eliminate private vehicle traffic to ensure the enjoyment of the park by all.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Another effective strategy not yet used I believe, would be to require at least day visitors to enter via shuttle buses from gateway communities; this could be expensive and I think has had considerable resistance, but t some point it may be needed. It would help a lot.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I suggest expanding the shuttle service and bar vehicles from entering on weekends and holidays”

Comment: “A recent past Secretary of the Interior promoted a vision of truly inspiring and desirable high-tech shuttle systems enabling private vehicles to be parked outside of Yosemite Valley or even outside of the Park, with such desirable shuttles being so fast, attractive, and functional that visitors would WANT to ride them (such as the Yellow Buses in Yellowstone rank as highly desirable and iconic). In the past, some county boards of supervisors and the Congressman opposed making people get out of the cars. Now, this is an opportunity to consider out-of-Valley parking based upon a different question. Could more people be distributed appropriately in a highly desirable manner to various destinations within Yosemite Park if Silicon Valley tech-type solutions were put to work to create a world-class visitor delivery (shuttle) system that people literally would beg to take? CSERC believes it is time to revisit the creation of possible out-of-Valley parking sites at Foresta, near Glacier Point Road, at El Portal or to consider other potential sites, so that attractive Park shuttles would thrill visitors with glass-roofed scenic views and options for naturalist or destination updates as they ride into the Park. Most important, it would free them from traffic jams and air quality impacts caused by congestion from private vehicles.”

Opposition to Tour Buses

Commenters suggested that shuttle buses be used instead of tour buses at certain locations (or in the entire park) or expressed opposition to tours because they contribute to crowding. They noted concern with the noise from tour operations as well as the impact to visitor experience when there is an influx of visitors from a tour bus. It was suggested that tour buses not be permitted in the Tunnel View parking lot and a dedicated tour route be established for these vehicles.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: ““The reservations really made a huge difference, as did banning tour buses. I realize buses also help to reduce individual car traffic but think it might be great to limit the # of tours on any given day too.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “4) Allowing tour busses into the Tunnel View parking lot. Bus drivers are arrogant, blowing their very loud horns incessantly, blocking tunnel traffic as they try to get into the lot and make maneuvering impossible for cars. Tour buses should be banned from Tunnel View. A possible solution would be to ban tour buses and then institute a route for shuttle buses (fewer and regularly scheduled) to carry tour bus visitors to Tunnel View at a later time. This use of shuttle buses at Tunnel View would contribute to an overall reduction of congestion.”

Comment: "A shuttle system also means prohibiting day-use tour bus operators from Yosemite Valley. When forty or fifty people get off a bus and visit Yosemite Falls at the same time, every other person's visit to the Falls is ruined. If a tour bus operator wants to bring day-use visitors to Yosemite, that tour bus operator should park outside the park along with all the other day-use visitors and the tour bus visitors should also ride the Park shuttle."

Comment: "Buses limited at Yosemite Falls."

Improvements to Public Transportation

Commenters identified issues with, or suggested improvements to, the public transportation system in the park, including adding shuttles and routes/stops, increasing shuttle operation hours and frequency, adjusting shuttle fees, and increasing bicycle use.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Buses like Zion and more buses and bus stops running through the park. FREE rentable bikes so people can get around the park easier. Imagine if you only had a bike and bus lane and cars are only for those with camping or lodging reservations and people with disabilities. Incentivize people taking public transportation. Make it easier for hikers and climbers and people with kids to use public transportation. If Disneyland can do it, so can you."

Comment: "I think increasing the number of Valley shuttles would help, since long waits to ride the shuttle can also really impact visitor experiences. Extending the Valley shuttle out to Bridalveil would be really beneficial. Have the shuttle go up to Tunnel View or rebuild the Old Wawona Road into a trail that goes to Tunnel View from Bridalveil. This would allow people who ride in on YARTS to be able to reach all of the key Valley sights with mass transit/bike/short hike."

Comment: "WHY OH WHY aren't there more shuttle buses?? And why no hiker buses, shuttles to Tuolumne, etc.? Poor shuttle routes, limited numbers of buses running, crowded buses - that is really, really bad for visitors."

Comment: "On bus access to address vehicle crowding: If there was sufficient parking outside of Yosemite for day visitors to Yosemite Valley, it would be good enough to have frequent bus service (including early and late hours), and keep the roads mostly clear for the busses themselves and camper arrival/departure. That would be preferable to an hours-long wait at the entrance station. Day use fees could also be collected at the point of departure, rather than at the entrance station. I'd still prefer bicycling inside the valley, and expect many others would as well. Busses would need to be equipped with substantial number of bike racks: trailers are available that can carry a dozen or more bicycles. Or you'd need more readily available rental bikes to borrow for transportation inside the valley (current prices are excessive: \$120/day for a small family of 3! I'll bring my car rather than pay that). Storage for people bringing sizable picnic gear is also likely a must (rolling coolers)."

Comment: "What if you want to go to an area of the valley not covered by the shuttle? The current shuttle system is not extensive enough to allow people to easily get from one area of the valley to the other and this is especially true when the Pilot Traffic Pattern is in place, and one can't easily drive from one place to another, and it even affects the shuttle routes. For example, if you are at Yosemite Lodge and want to go to Curry you have to ride the very long and time-

consuming Valley Wide Shuttle to El Cap Crossover and back. There is no longer a shuttle stop at Sentinel Bridge. This loop needs to be improved with more stops, stops further west, more frequency of shuttles, longer hours and improvement in Aramark's ability to keep the shuttles running on time and during the hours it should be running. I have heard many stories about people waiting for the shuttle at El Cap Crossover or at the Four Mile Trail stop where the last shuttle of the day didn't come, and they had young children with them that were incapable of walking to where their car was parked. Yes, the traffic pattern is great getting cars out of the valley quickly at the end of the day but that doesn't mean that it doesn't affect some people more than others in their ability to enjoy the valley.”

Opposition to Shuttles

Commenters expressed opposition to required use of shuttles.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Please no shuttle buses. I would rather enter the park via a limited reservation then have to use a shuttle bus to enter the valley”

Topic Question 5: “Shuttle buses would.”

Comment: “I dread the thought of implementing a shuttle system as other parks have done.”

Elements: Reservations - Allocation

Local Allocation

Commenters requested that local residents or California state residents be allocated reservations differently from visitors traveling from farther away. Some commenters requested that locals be allocated a pass that allows park entry without reservations or be exempt from reservation requirements. Other commenters suggested that locals should not be allocated reservations differently or be exempt from reservations.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I would love to see a “local” and “visitor” system that allows CA residents (or folks in zipcodes within x hours of the park?) to take advantage of last minute reservations/easier access, while giving other options that allow long distance visitors to plan their trips.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “If a reservation system is kept in place I do not think locals should be exempt. Just because they own property near Yosemite does mean they own Yosemite. Only park rangers should be granted these exemptions alongside native indigenous people of that land. I say this because with this privilege comes great responsibility. Natives of the land should have unlimited access alongside rangers. I get you live locally but you do not own Yosemite.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “SURROUNDING COUNTY RESIDENTS SHOULD NOT HAVE VISITATION RESTRICTIONS. I would like to see the local residents of the Yosemite area be

exempt from any restrictions on when we can enter the Park. Living close enough to visit on a regular basis is one of the great benefits of living in this area. We work hard to encourage a love of nature in our children and often visit Yosemite to enhance our homeschool learning experience.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “As a resident of Calaveras County, I think there should be an allotment in reservations for locals, who often don't plan their trip a year in advance because Yosemite is in our backyard. It would be nice if there were a certain number of reservations for "locals" that aren't booked way in advanced.”

Comment: “Concerned that people who are live locally will need to have a reservation to travel across the park or visiting friends within the park, Perhaps some kind of sticker to identify them at the gate?”

Allocation by Zone

Commenters suggested that park reservations be allocated for various zones inside the park or only required within certain areas of the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I wonder if the park could be divided into zones that you visit and there are a certain number of people for that zone. There were not many people up at tuolumne meadows but that is one of my favorite places so maybe there could be more permits just for that area.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I like the idea of limiting the number of visitors (and vehicles) allowed entry per day. But I wonder if it might be practical to have a separate allowance for the Valley vs the high country, similar to a “zone” system used in some other areas?”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Please think about different reservation requirements for the eastside entrance vs the westside entrances. On the eastside we depend heavily on the tourism the park generates and the restrictions during the pandemic negatively impacted our local community due to the reduced number of opportunities for guests to visit. The eastside entrance doesn't attract as many visitors as the westside, so when reservations were put in place all of the westside visitors snagged the reservations and left very few for the east side. The reservation system should have a quota for each entrance so that the distribution of reservations doesn't negatively impact the economies of the small communities on the eastside who depend on summer tourism. A benefit of this approach would be to spread the vehicles entering the park into the different geographic locations further reducing the congestion in the Valley and encouraging the visitation of other areas of the park.”

Comment: “I think a great solution would be to allow through traffic and visitation to sites outside of Yosemite Valley without a reservation, but to require reservations for parking in Yosemite Valley and for popular trailheads like the Mist Trail.”

Comment: “How could Day Use permits targeting areas that are crowded.”

Allocation by Group or Interest

Commenters provided suggestions for groups that should be exempt from reservations or for which different reservation processes should be implemented, including motorcyclists, climbers, those arriving by carpooling or transit, guests booking vacation rentals, pass holders, or seniors.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Make motorcycle and lifetime seniors pass holders exempt from the reservations.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “The reservation system was cumbersome and did not allow for day passes for guests who booked vacation rentals on short notice. This led to unhappy guests who may not book as readily in the future because of the difficulty. Perhaps there could be a pass given out to any vacation rental owners with vacation rental permits to hand out to guests?”

Comment: “The reservation system was a little inconvenient but overall was manageable. If it is ever implemented again, I wouldn't mind an exemption to pass holders. I use the park several times a month.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Allow those with lifetime passes such as Golden age, disabled, veterans in without a reservation. You are creating too many barriers for people.”

Allocation of Backcountry/Wilderness Permits

Commenters suggested various ways to allocate backcountry/wilderness permits, including making permits available closer to the time when visitors arrive, reserving walk-up permits, allowing visitors to print permits at home, or prioritizing people who are first-time visitors or who have not obtained a permit in the last several years.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “Permits are necessary in the high season. That's inevitable. But they could be improved: - The permit system (both entry and backcountry) favours disproportionately people that can plan 6 months in advance their vacation. It leaves those of us who need good weather windows to recreate safely with very little options. Please have more permits released the week before. - Let us cross over Tioga pass without advanced reservation now that the roadworks have ended. - Collecting backcountry permits during office hours eats up half a day of backpacking. Please let us print them at home so we can backpack on the weekends.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The permitting process is generally good, but what would be awesome would be a system that allows for more walk-ups, and then some kind of online view so people could see how many spots are left, easily.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “The system of lottery for camping spots or trail access should be improved, eliminating people who had the change to get a camping spot or access spot in the (2) previous years, so that more/different people can enjoy “staying in the heart of the park”. It seems that it is always the same people who get the spots (cheating the system?).”

Comment: "I liked the 2022 system for wilderness/backpacking permits where 60% are reserved far in advance and 40% become available online 7 days in advance"

Parkwide Entrance Lottery

Commenters expressed opinions on a lottery system. While some commenters were opposed to a lottery because of concerns related to decreased accessibility, particularly for local visitors, they noted it may be a good system for international guests. Some commented that a lottery allows more equitable access, and some felt that the lottery would be good for specific uses, such as the High Sierra camps. Others identified issues with having to pay a nonrefundable fee to enter the lottery.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "A lottery system would prohibit domestic and local residence from visiting the park as desired though that may be a good option for overseas guests. We love visiting Yosemite and appreciate your consideration to keep it accessible and comfortable to visit."

Comment: "Maybe make the longer term park reservations a lottery as opposed to tickets becoming available at a certain time to make access more equitable."

*Comment: "THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE: Use a rolling lottery for all reservable services in Yosemite, whether car camping or day use reservations, in the style of the successful Yosemite wilderness permit system or Half Dome day use permits. The wilderness permit system works so well and is one of my favorite wilderness permit reservation systems I've encountered in the NPS system. Why not do it for car camping reservations and day use permits? * Rolling lotteries completely defuse bots, and don't provide any advantage to visitors with the fastest computers and Internet connections. * The lottery should be completely automated and managed within recreation.gov, so that rangers don't spend any time manually processing lottery applications. * Lottery applications should not have any fees, no matter how low: the lottery shouldn't be a "pay to play" gambling operation that offers improved odds for visitors who can afford to repeatedly pay for losing lottery permit applications. (Yosemite isn't in Nevada!) Visitors should only have to pay fees when they win. * Finally, systematically checking photo ID for _everyone_ in the party will prevent duplicate lottery applications made under fake names or other party member names."*

Comment: Topic Question 4: "I'm instinctively suspect of rules that limit access to our public lands. However, in the case of Yosemite National Park, the crowds are loving the park to death and negatively impacting visitor experience in a fundamental and material manner. Due to the unique strain and load being placed on YNP due to overcrowding, I am supportive of a return to the permit system that was implemented during Covid. I am NOT, however, supportive of a lottery system. Lottery systems purport to create equity but in practice, impart undue hardships that prevent families from reliably being able to plan trips ahead of time. In my opinion, during Covid, there were more than enough permits available for those willing to plan ahead, so that there was no meaningful inequity or restriction on access."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "In the past, I've woken up at 8am to get reservations to the park, only for the website to fail over and over, because having 1000s of people try using a website at the same time is a bad idea. It is preposterous that there is not a simple lottery system because this is an issue over and over again. However, with the recreation.gov lotteries, some are non refundable, also preposterous, because I have spent almost \$1000 on non refundable permit

applications just to not ever get one. Please have a lottery system that doesn't tax me for losing and can be more flexible to my schedule."

Timing of Reservation Allocation

Commenters made suggestions regarding the timing for allocation of reservations. Some commenters expressed a preference for reservations to be available months or a year in advance, while others requested that some reservations be reserved on the day of entrance. Commenters felt that if the reservation system is too far in advance, visitors who do not know their plans (or plans change) may reserve more than they need and end up not using them. Some commenters noted the benefits of the camping reservation system in allowing all camping spots to be booked five months in advance of a visit.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Selling some reservations online and keeping a number for day of use availability would be preferable to a reservation only system."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "I am very pro reservation systems, but I do feel stretching it out 5 to 6 months in advance leads to a lot of cancellations, people taking spots that are doing it just to have the option. There should be staggered reservations for summer months so people can plan trips in advance, and people can plan trips more on a whim. The sites will always sell out, so why not offer some 5 months out, 4 months, 3 months, 2 months. There should also be penalties for canceling a reservation, or a wait list for spots that open up."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "I think reservation periods should be cut down to 2 week or one month periods at a time. So that people have a better chance of entering. Leave a varying daily reserve amount which allows locals to enter the park for a day trip without a reservation so they are not restricted or prevented from visiting just because the online reservation system is always full."

Comment: "Suggestions: Keep Tioga Pass open without reservation restrictions, release reservations 12 months in advance, make 100% of reservations available at 12 months, not at 7 days in advance, which is too late."

Comment: "It almost makes more sense to have all reservations go on sale for an entire year on January 1st, on the same day. Then you have a maximum number of people making reservations throughout the year since people can only make one reservation at a time until it's paid for and they could try to make a second reservation. Being on the 15th of each month you could have the same people gobbling up all the reservations each month, shutting out more people. Imagine you're selling pizza, and on the 15th of each month you have 300 pizzas to sell. If you sell them all on the 15th of each month, the same 300 people can buy the 300 pizzas each month. If you have 3,600 pizzas to sell on January 1st, there could be 3,600 unique people buying the 3,600 pizzas."

Comment: "I must give the park credit for having a fair reservation process to reserve campsites 5 months in advance on the 15th. Please don't change this process. In my opinion the reservation process is an example that other parks such as Glacier should adopt. Having the ability to book a campsite for the entire month (five months in advance), gives the potential camper a chance of booking a spot, since all sites in the valley are bookable at 7:00:00 AM on the 15th for the month. Other parks use the 6 month rolling date system, so you have 100 or 1000s of people trying to

book only a few sites each day. This results in popular campgrounds such as Many Glacier being almost impossible to book. Instead, Yosemite booking has several 100 sites open at once 5 months in advance with the entire month being able to book, which results in potentially a 1000 different combinations of potential campsites being available for camper to book, allowing one to be successful if they book at 7:00:00.”

Access to Tioga Pass

Commenters requested that drivers be allowed to travel through the park without stopping via Tioga Pass without a reservation or via a pass. Commenters noted that travel should not be restricted on Tioga Road (CA-120). Commenters suggested offering renewable transit passes or enforcing time limits for drivers to cross the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “The pass through permitting of local or non local travelers should ALWAYS be an option. A waste of time and resources to force people to pay or travel farther but with a reservation system paying even to pass is not an option. perhaps its should be.”

Comment: “Driving over Tioga Pass was a problem with reservations, and I think that needs to be addressed, I often drive over the pass in the summer just to get to the other side. I've had to take Sonora Pass more, and it is definitely more crowded when Yosemite is on reservations.”

Comment: “BUT I do have an issue of needing a reservation at any time just to drive through the park using 120 to get to the eastern Sierras. If I am just going through and have a time limit to get to the other end, what is the harm. I believe you should enforce penalties if the time limit is exceeded.”

Comment: “Additionally, the need to have a reservation to pass thru the park from Fishkill, Oak Flat and El Portal, as well as Tioga, requires that drivers often drive those areas in the dark. I have been over on 395 and had to access Sonora Pass b/c I could not go thru the Tioga entrance w/o a reservation. Understanding this is challenging, there must be a way to manage it. These are also State Highways so travel should not be limited on them.”

Comment: “Offer renewable transit passes for people those with ties to local community to go gate to gate.”

Elements: Expanded Infrastructure

Parking Suggestions

Commenters provided suggestions for how the park can address the lack of parking, including creating more parking lots earlier in the valley starting as far west as possible and going inwards. Other suggestions included staffing parking lots during times of peak visitation to direct traffic to overflow areas, creating parking in forested areas away from meadows that could be returned to nature when they are no longer needed, creating parking in dirt areas to reduce pavement/construction, providing parking at the entrance to the park and then a shuttle to the valley, and having a two-story parking garage.

Comments with suggestions for increased parking in specific areas included but not limited to Bridalveil Fall, down valley, a day use parking lot on the west end, Cathedral Beach, and increase the size of the Valley Parking Lot.

Commenters noted that the benefits of not having cars idling in the park would address some of the environmental impacts of creating additional parking lots.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "What's the vision? How to achieve this?? First off, there should be more parking lots created, and they should be created earlier in the valley starting as far west as possible going inwards. Second, during peak visit periods, the parking lots should be staffed so cars are allowed in and out of lots as spaces open up - - there is no reason for every car in the valley to aimlessly circle through every lot in the park... again, and again, and again. Traffic and parking control can direct the crowds (i.e. car congestion) much better much the same as is done at sporting events, ski resort lots, paid parking lots in big cities, etc. If the lot is full, the lot is full. Parking attendants can control the flow of cars at each lot and also be in radio communications with other lot attendants so they can properly inform drivers where there are current openings."

Comment: "Why are you not increasing parking throughout the entire Valley, specifically the western end, by adding pullouts and parking lots (and increased shuttle service) in forested areas away from meadows and the Merced River that can be "returned to nature" at a later date when they are no longer needed? I don't know the statistics, so just for example, if Yosemite Valley currently sees approximately 5000 vehicles during peak visitation, then why do we not have 6000 parking spaces? There is definitely plenty of space and opportunity to provide that much parking, and all of it (all the infrastructure, actually) can be removed at a later time if it is no longer needed (the Old Village, Sentinel Hotel, Glacier Point Hotel, Stoneman House hotel, etc.). With today's technology, parking lots can be constructed so that rain water and snow melt seep through the pavement and drain appropriately. While there will be a minor environmental impact constructing the parking lots, it will probably be less of an impact than having cars either stopped in traffic and just sitting there idling, or continuously circling parking lots waiting for a space to open up."

Comment: "Yosemite Valley needs: - better parking facilities (including paved) at Cathedral Beach and the trail head to view the Three Brothers, making it an all year round parking space - walking trail from Bridelvail Falls to Tunnel View so that walking on the shoulder of the road isn't requires to get from one to the other - public buses that cover the entire valley, including Tunnel View & Valley View on a regular basis (no less than every 15 minutes) during daylight hours (sunrise to sunset) - park and ride facility from El Portal into the valley that starts early - provide real time traffic information for cars on Southside Drive prior to the Cathedral Beach loop (electronic sign) - another foot bridge that crosses the Merced lower down and new trails to support it - provide real time car park information away from car parking so drivers know if time is better spent parking elsewhere and busing to the village for food"

Comment: "Would be expensive, but multi-level parking structures with the top level at ground level would be nice with little visual intrusion."

Topic Question 4: “Pave and increase the size of the Valley Parking Lot at the end of the road on the way to Happy Isles and Vernal Falls. Don’t have the “parking lot full” sign before this parking lot when in fact it is not full. Have a couple of human traffic/parking controllers stationed there to help. Remove the Valley Stables and put in another parking lot.”

Bike Paths and Infrastructure

Commenters noted the importance of bike infrastructure in addressing congestion issues at the park. To support bike use in the park, they suggested additional parking, dedicated bike paths/lanes, and providing for free (or allowing for rent) bikes and e-bikes, and having e-bike charging infrastructure. Specific suggestions included extending bike paths to the west end of the valley, a bike path to Pohono Bridge, trails to El Capitan or Bridalveil Falls, more paths at the east end of the valley, more paths at the west end of the valley, and a path from the gate to Tuolumne Meadows or Tenaya Lake. Commenters also suggested ways to increase active transportation (such as the use of bikes) at the park, including making more rental bikes available, discouraging driving, or removing amenities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Third, lots more people would bring their bikes along with them and park their cars farther away from the inner valley if only a) there were more places to park further away to get out of the traffic nightmare faster, and b) there were actually dedicated bike path or lanes. The best option for bikers is to not force them to share the road with cars but to instead give them dedicated paths. Even sharing a path with walkers/hikers can be a struggle if the foot traffic crowds are insane. But, sharing a path with foot traffic is still better than not having any paths at all, or not enough, which is the current situation, unbelievably. Remember there are mtn bikers that can go on dirt paths and road bikers that can only ride on pavement. Paths should be created for both. There's plenty of room in the valley to make paths for this, if only there was a greater desire and appetite to do so. And, keep in mind that your much serious of mtn bikers or road bikers probably won't be riding here, as they'd have better options elsewhere away from people - we're talking about people ditching their cars and instead riding bikes as a means of travel to get to their hiking and other sightseeing destinations while taking in the out-of-the-car scenery along the way. Fourth, the park could even make more revenue by renting day bikes to visitors from these farther away lots.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Why has the bike path not been extended to the west end of the valley similar to how the hiking trail has? It's ridiculous to expect people to ride on the roads in traffic. This should be a high priority to allow people to visit the whole valley without driving.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Bicycles are also a great way to get around the Valley. The amount of traffic on the approach roads and the lack of shoulders discourages cycling. The Valley floor could be improved to separate cyclists. and cars.”

Comment: “Inside the park, offer complimentary bicycles and E-bicycles, while expanding the requisite bike-friendly routes within the park to further encourage visitors to leave vehicles outside the park and take advantage of the shuttle service.”

Comment: “Not being able to ride my bike along the road has taken that experience away, a bike lane would be helpful, so a person could ride to El Capitan or Bridalveil Falls.”

Funding Infrastructure Improvements

Commenters suggested that infrastructure improvements be funded through donations.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Seventh, consider asking for donations to go towards such improvement projects. One visit and overnight stay at Curry Village is all it takes for people eating at the pavilion to sit there contemplating what in the world they just went through and why. You'd be surprised how many people would be willing to contribute towards a solution, especially given how much they otherwise love this place and wish to come back - - though on much more pleasant and manageable terms."

Visitor Centers/Visitor Facilities

Commenters requested the park provide more hospitality services and facilities outside of the valley. Specific suggestions included an interagency Visitor Center at the Highway 120/108/49 junction, a visitor center at Hetch Hetchy, and other welcome center ideas.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Please follow the lead of Zion National Park, and adopt ideas that were in the discarded 1980 General Management Plan - greatly reducing private vehicles and moving more hospitality facilities and services out of the valley - except the Ahwahnee and perhaps a scaled down Yosemite Lodge and Camp Curry."

Comment: "My wish is that there would be an interagency Visitor Center at the Highway 120/108/49 junction. Lot's of parking and YARTS type shuttle to YNP. Plus interpreters could disperse visitors to other areas(BLM, Stanislaus NF and State Parks) when YNP fills up."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "4.Interpretive Flow Ideally people should be able to drive in from all over the world, pick up pamphlets in their language to assist at entrances. Presently, you ,a new visitor coming into the Valley from several directions, will be drawn into traffic (desperately needing a restroom) that funnels you into the parking-lot of a company that sells kitchy quazi-park stuff. Is that representative of our Country's grandeur? (Oh please, No!) Or you end up confused in a campground. A natural flow would shuttle or lead you to a big Center, that gives you a cohesive approach to sites based on abilities and interests. Interpretive displays and a center circular desk of helpful friendly rangers. Perhaps the building raised on the west side of the meadow, where shuttles have a-lot of room to arrive and leave. a. Ideas for Center, and repeating thematic interpretive structures. We think a large granite boulder , steel, and glass roundhouse dome would be appropriate, beautiful and reflect the surroundings. With a clear domed roof that have peaks and falls names ,on narrow black pointers overhead. Rough untouched on the outside of the boulder, shaped and polished on the inside."

Comment: "Proposed construction of an all-inclusive visitor center in the Hetch Hetchy quarry. The new facility should be known as the Jay Julius Johnson Memorial Hetch Hetchy Visitor Center."

Pedestrian Infrastructure/Trails

Commenters requested additional infrastructure related to trails and other pedestrian use in order to reduce congestion on the roadways. Comments included specific suggestions for additional infrastructure: adding a walking track from Bridalveil Fall car park to Tunnel View, making trails for seniors more accessible, adding a loop at Upper Pines Campground, reopening Lower River Campground, converting the Merced River train grade to a hike/bike path, and improving horse trail maintenance.

Commenters also suggested pedestrian tunnels between Yosemite Falls and the Lodge, stating this is an area of traffic congestion that needs to be addressed.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Dedicated walking track from Bridelvail Falls car park to Tunnel View.”

Comment: “The real traffic issue comes from the pedestrian walkway at Yosemite falls. For this, we need a pedestrian tunnel. Sure, building it might be disruptive, and traffic may have to be redirected through the lodge, but it would make a huge difference long term.”

Comment: “Maintain trails and better pedestrian traffic opportunities so they don’t cause congestion on the roads.”

Comment: “Make trail for seniors and handicapped Picnic area parking area at entrance”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Consider converting the Merced River train grade to a hike and bike path.”

Restroom/Outhouse Facilities

Commenters requested additional restroom facilities such as opening the high sierra composting toilet for backcountry users and adding pit toilets in El Capitan Meadow. One commenter questioned why money was spent on large restroom facilities that seem to be overkill.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Why was so much spent on putting in new, larger toilets. It seems like the larger buildings are overkill.”

Comment: “Also, please open the high sierra composting toilet if the backpacking site is open. With backpackers camping there, and with no toilet, most every tree has been fertilized several times over.”

Comment: “The park also needs way more pit toilets. A couple in el Cap meadow would be great, and at intervals throughout the valley loop.”

Roadway Infrastructure

Commenters stated that improvements to roadway infrastructure are needed to address current congestion issues. Suggestions for improvements included traffic control through stoplights and electronic cross walks, use of one-way roads and traffic patterns, increased use of roundabouts, implementing the Tioga Pass kiosk realignment, and more areas to stop or pull off along the roadways.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “One way traffic patterns are effective at getting people through the valley, particularly when it is time to leave. For the unsuspecting visitor, or the guest staying at Yosemite Lodge, it adds significantly to the drive and time to get anywhere else. Creates additional traffic demands between Yosemite Village and El Capitan”

Comment: “Making valley roads one-way was absolutely essential. More parking near the valley entrance is still needed.”

Comment: “Implement the Tioga Pass Kiosk realignment.”

Comment: “There should also be more stops on the road just in case of any incident.”

Hetch Hetchy

Commenters requested additional infrastructure and access at Hetch Hetchy. The requested that the gate at Hetch Hetchy be open 24-hours a day, expanding trails including a trail from Hetch Hetchy to Tuolumne Meadows, improving the campground to allow for overnight stays, and providing additional concession services for food. Commenters felt that providing additional access and services in this area would relieve pressure from other areas of the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: “Why can't the gate at the Hetch Hetchy entrance be open 24-hrs a day, just like the other entrances? And why is access on that road restricted to short, day-time hours? It seems one obvious way to allow more access to the park, and not increase pressure on Yosemite Valley, would be to open up Hetch Hetchy with more trailheads and trails - and even camping opportunities.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Leaving the gate at the Hetch Hetchy entrance open 24 hours a day under normal circumstances, similar to the policy at Yosemite's other 4 entrances; Expanding trails; Improving the campground and allowing all visitors to stay overnight at Hetch Hetchy; Allowing low-impact, non-polluting boating on the reservoir; and Providing public transit to Hetch Hetchy.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Increasing access to and opportunities in other park areas (like Hetch Hetchy) may better distribute congestion.”

Comment; Topic Question 4: “I would like to have free access to Hetch Hetchy. This should include 24 access and camping. There should be concessions that supply prepared food as well as supplies for campers and backpackers.”

Comment: Topic Question 2: “2. The hours that Hetch Hetchy is available is a huge barrier! 8a-5p does not work for a backpacker or dayhiker that wants to utilize the daylight. I hike in HH every late winter and spring to get in shape for backpacking season. The wildflowers are incredible on all trails around the reservoir and over the ridges; I work every year to identify vegetation while dormant and while blooming. I backpack from the Dam up Jack Main Cyn and points beyond every year. If the gates cannot be open 24/7, please have the gates open at least by 6:30a, when it is light, and close at dark. My preference would be that ALL gates into the Park would be treated the same for the enjoyment of the public- -open 24/7. It does not make sense to me that there are restrictions on the gate of Hetch Hetchy and not the others. I understand that there is a dam, so why not just have a dam caretaker there or some type of security system set up at the dam (cameras)? The City of San Francisco should be responsible for paying for this and removing any restrictions placed on the public and the NPS. It is already an unnatural structure, an impairment, eyesore, disruption to scenery and natural historic objects. Why take away the public enjoyment when there are other less restrictive protective measures possible? Why has the closure been 5p for the last few years when the other gates had no restrictions on hours after covid shutdowns were over? If this is just about cars, then have a parking lot and free shuttle bus that provides access during daylight hours. If there are legitimate reasons, make them public so we can be informed as visitors who want more access. This restriction is unreasonable and should be considered contrary to the Organic Act and all policies, regulations, directives and orders issued under it. Please consider revising this restriction!”

Limiting Additional Infrastructure

Commenters stated that the park should not build their way out of the congestion issues because of the resulting long-term impacts to the park’s natural resources. If new infrastructure is needed, it should be done in a manner that limits impacts to the park’s resources. They also suggested that if additional infrastructure is needed, it should be environmentally friendly, such as including the use of electric shuttles and gravel parking areas.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I know parking is an issue, but please don't cut down trees and make space for vehicles, it only destroys what we come to see.”

Comment: “We encourage NPS to use this VUM process to analyze what, if any, additional infrastructure improvements can be made to help ease congestion at entrance stations and other locations inside the park. Any infrastructure changes should be done in a manner that limits damage to the park's natural and cultural resources.”

Comment: “Although infrastructure improvements may help ease congestion at discrete locations, NPCA cautions against heeding the advice of those who think that we can build our way out of this problem. Solutions such as drastically widening entrance stations or building additional parking spaces will have serious impacts to the park resources and are likely to only result in allowing additional traffic into the park without solving the underlying issues.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Establish scenic and biotic resource data (found in the 1980 GMP EIS) as GIS layers to contribute toward where not to locate facilities.”

Additional Services for Visitors

Commenters provided a variety of ideas for infrastructure improvements including providing lockers at the entrance of the park for visitors who take YARTS, continuing the water refill stations, providing upgrades for internet and cell services, providing overnight boarding for horses and providing additional food services.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "I would like there to be lockers available, probably somewhere in the Visitor Center/Village area for day trip visitors, who choose to take YARTS."

Comment: "We appreciate the waste reduction efforts, particularly the water refill stations."

Topic Question 4: "Overall, update the infrastructure. Upgrade to high-speed internet to all in park lodging and buildings and better cell service throughout the Park. Bury all electrical and phone lines underground."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "I've been following comments from other horse groups. I am a member of BCHC-Sierra Freepacker unit. I am also a member of Mariposa Mountain Riders. I agree wait times with stock in a trailer is difficult on the animals. But I feel equestrian groups ought to be aware, and plan early or later arrival times to best care for their animals. I would like to see staging areas that are dedicated to horse groups; too often we pull up and the staging area is full of trees, equipment, hikers. Riding off trails up on Glacier Point Road is very difficult as there is literally no place to park what with all the wilderness permit hikers taking up trailhead space. It would be terrific if the stables in the valley were available for overnight boarding."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "More restaurants or quick eats near the parking areas or tents if feasible. More options for cabin or tent rentals if possible."

Disperse Opportunities/Provide More Opportunities

Commenters stated that congestion issues in the park could be addressed by the park providing for additional opportunities across the park to disperse visitor use. These opportunities could include additional trails, viewpoints, or promoting other destinations outside the "iconic" sites. One commenter stated that the park could create carefully planned and highly desirable parking areas, restrooms, and trail systems at sites all along the Tioga Road to attract visitors away from other highly visited areas.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Spend your money on bettering facilities, viewpoints, trails to be as high quality and efficient as possible. People understand it is going to be crowded. People do not like low quality and inefficiency."

Comment: "CSERC promotes two "big picture" management changes for Yosemite that could potentially reduce traffic conflicts, reduce crowding in Yosemite Valley, and make for a far more manageable Park experience for visitors. FIRST, we point to the need for the Park to get past concentrating Yosemite Park visitors at a very few popular sites - - Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite Valley, Mariposa Grove, and Glacier Point. Yes, those iconic destinations will assuredly

still likely draw a majority of visitors to Yosemite far into the future, but the Park could create carefully planned and highly desirable parking areas, restrooms, and trail systems at sites all along the Tioga Pass Road to divert 10 or 20% of those who otherwise would cram into Yosemite Valley. There are gorgeous, iconic, selfie-worthy recreational, scenic sites sprinkled all along the Tioga Pass Road to totally satisfy day visitors. Similarly, there are other potential sites in the Park where parking areas, restrooms, and improved trails could be located between Crane Flat and Foresta, between Glacier Point Road and Wawona, and at other places where presently, extremely few visitors see parking trailheads or are encouraged to recreate in areas away from the core Park destinations. Spreading out visitors along the Park's paved road system would better distribute visitor impacts and could significantly increase satisfaction with the visitor experience.”

Lodging

Commenters suggested improvements to overnight and lodging accommodations and requested additional lodging accommodations be made available. Specific suggestions included demolishing the Yosemite Valley Lodge, building a more modern hotel, and adding more lodging options at the valley floor.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “For Yosemite Valley Lodge, I recommend demolishing it and building a more modern hotel (but with a rustic, national park vibe) with a smaller footprint.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “4. Need more overnight accommodations.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “5. Need to provide a way for people to drive around the Valley without getting out of their car thus allowing more people to see it even if they don't get to experience it fully.”

Comment: “As noted above, please evaluate having more lodging options at the valley floor or the possibility to add attached baths to the existing curry village or housekeeping camps and a seamless process to follow for making reservations, especially in the summer months, during high visitation periods. Thanks for considering the proposal.”

Elements: Campgrounds / Camping

Backpacking Camping Areas

Commenters had requests and suggestions related to backpacking camping areas. Commenters asked for backpacking-only camping areas in the valley or expanded areas for backpackers to camp in the valley for those who arrive by bus. Commenters said that a place to camp in the valley on the night before and night after a backpacking trip was important.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Other options for backpacking only camping areas for those arriving by bus would be nice."

Comment: "My only option was the backpacking camp which had one little dirt spot left by the time I arrived by bus that evening (8/4). I know the valley has limited space but there has to be room for an expanded backpacking camp area somewhere down there."

Comment: "I also really appreciate the option for a "frontcountry" camp site in a backpackers campground the night before and night after a backpacking trip."

Campfires

Commenters asked the park to ban or put restrictions on campfires, both in the backcountry and at designated campgrounds. Commenters worried about air pollution, impacts of unauthorized fire rings, risk of wildfires, and noise from people at campfires. Commenters suggested allowing only cookstoves in campgrounds or to only allow campfires organized and led by rangers.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Consider having a ranger led campfire only in the campgrounds each night. Cookstoves only at campsites. The smoke from campfires fills the air each day and along with all the vehicular pollution, creates Yosemite smog."

Comment: "NO MORE CAMPFIRES. I would LOVE all backcountry wood fires to be made illegal, period. On fighting cold: I was a certified Wilderness First Responder. We were trained that fires aren't going to save people from hypothermia, but proper clothing, gear and shelter and knowing how to use them will. For instance, a good hypo-wrap is much more effective. ○ Prevent disasters: The forests are drier and more susceptible today than I've ever seen in my lifetime. We do not need to risk future fires from people who do not properly manage their fires. ○ Firerings are blights on the land, period. ○ And, so many places we have been to, when we find a good spot for setting up camp for the night.. There's a fire ring and charcoal mucking up the flat spot."

Comment: "Please eliminate fires in the backcountry. There is no need and it is anything but untrammled. Too many illegal campfire rings and camp spots. Smoke from campfires is unhealthy too."

Comment: "Ban or restrict campfires. The air quality MUST exceed health standards. Are you studying or monitoring this? Consider one campfire area per campground, near the amphitheater."

Noise in Campgrounds

Commenters expressed concerns related to noise in campgrounds. Commenters felt that noise pollution from generators at campgrounds disrupted their camping experiences. Commenters were against RVs in campgrounds if they are running generators. Commenters suggested having separate campgrounds for tenting, only to avoid the noises of generators and allow visitors to hear the sounds of nature. One commenter noted that camping in large, multigenerational

groups that may be noisier than smaller groups is an important part of many cultures, including Indigenous cultures. The commenter asked that the park ensure there are camping areas that accommodate these important cultural needs.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Quiet campgrounds without the noise and air pollution of generators would be nice too."

Comment: Topic Question 2: "2. Noise. "Hey, Francis, how was your weekend?" I asked my Filipino public health colleague. "I went camping with about 18 of my cousins," came the exuberant reply. Many cultures - including our own indigenous cultures - often enjoy nature with large noisy multigenerational groups which our modern (white) park planners often restrict to a very few group camps. We need to consider not just Shelton Johnsons words, but we should put them into action by creating recreational spaces for true multicultural recreational experiences."

Comment: "Allowing RVs to be in every campground- their generators are so disruptive!! They should all be in Upper Pines or on outskirts of park. Its not fair that they take over limited tent camping spaces."

Comment: "So far the worst parts have been seeing so many unused campsites when I visit, despite how hard it was to book my own. And I don't like camping next to RVs and generators. I wish there were (more) separate campgrounds that are tent-only."

Car Camping

Commenters wrote in about the importance of car camping. One commenter noted that they like car camping because they can use campgrounds outside of the valley. Commenters suggested providing a designated location for people sleeping in their vehicles who do not need a campsite. Another commenter suggested having a parking lot for car camping that is geared toward rock climbers.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "As in-vehicle camping has become more popular, it would really help ease the camping bottleneck if there were a designated space for self-sufficient vehicle camping. I can't tell you how many sites in the valley campgrounds have vans, camper vans, etc in them and almost nothing else. What if there were a place to rent nightly space for your vehicle, without any amenities? I imagine it could look like the opposite of camp 4. You rent a parking space with a couple pit toilets nearby. No picnic tables or fire rings. Nightly rental only and nobody can leave items like chairs behind. I don't even think any new space would necessarily have to be created for this. Why not turn one of the parking lots into this after 6pm or sunset?"

Comment: "The question of climbers in Yosemite. Yosemite is super established in climbing history as a place of climbing innovation and breakthroughs. Modern heroes of climbing live and project in the valley. And normal people just want to climb. They don't need massive established campgrounds, or bathrooms with lights, they just want to park their car and sleep and wake up and climb. Why have climbers in competition with families on vacation? Why not establish more primitive, compact, minimalistic camping for people who just want to sleep and climb? Moreso than the average American, climbers are great visitors and stewards of the earth, with local

communities self-educating about outdoor etiquette. whenever I go to the annual Yosemite Facelift events we find trash that is so obviously left by non-climbers and it's climbers who are cleaning up after newbies to the outdoors! It's no secret that a lot of climbers are driven to illegally camp in their cars and yet they barely leave any footprint, why not just make it legal, have a little lot with a couple portapotties where people can camp in their cars? It would be so much more efficient than having climbers compete with families for massive campsites when they don't even need the space or amenities.”

Comment: “Dedicated location or locations for people sleeping in a vehicle who don't need a campsite.... You can charge, but make it higher density than a campsite...”

Campground Improvements

Commenters had suggestions for campground improvements. Commenters asked for the campgrounds to be better maintained by picking up tree debris, making sure facilities are in good condition, and having more flat sites for tenting. Commenters suggested having a check out system to ensure people pack out what they bring in. They asked for the park to rescind the right to reserve campsites if a visitor does not leave a campground as they found it. One commenter worried about encountering bears in campgrounds and another suggested adding shower facilities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Some campground sites have no level spots to put tents, particularly Crane Flats.”

Comment: “Seeing bears in the campgrounds (as you know they may not have long to live).”

Comment: “Upgrade the camping experience by improving the campsites. Some of the campsites were in such terrible condition that it was unpleasant to camp- especially when people come to Yosemite to party. We've had some lousy camping experiences because of that.”

Comment: “Reservations for campgrounds, with a deposit on leaving it as you found it (take trash out, don't litter, etc.) Have a checkout process, where their site must be clean before they leave. Make it hurt if they decide to trash our forests and then don't approve them coming back and making future reservation. Make people accountable again and they will take care of our forests.”

Campsite Reservation Fees

Commenters were concerned about the prices of campsites. Commenters said that camping is important because it provides an inexpensive option to families to experience the valley without driving in. Commenters also explained that less access to camping has made their trips more expensive since they have to pay higher prices for lodging. One commenter asked the park to remove or reduce lodging at the park and use the space and resources for more campgrounds, since they are more affordable and offer a better outdoor experience. Alternatively, some commenters suggested that the park should allow the price of campsites to rise to the market rate or they should hold back a portion of the campsites to be priced at the market rate.

Commenters argued that this would afford some certainty to people travelling from far away who would be willing to pay higher prices.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 1: “Being able to stay in the valley. We have camped in the valley campgrounds many times, but getting reservations is difficult. After the flood in the late 90’s, 3 campgrounds were removed (the 2 rivers and 1 group). The reduced camping access by a large percent. Camping is a more inexpensive option and should be expanded to provide more families the opportunity to experience the valley without having to drive in.”

Comment: “Camping is a valuable part of anyone’s life, especially a child’s life. To not be able to camp in one of the nation’s greatest parks is unfortunate. I truly feel as though the camping experience is quickly disappearing in Yosemite National Park and the concept of staying overnight is moving toward costly concessions like cabin rentals and hotel lodging. Even though I may make the decision to treat my family to one night in the Yosemite Valley for a \$180/night tent cabin (with no heat), I cannot afford to pay for two nights, nor do I think the cost is reasonable for what you are getting. Who is the Yosemite National Park trying to cater to? The wealthy or the regular, lower to middle-class individual who just wants to get into the park and provide a wonderful, memorable experience for their family?”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “Cost of campsites. Yours are significantly higher than other parks. BS that you’re “competing” with the local commercial campgrounds. I no longer camp inside the park because \$36/night! Glacier is still at \$23; even RMNP finally increased to \$35 for 2023. You don’t even offer showers like most state parks.”

Comment: “It is onerous and expensive to wish and hope you will get a campsite. I am not wealthy, but would gladly pay a few hundred dollars a night for a space just to avoid the uncertainty and the hassle. In the end, I would probably save money! So, let the market do its job. We are, after all, supposed to have a market economy.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “The NPS reservation process. You should set a number of campsites aside and price them at the market rate. That way, people travelling a long distance to the park can have some certainty (this is valuable).”

New Ideas for Campgrounds

Commenters proposed new ideas for campgrounds and camping in the park. Suggestions included the following:

- Develop a new camping system that provides shelters and cooking areas
- Limit the number of nights a group can stay at a campground and require six hours of volunteer work for each additional day they would like to stay
- Create an adult-only camping area
- Provide better photos of campsites on the website
- Do not add more campsites within the park, add them to the surrounding National Forest
- Limit the number of cars allowed at a campsite or charge for cars at campsites
- Have a No-RV themed weekend at the park
- Add additional deluxe-style cabins with bathrooms, heat, and air conditioning

- Change some areas that currently have dispersed camping to designated campsites to reduce natural resource impacts
- Update kiosks at the campsites

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “A new system of camping would be devised which would provide shelter and cooking areas. Campers would bring sleeping bags, food and other needs that fit a standard carry module. Climbers, likewise.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “This goes for ALL parks: Please provide better (or any) photos of campsites. Your campground maps are pretty good, but the NPS and NFS really need to step up their game overall. Many of us would be happy to exchange a bit of photography for a few nights in the campground. Each camping facility offered on Rec.gov should have clear and accurate information. I’d volunteer to help!”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Adding additional curry village deluxe style cabins would be nice. More like the cabins available at Yellowstone’s Lake Yellowstone Cabins where there are bathrooms and heat & ac in the cabin. If bathrooms are not an option, just make them like the lake yellowstone cabins without a bathroom then.”

Comment: “Problem: Insufficient lodging and camping space cause more people to stay outside the Park, thus having to drive in every day. Solution: Until we open up more RV camping space in the Valley, this will continue to be a problem. We simply have more demand than supply. One way to increase the supply is to increase turnover. Instead of allowing a week of camping in prime season in the Valley, reduce the number of nights permitted to only 3. While making the reservation, they can extend their stay by 2 more nights by continuing to pay the full nightly camping fee, plus at least one adult in the group must volunteer for at least 6 hours each of those additional days. Their volunteer time can be assigned as a parking lot attendant, pulling non-native plants, giving directions and answering questions, or anything else so assigned. After that, they can still reserve a site outside the Valley.”

Comment: “Worst - lack of places to camp near the park. I don't want more campsites in the park, but I think there should be many more campsites in the National Forest surrounding the park.”

Restrictions on Camping

A few commenters said that camping should be limited or restricted. A commenter said that camping outside of the valley, particularly in Tuolumne Meadows, should be limited to preserve the quiet. One commenter worried about camping in the High Sierra because of natural resource impacts. They were also glad that the park had removed campgrounds along rivers to protect riparian zones.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Again, driven by the pandemic, limiting the number of sites available at each campground was great. Especially in Tuolumne Meadows. Let the Valley be crowded, but from White Wolf on should be quiet and limited.”

Comment: "I understand that camping should be limited- -restricted."

Comment: "It seems that the time for the High Sierra camps should be over. The impact of stock going to those very special places is too heavy. The stress and strain on water systems, sanitary, systems, and others is also too much. Park trails have been much nicer with fewer stock animals. Removing campgrounds along the rivers has done a lot to protect the riparian habitat"

Camping Reservation System Challenges

Commenters expressed frustration about the camping reservation system and their challenges in obtaining campsites. Several commenters expressed frustration because campsites are all listed as reserved but are sometimes not full because groups do not show up for their reservation. Commenters felt that the reservation system for campsites favored computer-savvy people and others said that bots were reserving all of the campsites. Commenters said they had heard of people illegally buying camping reservations from third parties. Commenter said there should be a process to motivate people to cancel their camping reservations if they are no longer using them, such as a check-in system. Another commenter suggested penalties for not showing and not canceling, such as a yearlong ban from camping reservations. Commenters suggested including a waitlist for camping reservations or only allowing people to reserve campsites in the valley every other year, or at a different interval. Commenters asked the park to reimplement first-come camping along Tioga Road, at Camp 4, and in other areas, including accessible sites. Commenters noted that requiring reservations creates equity issues since many visitors are unable to plan their vacations months in advance. One commenter suggested having a quota per address (not per email address) to prevent people from circumventing the reservation rules. Other commenters suggested more group camping options to increase the number of reservations available. Some commenters were in favor of the lottery system for campgrounds, while others preferred for campsites to be reservable many months, or even years, in advance. One commenter said that the campsite reservation system is restrictive for rock climbers who require many days of training in the same area to complete climbing objectives.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Indeed, a significant barrier that gets in the way of climbers enjoying or visiting Yosemite include difficulty finding camping opportunities, especially given the restrictive stay limits in the park: a 30-night camping limit within Yosemite National Park in a calendar year, and a 14-night camping limit from May 1 to September 15 (including wilderness camping). This is not enough time for climbers to train/prepare for Yosemite's big walls and complete specific climbing objectives that often require multiple days and repeat attempts."

Comment: ". Please address the camping situation. People are making reservations that they later sell off. Perhaps there should be a system that doesn't allow you to get sites year after year so that everyone can have a chance at getting a site at some point in their lifetime."

Comment: "My one complaint is the campsite booking system. It is well know amongst the tech community that people have algorithms that automatically book campsites when they open. All sites are gone in milliseconds, something that is not humanly possible. I have been fortunate to camp in the valley (I somehow got a site by having 3 computers open and 3 people trying all when availability opened). All sites were immediately booked and when I show up many of the sites that

were supposedly booked remain empty throughout the weekend. It's frustrating and something that needs to be managed better. I consider myself quick on a computer so I can only imagine what the experience is like for older generations who may not be."

Comment: "More camping options. Get rid of the lotteries and make every site long term reservation. Families have to make plans a long time in advance to drive cross country for a once in a lifetime trip. Make campsites reservable 15 months in advance."

Comment: "The campaign reservation system is the worst ever because it leads to a massive amount of unused reservations."

New, Reopened, or Expanded Campgrounds

Commenters asked for more areas to be opened or reopened to camping. Commenters noted that decreased campground access after flooding in the late 1990s led to campsite closures. Commenters noted that by decreasing the number of campsites, the park incentivizes day trips, which increases vehicle congestion. Commenters acknowledged that the park wants to protect natural resources and noted that camping is a low-impact activity, especially compared to car congestion in the park. One commenter was frustrated by the simultaneous closure of Tuolumne and Bridalveil Creek campgrounds and asked that the park stagger closures for maintenance in the future. One commenter asked for the park to use fewer Yosemite Conservancy volunteers at campgrounds since they take up campsites. Some commenters asked for more campsites for RV camping or horse camping. Areas where commenters requested new, reopened, or expanded campgrounds included the following:

- Along Tioga Road
- Reopen Smoky Jack and Tenaya Lake campgrounds
- Turn parking lots into campgrounds
- Reopen Tuolumne campground
- Open all High Sierra camps
- Open campsites in Foresta Valley
- Reopen Crane Flat campground
- Reopen Upper and Lower River campgrounds

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "RETURN THE UPPER AND LOWER RIVER CAMPGROUNDS TO PUBLIC USE"

Comment: "INEFFECTIVE: Because of NPS's lack of sufficient resources, closing certain non-Yosemite Valley campgrounds including Smoky Jack and Tenaya Lake campgrounds."

Comment: "Also, it appears that you have diminished any visibility for the camping along the Tioga Pass Road (White Wolf etc.) - - maybe you put the signs back after the corona virus had run its course, but it sure seems to be LOW KEY. What's the story on this! Being able to camp in the high country is a tremendous experience - - and I would hate to see that go away."

Comment: "Also, are the High Sierra Camps going to be open again this year? That's another wonderful (semi) wilderness experience - - please don't eliminate that."

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I question the closing of both Tuolumne and Bridalveil campgrounds, at the same time! I understand the Park needs to maintain its facilities, but feel management could've staggered those closures.”

Elements: Education/Enforcement

Need for Additional Regulations/Enforcement

Commenters expressed concerns over how various forms of unpermitted access would impact park resources. They requested additional enforcement of park restrictions such as wilderness protections, dog-leash laws, regulating bike use on trails, campground rules, and anti-drone regulations. Commenters also identified litter as a concern and requested stricter enforcement and education on anti-litter regulations and Leave No Trace principles. They also requested that a no smoking ordinance be in place for the entire park and that mules be banned for personal use (only to be used for park rangers and rescue personnel).

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I would also like to see more enforcement of laws which prohibit dogs on trails and inside stores/restaurants.”

Comment: “Please work to keep bikes and especially E-Bikes off trails. With the human hikers it is enough of a potentially dangerous situation when crossing paths. Bikes and E-Bikes add an almost insurmountable level of danger. I like sharing the trails, bikes have room in the valley floor, the meadow loop in Wawona and all of the SNF.”

Comment: “I would like to see Yosemite enforce the 6 person campground limit.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “People who have a disregard for nature and not necessarily physical barriers or constraints the park has. Again, managing crowds and having the staff to enforce and observe those who lack accountability for keeping our parks safe and clean.”

Traffic Management Enforcement

Commenters suggested that traffic management, including speed limit enforcement, snow tire/chain requirements, use of turnouts, and limiting which parking lots visitors can use, may be effective at reducing congestion. Some commenters proposed hiring additional staff to assist with traffic management, specifically in the area of traffic management to address crosswalks and congestion points, and also noted concern that due to these areas emergency vehicles are unable to get through.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “- Continue using traffic management staff to manage and control the flow of traffic at crosswalks and congestion points.”

Comment: Topic Question 2: “The worst parts have been poor traffic management, due to the allowance of backups at Yosemite Falls on Northside Dr. Full time traffic control personnel should be utilized on weekends and evenings to mitigate these preventable traffic jams.”

Comment: “Fifth, if you're not an overnight guest, handicap, or under some other special consideration category, then you should be forced to park in the first lot that you're directed to. Cars should not be parking at Curry Village or elsewhere if they are not overnight guests, and so they shouldn't be aimlessly circling over there on their own at their own discretion under a “free for all” means of crowd control.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Enforcing the speed limit within park roads. Many visitors tailgate drivers on the 2 lane roads despite going the speed limit while coming out of the park and it's stressful. I don't visit Yosemite to be rushed out when all the fun is done, so drivers need to follow the speed limit and keep everyone safe, especially in winter conditions.”

Comment: “Years ago, they made you show that you have tire chains. After seeing the drivers these past few weeks, I think they should go back to that rather than just asking. I know this is a manpower issue, but people were sliding all over the roads. Also, as I have stated above, there needs to be a way for skiers to get to Badger Pass during the Firefall weekends.”

Noise Enforcement

Commenters requested stricter enforcement of noise limits to protect the park's soundscapes.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “At the very least, the campsites need to be spread out, and they need to be very strict rules as far as playing music, drinking and being loud. Quiet hours, starting at 10 PM is far too late, most people choose to wake up early to get a start on the day and to get hikes in. The sleep of everyone should be respected over the desire of a few to stay up late and make noise.”

Comment: “Failure to consistently enforce quiet hours at some campgrounds after 10pm (in 2022 saw some specific example of this at Hodgdon Meadow campground).”

Opposition to Restrictions

Commenters expressed opposition to current and proposed park restrictions, including trail closures, unused park resources, and stricter regulations on visitor use. Specifically, they requested not closing the Four Mile Trail in the winter and keeping the old superintendent's house open.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Please don't close the 4-mile trail in winter. It's a great winter hike, with the right equipment and skills.”

Comment: “I hope that the old superintendent's house will be refurbished and used, it would be a great place for kids to learn about the park, to have art classes, for displays of the park and maybe

even a place to enjoy a picnic on the patio of the building. It is a beautiful house that should remain.”

Comment: “Final thoughts. I have enjoyed Yosemite for the better part of 12 years now. Making several visits each summer. I realize that managing stupid is really an incredibly difficult task. My only request is to try not to make regulations or boundaries for the few idiots that end up destroying the experience for those who try to obey the rules and structures in place while seeing this wonderful place. Far too often in these types of evaluations, the final result is set in place to stop 10% of the population who are causing issues and problems. New regulations not only don't stop their irresponsible behavior but affect the other 90% trying to enjoy the park as intended.”

Staff Resources for Communication and Outreach

Commenters requested that additional park resources be committed to communication and outreach, including additional and clearer signage, educational programs for children and adults, and publicizing information on park conditions and congestion. Commenters proposed additional educational programs on respecting wildlife and the history and contributions of American Indians to the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I think the zoom meetings for backpackers to get their online permits approved was awesome! I learned so many more practical details of the basic leave no trace talk. With the diversity of experienced staff doing those zoom calls, there were new versions of the talk each time I listened. It also gave me an opportunity to see the knowledge level of the other backpackers with their questions. It would be so much easier to get an early start on Day 1 if I could do the zoom call and print my own permit. Last summer the rangers were just looking to see if I had previous permits, checking with me that I had, and then skipping the LNT talk and handing me the permit. In contrast, I can pick up a permit at Stanislaus NF headquarters in Sonora a few days before starting my trip Kibbie Ridge, Kennedy Meadows, Crabtree TH's)- -no discussion of LNT. For Humboldt Toiyabe NF (Leavitt Meadow, Robinson Creek, Virginia Lakes TH's) it is all on Rec.gov, including printing the permit, with zero human interface, just printed rules.”

Comment: “Having lots of signage about the reservation system, from Lee Vining all the way to Bishop is hopefully helpful to visitors. I feel like it's important to really make sure folks know what is going on before they make the trip, as I've noticed many people don't make a plan!”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “I don't seem to be able to find detailed information about the over all camping within the park. The park's website feels limited in the depth of what someone might need to understand in finding camping. For example, Crane Flats camp grounds, it was closed last year but it does not state if it will be re-opening for 2023. The website doesn't seem to stress how extremely difficult it is to obtain a site at particular times of the year.”

Comment: “Also, visitors need more guidance and education on how to conduct themselves and be good stewards. One idea to play with - could this be incentivized with a discount on park entry, e.g. \$5 off for attending or completing a 15 minute online orientation that could be provided in many languages, have a quiz at the end, that provides a QR code to scan at the entrance? It could cover bear issues like not speeding on park roads, trash, LNT, carrying chains, etc. Some national parks in other countries require all visitors entering to attend an orientation.”

Comment: “If it is an intent to one day limit entry into the park. I hope there will be consideration to install several early warning signs informing us as to the closures, along the routes leading to

the Park miles before entering the Park Stations. (e.g., just outside the last communities on the roads leading to the parks.”

Additional Communication

Commenters expressed uncertainty around what times of the year reservations were required for park entrance and requested additional communications about changes to the reservation system.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: “The biggest barrier is the uncertainty around when reservation systems start.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The communication has made it very difficult for us as tour operators to be aware of the most recent rules as a lot of times we were not aware of changes to the system. Making reservations for our customers is a lot of work and often they will change their routing because they are afraid they wont be able to visit the park at all.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Communication is key and then sticking to what had been communicated. For international visitors it is much more difficult to make reservations online. For the reservation system all reservations should be made further in advance (maybe a year / maybe 6 months out) but 7 days is too late for international visitors.”

Elements: New Elements

Limiting Private Vehicle Use

Commenters suggested restricting who should be permitted to drive private vehicles in the park. Some commenters suggested that all private vehicles be prohibited during certain timeframes.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “Limiting car access, parking, car campspots and capping motorized entry during certain hours or peak season has got to be the only way to deal with the hordes.”

Comment: “I also think it would be wise to ban cars with fewer than 3 people in them.”

Comment: “Close the entire Park to vehicles on some defined interval (once a month, once a week). Entry by foot, bike, horse, wheelbarrow...etc, just no cars.”

Comment: “Way less cars. Maybe none except for those with camping reservations and accessibility needs.”

Comment: “It is simply unsustainable to allow an unlimited number of vehicles to enter the park: after their drivers have waited in a long line just to enter the park, they will have to be in unacceptably harrowing traffic congestion, and many may give up without even finding a place to park their vehicles. For a longterm future, there is no reasonable alternative solution: there needs to be a limit on the number of day use vehicles allowed at certain times so that the allowed

vehicles do not exceed the number of available day use parking spaces. (And you cannot simply add more parking spaces—there's no "empty" extra space in the valley that should be paved over! Too much pavement already! Much better to reduce numbers of vehicles.)”

Other Suggestions to Address Crowding and Congestion

Commenters suggested other changes in operations to address crowding and congestion, adding or removing amenities and services, such as restaurants and lodging, limiting group sizes or the days when groups can access the park, or implementing a pricing structure based on demand.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “It seems like the heaviest usage in the park aside from the areas around the falls is where food is sold. I know the concessioners want to make as much money as possible but I wonder if prepared food were not sold except for the Ahawanee and Yosemite Lodge and something for tent campers at Curry it would ease congestion in those areas. If you're camping you bring your own food and could also do that for a day trip. Reservations could be required for dining at the Ahawanee and only people staying at the Lodge or Curry can eat at those venues. I know the concessioners wouldn't be in favor of this but is the purpose of the national parks to make money for the concessioner or to protect the park and preserve it for the enjoyment of the people. Having to plan and put a little effort into your trip to Yosemite might actually make you appreciate it more. A little effort often does that.”

Comment: “The allowable group size in many of these areas should be no more than 6. Please look at the impacts of these large, commercial groups when it comes to garbage (toilet paper in particular), campsite choices, and impacts on creek and river health.”

Comment: “all extraneous attractions should be eliminated, such as the bar.”

Comment: “A pricing structure that encourages access during underutilized times (fall and winter) could open up usage to a great many more folks.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “Although it would be an affront to tourism for the state and nation, remove concessions and hotels from the valley. Build a new underground parking structure near Wawona Tunnel. Anyone that wants to see the valley can park their car and then hike in to camp at Curry Village in their own tent. This would return the magic of nature to the park, reduce the burden of humanity, etc. There will be those who say that such practice is discriminatory to those who are disabled. Makes sense, allow people with handicapped placards to drop off their cars near the camp sites, then park back at Wawona, and have a shuttle bus take them back to the camp site. An alternative suggestion would be to allow every citizen the right to visit only once per year, but I do not know how many visitors make multiple trips per year and I do not know how this would work with foreign visitors. Perhaps some sort of common ground could be met between the extreme of the present congestion and my suggestions above by making specific parts of the valley more off limits to cars, and only accessible to hikers/overnight campers and then limit the number of overnight camp permits in a similar way to Grand Canyon.”

Additional Guidance and Resources

Commenters suggested additional resources, guidance, or requirements that should be considered in visitor access management planning at the park. These include the 1993 publication, “Yosemite Restoration Trust Improving the Visitor’s Experience in Yosemite Valley,” and the Biden administration’s “America the Beautiful” initiative.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I urge you to review the 1993 Yosemite Restoration Trust Improving the Visitor's Experience in Yosemite Valley Publication. Contributors include former Mariposa County Supervisor, Tuolumne County Senior Planner, NPS Western Regional Director, a Professor of Transportation Planning, NPS Denver Service Center, NPS Chief of Planning, a former Yosemite Superintendent, the Sierra Club, National Parks and Conservation Association, Mono Lake Committee, and me. The project was funded by the Compton Foundation, Goldman Foundation, Pew Charitable Trust, Heller Foundation, Strong Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Weeden Foundation, North Face, and Patagonia. The recommendations include 1) Disperse Visitor Use 2) Discourage and Limit Visits at Peak Times (day-use reservation system) 3) Transforming the Transportation System 4) Day-Use Reservation System Case Studies. The park's visitation at the time the recommendations were released was 3.8 million - up from 2.5 million in 1980. I would be happy to share a pdf of this copy if you do not otherwise have one in the Yosemite Library.”

Comment: “The team needs also to consider the Administration's new 30x30 initiative- -focused on reducing emissions to combat climate change and USING our natural lands for wildlife habitat to combat the extinction of species/biodiversity crisis. More than ever, our national park managers need to remember their parks' role in conserving nature. The 30 by 30 initiative ALSO wants more people to have better access to Nature. Access to Nature does not mean waiting in a car in long lines to enter the park, or just driving around trying to park a car; nor does it mean walking while dodging cars everywhere. Let Nature rule, so people can truly savor it all around.”

Tour and Other Commercial Operators

Commenters noted the benefits of organized tours and provided suggestions related to commercial providers in the park, such as reducing fees for tour operators. As a benefit, they noted that tour buses allow for more visitors in one vehicle, as opposed to the same number of visitors in separate vehicles. One commenter suggested the park consider offering new Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs) to more mountaineering and rock-climbing service providers to diversify recreational opportunities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “There are many things that can be done to contribute to a better experience for the visitors without disenfranchising gateway businesses, but none can make as much of an impact as recognizing and maximizing the benefits provided by the organized tour business.”

Comment: “Tour groups can be streamlined and with good policies could go a long way to alleviate traffic and parking problems as well as greatly reducing their impact on the shuttles. A tour bus length is between 22' & 45' and carry 15-50 passengers, each car is approximately 17' and

carries an average of 2.5 people, buses averaging 40 people take roughly the same space as two cars totaling an average of 5 people. Thus, individual vehicles, with the same number of people, take approximately 8 times as much parking space as tour buses.”

Comment: “- Reduce the cost to tour companies who are providing alternatives to driving in the park.”

Comment: “Currently Yosemite National Park permits only one provider of guided rock climbing and mountaineering services in Yosemite. This guide service has an excellent track record of service to the public over the many decades it has been in existence. However, we believe service to the public could be enhanced by expanding the availability of guided rock climbing and mountaineering in Yosemite. As a component of the Visitor Access Management Plan, we recommend the park consider offering new Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs) to a diverse array of mountaineering and rock-climbing service providers. This would increase recreational opportunities in Yosemite, expand public choice when selecting a guide, improve visitor services, and create jobs. There are examples of this approach being utilized with great success in other climbing parks. Rocky Mountain National Park and Mount Rainier National Park have increased the diversity of providers by implementing CUA programs and increasing the number of mountaineering concession contracts. These examples can serve as a model for expanding and improving recreational opportunities in Yosemite.”

Elements: Regional Transit

Expanded Regional Transit

Commenters noted benefits and suggested offering expanded or new regional transit services to the park, including expansion of existing bus service or new train or light-rail service. Commenters suggested the use of park-and-rides not only to enter to the park, but to also take visitors to scenic spots, such as Glacier Point. Increased use of the YARTS system from surrounding communities, such as Mariposa and Merced, was requested as well as restoring Amtrak service in the area. Some commenters noted that visitors should be encouraged to use tours as a way to reduce private vehicle traffic. Some commenters suggested that reservations should not be required for people arriving via public transit.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: “The crowds and lack of community transportation. You can tell which people rent a car to go to the park. If the park had a train that went up 140 and brought people to the valley this would help to cut down on car traffic while providing accessible forms of transport. The busses suck to ride up to the park, I’ve done it and I can see why someone would just fork over the money for a rental. We need a 2nd form of public transport and those train tracks are already there along 140, we need to use them.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I would like to see much more frequent YARTS service from surrounding cities - especially Mariposa and Merced. It would also be nice if there were ways to schedule smaller Yarts vans or shuttle from surrounding cities.”

Comment: “Can the powers that be seriously look into restoring the Yosemite railway line from now-quiet Chowchilla, connecting to Amtrak? Most of the railway bed is still there, so

engineering-wise, it is not a huge deal to recreate. That would appeal to so many out-of-state and especially out-of-the-country visitors if they could take a connecting train to visit the park, and they could enjoy the beautiful river views from observation cars along the way. Connecting flights to FAT and then renting a car or van is just not feasible for many, and it adds to the Yosemite Valley vehicle congestion. If Europe can do it, USA should be able to do it even better.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “This doesn't solve the permitting problem of high demand areas like Half Dome, but encouraging people to take public transit into the park will increase the quality of everyone's experience. More restrictions on car volume and better marketing for YARTS. What would blow my mind is to have light rail replace the current YARTS system and run the service every hour or every 15 or 30 min during high demand times.”

Comment: “Transportation - Local Small Bus Tour Guides: o We need to stop treating buses as second-class citizens and start making it VERY easy for them to help the cause. NPS has supported YARTS for years, which makes sense if YARTS was successful and fuller, but WHY does NPS not support local tour operators that takes a ton of cars out of Yosemite each year? I know this is a strong statement, but we've gone over this over and over again throughout the years with nothing happening, it's time to make a change. I would suggest having a conversation with Dee Ann Smith with Discover Yosemite Tours. She has been around a very long time and is very knowledgeable, follows the rules, and wants to do what's best for all. I was told that an average car length is 17 feet and carries 2.5 passengers and the local tour operator busses are 27' and carry an average of 20 passengers...you can see that the math favors bringing in more tour operators. Plus, their smaller vans are 22' and seat 14 people - about the same car size with 11.5 more people per car.”

Regional Transit Issues

Commenters identified issues related to regional transit to the park, including lack of access to or lack of awareness of regional transit services, or limitations from regional transit schedules. Some commenters suggested ways to increase awareness and use of regional transit services through marketing or incentives.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “YARTS is a great way to get into the park, but it doesn't run frequently enough.”

Comment: “YARTS - you need to increase awareness and options. Think of it, visitors that arrive at the gate without a reservation can drive back to Oakhurst, park, and ride to and enjoy the Park without impacting the traffic situation in the Park.”

Comment: “I believe Yosemite needs to make much more use of the YARTS bus service. Presently, it is not an even matching the plans from years ago. For example, the Merced River Plan calls for four round trips to Sonora. Presently there are only three. There are some good strategies for improving ridership. A 1/2 full bus removes 10 cars from Yosemite roads. Some strategies for improving ridership are: • Offer video delivered interpretation en route. • Improve the bus frequency. • Offer financial incentives. • Make easy connections or offer special service from the gateways to the High Country. • Offer a special run that would be "local" and make certain stops such as 10 minutes at Olmsted point. I believe with expanded bus service including reasonable incentives to increase ridership, modifications to a peak use reservation system, and much stronger, sustained publicity, Excess congestion and be managed and contained.”

Comment: “Gateway visitors should have the option of subsidized transportation to the Valley, as a way of reducing traffic.”

Comment: “I think it would be instructive to study the acceptance of various alternate transportation schemes. There are many reasons for people to use their private vehicles rather than transits; however, there may be some who are willing to use an alternate form in exchange for access. Perhaps a reservation system for those with private vehicles, but allow anyone willing to take a bus access without reservation? I might consider that alternative if: 1. There is not a major additional cost. 2. There is a reliable place to park my personal vehicle. 3. There are enough buses running to not waste time waiting. 4. The schedule can accommodate early and later hours. 5. The buses are not limited to the most popular areas. 6. The buses have enough space for cargo.”

Hotel Shuttles

Commenters suggested that hotels in gateway communities outside the park be required or encouraged to provide shuttle services for their guests to the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “By limiting overnight accommodations in the park, more accommodations have been created outside the park, adding even more to the traffic problems with so many people driving up for the day. I think the larger hotels should be required to provide free shuttles for their guests.”

Comment: “Accommodations could also be encouraged to tack a few extra dollars onto a night's lodging fee, and provide shuttle service to the Valley for their customers. the views along the way, as the shuttle service drives toward the park, can also be advertised as a worthwhile part of the visitor experience.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I wonder if the out laying accommodations could offer shuttle service for their guests into Yosemite to further cut down on vehicle traffic. Make the YARTS system more well advertised to those same hotels, motels, campgrounds and RV parks.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I think that gateway hotels outside the Park should be allowed and encouraged to develop shuttles into the park for day use visitors (Similar to, but more flexible than YARTS) This will provide a means for visitors without reservations to visit the park and concurrently stimulate the gateway communities economies.”

Elements: Reservations - Timing

Reservation Timing

Commenters expressed a preference for requiring reservations during time periods with high visitation (i.e., months, days, hours) or year round. Commenters also identified timeframes when reservations should not be required (e.g., weekdays outside of the peak visitation season). One commenter also suggested doing a baseline analysis for two years (2023 and 2024) to account for continuing construction in 2023. Commenters appreciation for being able to access the park without a reservation outside of peak hours under the 2022 reservation system, which

allowed for more spontaneous visits. Some commenters expressed a preference or requested changes to these hours.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I think the reservation system was a good idea, and I do think it should become a permanent practice during busy times: Summer and weekends year-round. But for local visitors like me, it’s nice to be able to go up to the park spontaneously. Leaving weekdays in the off season off reservations leaves locals and foreign visitors the chance to visit spontaneously.”

Comment: “I would like no reservations in the winter - October thru April, except for special events like Fire Fall, and keep the 6AM feature with the reservation system.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “Yosemite should go to a year round reservation system to get into the park. Leaving it only for certain seasons is confusing to those who want to visit. Make it year round so there is no confusion, that you will always need a reservation to get in.”

Comment: “The last implemented plan allowed access to the park before 6:00am and after 4:30pm without a pass. We would hope that the data collected during 2023 will be used to expand these times as much as possible.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “5. Day use reservations 7am-4pm while not popular is the best solution. Although volume of day use visitors 9:30am to 3:30pm overwhelms the areas on Southside drive.”

Comment: “The change in the reservation system in 2022 to allow non-reserved entrance in the morning and late afternoons was welcome and worked well for many. It especially helps locals. However, the early cutoff of 06:00 is perhaps a little too early, especially for people who aren’t staying extremely close, resulting in some management issues such as unauthorized camping along Hwy 120. A somewhat later cutoff of 07:00 might alleviate some of these problems, as more people will feel they can make the cutoff without needing to camp in their vehicles, while still allowing management of crowding within the park.”

Reservation Duration

Commenters expressed preference for the duration of reservations (number of days a reservation is valid), ranging from one to seven days. Commenters also noted that people should be permitted to visit the park on any day during the reservation window. They noted that by moving from three- to seven-day reservations, the price of access effectively doubled.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I like the reservations system that was used, either a 3 or 5 day window seemed to work best to limit crowding.”

Comment: “Weekends will always be the most sought out days. By allowing to visit on any day during the reservation window worked best vs having to show up on day 1 of the reservation,”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “We really liked the second year of reservation system that one could arrive on any day of the pass window. We liked that much better because it allowed some

flexibility if we could not make the first day of our pass. Also, three day was fine, we did not need 7 day window.”

Comment: “An improvement to the prior reservation system would be to allow a one or two day reservation. For those of use who live within a few hours drive of the Park, we still needed to make a reservation good for three days even though used just for a day visit. The three day reservation deprived others who needed a full three days.”

Reservation Timed Entry

Commenters requested that the park implement timed entry windows to help manage queues at the gates and traffic congestion in the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “In summer, use hourly reservations windows from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Benefit: Reduce gate wait time.”

Comment: “Although this may be a barrier to entry for some, I think offering limited-time-slotted access would let the park actively manage congestion throughout the year.”

Comment: “We would like to briefly highlight a few other models of visitor management that exist in other park units. These include the following: • The timed entry window regulations that Rocky Mountain National Park utilized as part of their visitor management strategy in order to stager the number of folks at the gates.”

Elements: Reservation and Time-Entry System

Suggested Changes to the System

Commenters asked questions about, raised issues with, or suggested changes to the online reservation system, including changes in the platform being used, allowing visitors to book accommodations on the site, improving the cancellation process to allow for refunds, banning bots, changing fees, and offering refunds. One commenter asked how many people use the reservation system. One commenter suggested operational changes to implement in lieu of a reservation system.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “There was a thread on the FB backpacking pages earlier this year advising that RECREATION.GOV is NOT actually run by the government, but instead a private company, whose goal is to make money. While I understand that creating and managing a website costs somebody money, and therefore cannot be completely free, it is disturbing to many of us that apparently NONE of the funds go to the parks themselves. I believe the backcountry permitting used to be done by Yosemite Conservancy, which directly benefits the park. Consider going back to this system for Yosemite.”

Comment: “The park reservation system is effective, I guess, though I find it really annoying. I end up booking more reservations than I need because they open up so far in advance I don't know exactly when my friends are able to go, but I just take whatever I can get. I probably didn't use half my reservations last year. Do you even offer refunds if I release a reservation? I don't know. That might help.”

Comment: “The reservation system used during the pandemic was the most effective strategy to date but could be improved. The cost per day reservation should be refundable but should also be increased, this would encourage folks to submit cancellations when they are unable to use the reservation. These cancelled reservations should be made available (but never on a same day basis) so that the total number of visitors per day can be more accurately managed without having to predict the number of no-shows.”

Comment: “There must be a way to collect data that would provide clarity on people that utilize technology as an unfair advantage. There must to be a way to create an equally fair system. Please allocate the needed resources to work through these issues. This is a HUGE PROBLEM!”

Comment: “Streamline the reservation and permitting system by having entrance reservation and associated recreation permits accessed through the same portal; for example, if a wilderness permit is required for an activity, bundle the wilderness permit with the entrance reservation, or if someone only needs a wilderness permit, allow for a process to bypass the entrance reservation (i.e. one channel, one permit). Have all reservation requirements and information at the top of YNP's homepage with no permitting information hidden beyond other links. Ensure any reservations or permitting are in line with the NPS mandate for implementing minimum regulatory tools.”

Previous Reservation Systems

Commenters expressed a range of views on past reservation systems. Some commenters expressed support or described the benefits of a particular reservation system previously used at the park (i.e., the 2020–2021 system or 2022 system). Alternatively, some commenters identified issues with previous systems or expressed uncertainty regarding the effects of previous systems.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I am a very strong supporter of the reservation system. It worked well and you should reinstitute it. I thought the 2020-2021 system was the best. The time-check system for people passing through over Tioga Pass seemed to work fine. I did not like the change in 2022 that required full reservations for people who were only going to be in the Park for a few hours and thus would have minimal impact on facilities. For example, I used Tioga Pass to access an eastside trailhead in Inyo National Forest for a week-long backpack. Therefore, I had to get two separate day-use reservations even though I only spent about four hours total in the Park. These were reservations that could have gone to actual day users.”

Comment: “The reservation system in 2021 wasn't as successful because you allowed a lot more vehicles than in 2020. And while that was better than being uncontrolled, it still wasn't the best visitor experience.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “I've been pleased with each year's version of the reservation system. Being able to book ahead worked well for me as well as when you would free more up just

prior to entry date. Unrestricted entry last year before 0600 and after 1600 seemed popular although I didn't use it because we had ticketed entries. 3 days makes more sense than 7 days. It took time to get the car stickers at East Gate but I was fine with it because then we could pass through quickly. Was surprised when you stopped issuing them in Fall 2022.”

Comment: Topic Question 3: “The requirement to have a camping reservation or day-use permit in 2020/2021 was good at reducing crowding but I think those policies were a little too restrictive. The 2022 policy of only imposing entrance restrictions during peak hours (and peak season) was a better idea.”

Comment: “Crowding and congestion in the valley has simply not been effectively addressed, although COVID did provide a convenient excuse to impose temporary visitation limits through a reservation system.”

Wilderness Permit Reservation System Improvements

Commenters suggested improvements to the online wilderness permit reservation system, including allocating permits by lottery, providing a wait list for areas that are fully booked, or reducing fees.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “The wilderness permit reservation system could use improvement. It should allow you to see the remaining trailhead quota in real time - like the Inyo NF system does. As of last summer, you had to submit a reservation request and then wait days (sometimes weeks) to find out if your request was successful or if someone got in before you. The required back-and-forth between web sites and recreation.gov is awkward at best.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “(1) While we like the newish reservation system for acquiring wilderness permits, one thought would be to implement a wait list / sign-up if a certain area is booked up. For example, wilderness permits are GONE in seconds once they open up (which admittedly, is part of the fun), but there are often cancellations. Having to go back into the system and check periodically is doable, but we wonder if a wait-list system could be implemented such that the person who didn't get lucky with an original permit, may get lucky if there is a cancellation. But that may require an email or text to the wait-listed person to confirm within X time if they get off the waitlist. Acknowledge there is no perfect solution.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I think the best wilderness permit system I've ever seen is run by the PCTA. You enter a free lottery which assigns you a time of day. At that time you get access to select whatever permit is available. They have 2 batches of permits so they do this twice over the winter. It keeps things fair for those with slow connections while still keeping it flexible and adaptable. Most importantly they don't charge a lottery fee. Yosemite could learn a lot from them.”

Comment: “I really wish to section hike JMT this season and I am really held back by why recreation.gov charges us to participate in lottery. I do not gamble, if I did I'd rather go burn money in Vegas Please consider removing these lottery participation charges before someone with deep pockets sues NPS. It can be done ask Conservancy, they have managed the permits and lotteries pretty well.”

Education and Public Messaging

Commenters raised the need for better education and public messaging related to the reservation system or more consistency in implementing reservations. Some commenters noted that public messaging related to any system changes is needed far enough in advance for international travelers to make or change their plans.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “However, as a FS employee last season at Mono Lake, the reservation system needs to be better advertised - many of our visitors from Europe were not aware and were very frustrated.”

Comment: “Discontinuing the reservation system without having a better plan in place seems like an unforced error.”

Comment: “Worst parts: - Permitting systems and unpredictable/short notice changes to them”

Comment: “• DMOs and gateway lodging will need to know if a reservation system is going into effect at least 14 months in advance. • Consistency with reservation system parameters every time its implemented. • Allowing gateways to place promotional pieces at gates and make process for NPS approval easier. Can NPS provide a template? • Providing DMOs some passes to have available for media visits that relate to their marketing efforts.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “Not knowing what traffic conditions and congestion will be is a big barrier. If you don't know if you will find parking or whether or not you will experience lots of congestion, it creates a barrier and disincentive to visit the park. This could be improved if the park were able to provide visitation forecasts, which it would be able to do if it was issuing daily and overnight permits. It would be able to post daily visitation permits that have been issued on the park website, and people would be able to either choose not to come, or submit for a permit (if any are available), or otherwise plan accordingly.”

Elements: Visitor Capacities

Support for Visitor Capacity Limits

Commenters expressed support for a fixed limit on the number of people or cars that could enter the park at a given time. Many commenters suggested that capacities be tied to the number of available parking spaces to reduce parking lot congestion. Some commenters also suggested that additional capacities be imposed on repeat visitors or visitors from different states or countries to ensure equitable access to the park. Commenters felt that restrictions on the number of visitors in the park would alleviate issues associated with crowding and protect park resources from overuse.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Sixth, there should be a quota on the number of cars allowed into the valley at a time depending on the number of eligible parking spaces. More parking spaces are a must, but once a capacity is reached, visitors should be directed to other less utilized portions of the park like

Wawona and Tuolumne Meadows, where hopefully more parking can be created, as well, once needed.”

Comment: “There are only so many people, cars, buses, and RV's which the Park can hold. Allow percentages of those marked guests during an open calendar time up to the percentage of their identified past attendance. The statistics of state, national, and international visitors may be adjusted after this next year, given any complaints, observations, or special requests. Comments: You need a couple of mathematicians and good programmers to set this up.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Identifying visitor capacity will be one of the most important and complex parts of the planning process. A reservation system will only be effective if you have taken into account each of the following three dimensions of recreation carrying capacity to determine the number of reservations to allow per day: resource, social, and managerial (Manning 2011). Social considerations are particularly difficult to analyze because of the subjective nature of visitor experiences. Determining what the "majority" of visitors consider to be "quality experience" will require a lot of public engagement including questionnaires, polls, surveys etc. I suggest a technique used by Arches National Park, where visitors were shown pictures of Delicate Arch with varying levels of crowding and asked to identify which were representative of acceptable levels of crowding. Their year long survey revealed that the majority of people think that a crowd of 30 or more visitors at Delicate Arch is unacceptable (Manning et al 2017). Using this information Arches National Park resized their parking area and adopted a regulation against overflow parking to limit the number of visitors frequenting that area. Yosemite's Visitor Access Management Plan could benefit from techniques like these.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “Carrying capacity is a tool that must enter in to every management decision. Our National Parks should not be managed as government versions of Disneyland. People who visit Disneyland do so for a man made experience that appeals to their psyches. Our National Parks exist to preserve aspects of the natural world that exceed anything man can duplicate. Our role is to see that these examples of the natural world will be available for our children's children to appreciate and to thank us for what we have done.”

Comment: “As it relates to the number of daily reservations granted, we believe the primary consideration should be limiting vehicle traffic at chokepoints such as entrance stations and the eastern portion of Yosemite Valley. We thus ask the NPS take time to fully analyze whether the vehicle and individual capacity limits outlined in documents such as the Merced River Plan are sufficient to protect the park, or whether lower thresholds should be considered when allocating future vehicle reservations.”

Increased Visitor Quotas

Commenters expressed that limitations were effective in preventing crowding but suggested that more visitors be allowed into the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I'd like to see the reservation system remain in place with an expanded number of reservations offered during peak times.”

*Comment: "The original reservation system (reservations needed 24 hours per day) seemed to way undershoot capacity. There were summer days when the Valley felt deserted. The goal should be to get as many people into the park as can get in and *enjoy* it."*

Elements: Entrance Station Suggestions

Suggestions for Reducing Wait Times

Commenters provided suggestions for how wait times could be reduced at entrance stations including hiring additional staff to ensure that kiosks remain open during peak entry times, reducing entry line wait times, and using "express lanes" for visitors who could be offered expedited entry (e.g., annual pass holders, visitors reentering the park, and residents of gateway communities). Other suggestions included additional entrance lanes, printable passes to save time, allowing visitors to pay by cash, having multiple rangers working the line perform tasks such as checking reservations, collecting necessary paperwork, and answering visitor questions so that cars can pass through entry kiosks more quickly. Commenters also suggested operational changes so that park employees would not have to provide information at entrance gates, such as rerouting visitors with questions to a visitor center or placing information kiosks near entrance gates.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: "The entrance stations should be fully staffed (have all the booths open) to reduce the wait time."

Comment: "Separate lanes for annual and senior pass holders and a quick response from entrance staff to make them available when the entrances start to get crowded."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "There is going to be a line and a crowd of people entering so it is important to communicate. If there's not reservations, will you just turn people away when the park is "full"? How will you handle the lines at the entrance. Again, there was no management before. A few suggestions: open all three lanes. Have one lane for those with passes (including annual passes). Have a ranger there to triage the line, sending passes to the far gate and answering questions for other s before they get up to the booth. Another suggestion, have passes/QR codes that are printable (this is more for reservations). This will free up time at the booth. Last suggestion, learn form our friends at in-n-out. Have multiple rangers working the lines to take entrance fees, etc. Use an ipad or like device to make a mobile check out."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Use an "In and Out Burget-type" system for entry at the gates, where people with clipboards go ip to cars waiting in line and do everything necessary for park entry except collect entry fees, so the lines at the gates move more quickly."

Comment: "Managing the entrance lines at the Tioga entrance is a challenge since there is only one lane. It's very helpful when a ranger is able to wave some people through in the opposite lane when there is no traffic heading out of the park. It's frustrating to wait for people who have lot of questions or need to buy a pass. I just try to arrive very early and prior to having that line build up."

Arch Rock Entrance Station

Commenters suggested that the Arch Rock entrance station be moved down to the park boundary to allow construction of additional entrance booths and lanes.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "I believe the arch rock station needs to be moved down to Parkline, at whatever the cost. Vehicles backed up in the rockslide zone is not a smart safety policy."

Comment: "I recommend moving the Arch Rock entrance to the park line so that there are many more lanes to get through the gate process. Lanes for employees and residents are essential."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "I also would like to suggest that moving the Arch Rock entrance station down to the park boundary (near the Yosemite View) would allow construction of additional entrance booths which could help alleviate the long lines. Also automating the entrance process would speed up the entrance process. With more booths you can have expedited entry stations and have a limited number of stations for those visitors who require information, directions or suggestions. The same comment about expanding the number of booths at Tioga Pass also applies"

Elements: Emerging Technology

Additional Technological Infrastructure

Commenters requested additional technological infrastructure in the park, including additional Wi-Fi and cellular coverage as well as solar power generation and additional chargers for electric vehicles. Commenters noted that these improvements may improve park resources and decrease congestion within the park by making it easier for park visitors to bring electric vehicles or use rideshare apps.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Also, as more visitors will be driving EVs to Yosemite, more L1/L2 charging should be provided where practical- -the existing handful of chargers in the valley are insufficient, and people will instead drive gas-powered cars if there is fear that they'll be stranded without ability to charge."

Comment: "Another suggestion I have is to add more electric car chargers. To my knowledge, there are currently only 2 chargers in the entire park, both at the Yosemite Village store. I now drive an electric car, and the range is barely enough to get me from the closest charger outside the park to the valley and back. As we shift away from fossil fuels in the coming years, chargers in the park will become more important."

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Has the park considered allowing and providing adequate cell coverage for ride sharing apps like Uber to operate to alleviate crowding and parking? Bus service and bus stops are very limited. Many folks are seeking experiences that start at road pullouts near climbing walls or bouldering areas that are not well served by buses. Many others want to do hikes that start in one place and come out a different place, which requires a car at either end."

Comment: “Electric Charging Stations & Solar Power: The park (not just the concessionaire) needs to support alternative energy methods by incorporating solar power into ALL building and renovation projects, and by building electric vehicle charging stations that are NOT part of a concessionaire business location.”

Technology Fees

Commenters noted that technology use may decrease their enjoyment of the park. In particular, some commenters noted that filming may contribute to crowding issues and raise safety concerns. Commenters proposed measures including imposing higher fees for commercial filming and decreasing park personnel’s reliance on technology.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “If there is a permit for commercial filming or non-commercial filming, this can further resolve the crowding issue and filming for personal use and enjoyment. If there are fees for using technology, this can help manage activity of tourists and even ensure public safety. On the website it states that the fee for commercial filming for 1-10 people - \$150/day. I believe they should raise the price to really ensure public safety and tackle the crowding issue.”

Travel and Parking Information

Commenters suggested the use of technology to communicate parking availability and congestion to potential visitors in advance. Commenters provided examples of how this technology has been implemented through websites and apps to improve visitor experience and congestion in recreational and commercial areas.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Also - I suggest that you consult with Disneyland on crowd management. I'm not kidding. Those folks have it down to a science! An app like Mousewait would be a game changer. People could report on current conditions in real time so you could avoid them until later. Don't roll your eyes. I saw that! 😊. I know you don't have unlimited budget, but it's either do something or allow this world treasure to be trashed. A really good app could help. I've downloaded several and haven't seen any that are comparable.”

Comment: Topic Question 2: “2) The valley needs to be treated as its own traffic management zone in some fashion. IMHO. I'd suggest digitizing parking lot occupancy, local malls do that with their parking structures which minimizes orbiting when people know from informational signs exactly where there are open parking spots. Modest in/out counters, some networked informational signs perhaps with an updated parking lot occupancy webpage and a lot of visitor frustration and unnecessary valley roadway traffic congestion could be mitigated.”

Comment: “One of the exercises we did in 2012 was to divide visitors into four different groups. Each group had different demographics and different strategies to reach as well as behaviors to change to have an effect on peak time congestion. Two of those groups could best be reached as they were approaching the Park on the highway. In both cases, there were two primary means of reaching those travelers. One, changeable message signs in the four gateways. Two, a smartphone

app that provides a Yosemite message as the traveler reaches specified zip code in the four gateways. A preliminary design of this app was created. For context, I have spent 40 years working in Silicon Valley designing and implementing software. The changes mentioned above should be straightforward design and implement.”

Comment: “NPCA supports using technology, such as park websites, apps, roadside signs, and other means, to provide pre-planning and real-time information to park visitors to help them plan their trip and prepare for a seamless, responsible, and enjoyable national park experience. Working with the local business community, local/state tourism representatives, and the California Department of Transportation to help educate visitors and provide information would be mutually beneficial for the park and its neighboring communities.”

Technology at Entrance Stations

Commenters suggested the use of technology to expedite park entry. Some proposed technological implementations focused on the reservation system, including QR codes to verify reservations, electronic passes, or car tags to expedite entry for annual or seasonal pass holders. Other suggestions focused on payment at toll booths, such as RFID toll systems and improved credit card readers.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I think the thing to do with the entrance reservations, is to switch to a scannable QR code type of reservation document/electronic document.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “5. Congestion at entrance gates is a problem. Coincidentally, congestion at urban toll plazas was also historically a problem. Toll plazas solved the problem using RFID “E-Zpass” or “Fastrak” systems that allow vehicles to drive through without stopping. More recently, bridges such as the Golden Gate Bridge eliminated all cash payments for non-Fastrak users by using license plate readers to mail the motorist a bill. The entrance gate is basically a toll plaza. Therefore, similarly, your goal will be to have lanes at the entrance gates that do not require most vehicles to stop and interact with a ranger. Ideas to consider might be: (a) integrate with California FasTrak toll system, (b) allow users with an annual pass to associate that annual pass with a vehicle license plate, (c) collect license plate numbers and annual pass identifiers when issuing a day use entry permit, campground permit, or wilderness permit, and use this information to identify the vehicle using license plate readers, (d) mail users a bill using the license plate number, similar to the Golden Gate Bridge (e) prominently feature digital materials that can be downloaded onto a smartphone (e.g. smartphone app, mobile-friendly website), so that new visitors to the park don't need to be given paper materials (newspaper, brochure) by a ranger.”

Comment: “NPCA also supports analyzing whether technological improvements such as improving wireless internet access at entrance stations and providing park staff with mobile credit/debit card readers could allow NPS staff on foot near entrance stations to provide information, check reservations, and accept payments from vehicles in line to enter. Such a solution could help the park expedite the sometime hours-long lines at entrance stations especially if vehicles that already have reservations and passes to enter the park are then allowed to use the entrance lanes reserved for park employees and residents.”

Elements: Big Wall Climbing Permits

Big Wall Climbing Permit Challenges

Commenters stated that the reservation system and big wall permits have made rock climbing difficult in the park and suggested the permit system apply to those doing non ground-up tactics (e.g., pre-placing water, food, gear, and leaving fixed ropes). They requested that quotas and fees not be applied to this activity. They further noted that the need to obtain permits in advance makes climbing in the park difficult, as climbers tend to make plans on short notice based off weather conditions.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 5: “The big wall permitting process has made it extremely difficult for out of state climbers to visit the park and climb longer routes on El Cap and other formations. It is a barrier that doesn’t seem to have any benefit to the park. The people who are spending multiple nights on a wall are the ones who are being good stewards to the park. These climbers are the ones who are picking out all there shit, literally. The permitting process should really be applied to those who are doing non ground up tactics such as pre placing water/food/gear, leaving fixed ropes, etc.”

Comment: “However, climbers have expressed frustration with the multitude of permit requirements including gate reservations, big wall permits and wilderness climbing”

Comment: “The reservation system - climbers often decide to come or not on short notice based on the weather. This is fundamentally incompatible with the reservation system.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “Having to schedule or get a permit to do a climb on any kind of reservation system. Anything that would encourage climbers to jump into a bad weather window or make a bad decision just because they had the permit and were concerned they couldn’t change plans or it would be difficult to get that permit again. Any permitting restriction system will have this dangerous and negative effect on climbers.”

Comment: “A trailhead quota approach does not accurately capture all trail users or manage where groups go once past the trailhead. In many instances this concept would not be applicable to climbers who commonly use non-system trails or go off trail to access climbs. We suggest—even if a trailhead quota system is implemented—that park managers continue to allow (permitted) bivouacs for climbers where necessary to achieve their climbing objective as long as they observe NPS rules and policies and observe Leave No Trace Principles. Likewise, a designated campsite approach for managing visitor use is often not applicable to climbers as they frequently bivouac on the wall itself when targeting longer climbing objectives. While we assume this designated campsite management approach would be directed more towards traditional backpackers in YNP backcountry, it is unclear how this might impact climber overnight use in the backcountry and we question whether this potential management tool will apply to climbers who require an overnight bivouac to complete, approach, or return from a climb. Where appropriate, we support a combination of destination quotas and zone quotas for managing visitor use. The destination quota approach is similar to the current management of the popular Cables Route up Half Dome. This form of management is appropriate for “special destinations” such as Half Dome, which draw large crowds of people to high use “hot spots.” Planners may find that additional locations that attract high use levels in Yosemite warrant “special destination” status and apply a destination quota as an appropriate management tool to for managing visitor use as a

means to achieve desired conditions. We expect that prior to the park imposing additional destination quotas, planners will conduct adequate visitor use pattern and carrying capacity studies in order to determine appropriate desired conditions for each "special destination." We also support zone quotas and believe that zones can be used to manage social and environmental conditions as well as determine, if necessary, the appropriate time and scope for mitigation. However, given the diversity of visitor use, wilderness character, and management needs at different locations in Yosemite, planners should consider developing multiple zones for this plan with each designed to accommodate the needs and use patterns of appropriate visitor uses. As with all the quota concepts, prior to applying a zone quota park planners should clearly articulate the desired condition for each zone based on well-substantiated social science."

Climbing Safety and Orientation

Commenters requested that the park implement a safety or orientation system to educate visitors on proper climbing techniques. Some commenters also encouraged raising fees on climbing permits to pay for this system.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: "Make people pay \$200.00 to get a permit to hike to the top of Half Dome via the cables. Last time I checked, it was only \$6. Pay \$100 for the permit and \$100 to watch a movie, on line, on how to hike up the cables to the top of Half Dome. Then have a time for people to start the hike. I have hikes to Half Dome at night 16 times. Never crowded at night and watched a great sunrise every time. Use the money to educate people on the dangers and the proper procedure when hiking the cables. Use one cable. Right side going up and left side going down. Show how to hike on the inside and outside of the cable. Proper gloves to use, equipment to bring, etc. Have a Ranger shack at the flat part before the blocks to screen people and stagger them out when it gets crowded."

Comment: "I feel like a permitting system to reduce casualties on rock climbing would be a great system, and maybe offering an orientation course nearby the park would help weed out the wanna-be rock climbers vs. the hard-core climbers to reduce the death rate at the park."

Wilderness Permit Requirement for Climbing

Commenters felt that the requirement for visitors to obtain wilderness permits for climbing was unnecessary. Commenters also noted that many visitors were unaware of this requirement.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: "Also, El Capitan is not wilderness. You can see and hear the road. Wilderness permits for big wall climbing are silly."

Comment: "Additionally, it is not clear from Yosemite's homepage that a wilderness climbing permit is required, as this information is behind a series of other links. The additional requirement to pick the permit up in person often necessitated another entrance reservation, and required securing lodging for the evening - either inside or outside the park - as the team needed to pick up a permit the day before a climb. Finally, inside the park with a wilderness climbing

permit in hand, the climbing team needed to find a place to park their vehicle, with limited space available for many of the big wall trailheads. In summary, the process for securing reservations, lodging, and permits during the 2022 season was not intuitive or streamlined, and presented difficulties with coordinating entrance permits and lodging without significant advanced preparation.”

Elements: Parking Reservations

Parking Reservations or Limits

Commenters expressed support for implementing parking reservations or otherwise limiting the number of cars that can park at the park and provided rationale for implementing reservations, including limiting traffic congestion and allowing people to park close to the locations within the park that they would like to visit. Commenters noted specific locations that should have reserved parking including Tenaya Lake, Tuolumne Meadows, the Eastern Valley and Yosemite Valley Lodge. Some commenters noted that parking lots should have time limits or attendants directing traffic to available spaces. Commenters noted that a parking spot should be guaranteed for people who obtain a reservation or wilderness permit. One commenter noted that enforcement of parking reservations may be difficult.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “the park may already have tried requiring a pre-reserved parking space. This may have the problem that people will reserve haphazardly and then not use the reserved space, but there are likely ways around such specific issues, and it could avoid SOME of the horrible summer congestion.”

Comment: “Since Tenaya Lake and Tuolumne Meadows are on Highway 120 for which there is also a lot of through-traffic, some sort of a reservation system needs to be implemented for day-use parking at those locations. I realize that also means having rangers situated at those locations to enforce reservations at those area's parking lots, something that may be too expensive and difficult to implement as well as being a thankless, endlessly frustrating job for the rangers.”

Comment: “There should be reservations where people can pay for a guaranteed parking spot and if they have a specific desired area to visit, there should be a reservation for that said location. Yes, it costs, but I believe people are willing to pay more for a less crowded experience.”

Comment: “In the Valley or other areas where we have parking lots, a parking lot attendant will radio the waiting area attendant to tell him which spot is now open. The waiting area attendant will then attach the spot number to the middle of the square plastic permit on the windshield.”

Comment: “Provide a 2-hour parking lot so that people can come in and take the sightseeing bus and walk around some without the time to do any hiking. I'm reluctant to suggest this because it takes up some of the already precious parking space. Therefore, as an alternative, maybe give people a map of a loop they can drive that will take them around without stopping, allowing them to see Yosemite Valley from their car. Then, if they would like, they can get in line to tour either Hwy 120 or Hwy 41.”

Elements: Horsetail Falls Reservations

Reservations for Horsetail Fall

Commenters reported diminished visitor experience due to crowding during the Horsetail Fall event. Many commenters requested that the reservation system be implemented for Horsetail Falls during February, though some visitors expressed concerns with the restrictions on roadside parking. Alternatively, some commenters expressed frustrations with park restrictions in February. Commenters requested that the park be accessible without reservations in February and offered alternative suggestions, such as clearing trees to expand the park area where visitors can view Horsetail Falls, and opening areas of the park outside of the Falls to general access.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Worst - Firefall in February. It is completely out of control, especially over Presidents day weekend.. You truly need to implement the reservation system for the month of February. Presidents Day Weekend was complete grid lock after it was over. People were simply parking 2 miles away and trampling everything in site”

Comment: “Also, I do not like the way the reservations for Horse Tail Falls are being handled. Yes we need to limit it but the way it is happening there are hundreds of people on the trail and senior citizens are not able to get there. I much preferred when people had to get reservations and were allowed to park on the side of the road but restrictions were all week long.”

Comment: “The reservation system has been effective in addressing crowds specifically Horsetail Fall. Online it says that in order to manage this event, reservations will be required for entry to Yosemite on; February 10-12, 2023, February 17-19, 2023, and February 24-26, 2023. I believe they should continue to utilize this system and also like how there is a permit needed for commercial filming.”

Comment: Topic Question 5: “I greatly dislike the severe limitations for viewing Horsetail fall in February. While I agree with the idea that the river bank needs to be protected from erosion, why not solve the problem by cutting down trees so people can easily enjoy the view from a meadow instead of a riverbank? In fact, I think a lot more trees should be removed around the valley to improve the views. The valley used to be mostly meadows anyway when the Ahwahneechee controlled the land.”

Comment: “During Feb I would like to rock climb in the lower Merced canyon and ski at Badger pass, but because of the Firefall reservation system, I cannot - - to be clear there are many people not seeing Firefall, why are they all restricted access? The permit should be for parking in the valley or something so others can enjoy the less crowded parts of the park”

NEPA Issues

2013 Settlement Agreement and Previous Impacts

Commenters raised concerns regarding the environmental impact of previous infrastructure improvements at the park and the implementation of the court-ordered settlement agreement of 2013 related to day use visitor requirements.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: Topic Question 4: “How much taxpayer money has been spent repaving, repainting, and continuously changing and experimenting? Also, what has the environmental impact been doing that?”

Comment: Topic Question 2: “Not following the environmental planning on implementing the day use visitor requirement of the court ordered settlement agreement of 2013.”

Miscellaneous – Other Comments

Visitor Management and Education - Other

Commenters provided other suggestions related to visitor management or education including reducing waste, increasing recycling, and further educating visitors—including regarding the tribal history of the land. Several commenters requested more dog-friendly trails and recreation opportunities.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “I also want to mention that the park should stop selling plastic water bottles in the vending areas completely. If Grad Canyon Park can do it, so can Yosemite. More water filling stations are needed.”

Comment: “I visited Banff National Park in Canada this past summer (who also had a day pass reservation system). For every activity in the park (walking tours, casual rides, etc) park officials would tell us whose native lands we were on and what we can do to support them now. Yosemite is Ahwahneechee Land. I've been to Yosemite dozens of times, but had to look that up because all I remember reading about is which person happened to "stumble on" these native lands first. I think that's a real disservice to the native people who first owned the land. Yes, I've seen the occasional sign about native culture/what tools they used, but I think Yosemite could be much better at giving credit to the people who kept Yosemite sacred for thousands of years before it became a National Park.

Comment: Topic Question 5: “We love to take our dog out backpacking and hiking. If more trails were dog friendly, we would visit more often.”

Further Involvement in the Planning Process

Commenters thanked the NPS for their work and for conducting the planning process and inviting public feedback. Some commenters expressed interest in getting more involved in the planning process or volunteering at the park.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Thank you for making the effort to address these challenges and to solicit end-user feedback, it's much appreciated!”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “I would like to know about opportunities to contribute as a volunteer to my park.”

Cooperation with Other Agencies

Commenters suggested other agencies, organizations, or stakeholders who should be involved in the planning process, including the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, park employees, local elected officials, and nonprofit organizations.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “Please communicate openly with the USFS/BLM surrounding areas because there will be overflow impacts to those areas that are stretched thin with less personnel and thus, unable to handle extreme increases in visitation.”

Comment: Topic Question 4: “It strikes me as odd that park management made the decision to end the reservation system without seeking the input of the people who spend their days working around the park.”

Comment: “I would like to mention that the restrictions in the last 3 years along with Covid and whatever, have affected the hiking experience in the Mammoth area. We now have parking and overcrowding issues at our trailheads. I suggest that you include our local representatives, especially John Wentworth, the current mayor of Mammoth Lakes, in your considerations. It’s a regional issue, not just a park issue. But you know that!”

Comment: “We appreciate being included as a stakeholder group of the park. As such, we are in favor of the NPS’s communication and collaboration with visitor and stakeholder groups which is a vital tool in the toolbox of management strategies. Our organization advocates for the protection of the river and watershed values, while understanding the importance of gateway communities working collaboratively and in close coordination with park management to address the visitor access issues. Nonprofit groups like ours can be important conduits of information to promote resource protection and minimize visitor use impacts to those resources. We welcome the ability to collaborate with the park on any future communication efforts. The Visitor Access Management Plan process provides an excellent opportunity to encourage collaboration with nonprofits like the UMRWC where we might engage the community in water quality/habitat monitoring and volunteerism that cultivates appreciation for and stewardship of river and watershed resources.”

Park Partners and Monitoring the Plan Success

Commenters made comments or suggestions related to the planning process, including incorporating the recommendations of previous plans and partnering with a university. Commenters suggested that the park review the impacts of any planned approach and establish indicators and monitoring measures to assess the success of the plan. Commenters also requested greater outreach through social media and news outlets and creation of an electronic mailing list.

Representative Quotes:

Comment: “As you know, Yosemite National Park is at the heart of a very dynamic economic ecosystem in the Central Sierra. As such, I have a great interest in any proposed changes to park visitation policies that may affect the health of our local economy or the vitality of residents in the area. I believe that appropriate mitigation or preparation efforts can be identified through a thoughtful evaluation of the surrounding areas infrastructure and capacity to support any proposed changes. I would ask that the park's planning efforts include a thorough review of the potential impacts on our local gateway communities as well as neighboring land managers. I strongly recommend that a working group of regional decision makers be formed that can help analyze and make recommendations on projected impacts and subsequent mitigation or supporting efforts. This information will help local, state, and federal decision makers direct funding and support regional solutions that ensure Yosemite National Park remains a world class destination for generations to come.”

Comment: “The UMRWC encourages the National Park Service to implement the strategies outlined in both the Tuolumne (TRP) and Merced (MRP) Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plans. The NPS engaged in a decades-long legal battle over the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act guidance requiring the establishment of user capacities to protect river values, the free-flowing condition of the river, and water quality. As a result, the TRP and MRP established a new template that is seen as a model for wild and scenic river planning across the country. The court mandated that the NPS document the condition of river values, establish capacities that would proactively protect river values, and establish a monitoring program to stay ahead of potential resource degradation. Those plans were informed by years of scientific research and public/tribal input. Rather than sit idly on a shelf, their guidance- -particularly in regards to enforcing user capacities- -should become the park's first front line for management decisions.”

Comment: “it is a bit disconcerting that visitor statistics from this year (2023) are being used to shape policy with regard to overcrowding and traffic management. the nps is introducing a statistical bias by allowing unrestricted access after three years of a draconian reservation system. we can't quite predict the future, but i would throw out a 'wild' guess, that, after three years of restrictions (which artificially lowered the number of visitors by strategic nps design and implementation), the visitor numbers will go up with 'no' restrictions in place - possibly significantly. are we (the nps) really going to use those figures to validate a restrictive policy such as a reservation system? if that is the case, i implore you to seek 'qualified' counsel at one of the more prominent universities of the state (and not pay some private firm millions for 'research'). i'm biased toward cal, but heck, i'll take what some lowly applied math grad student from ucla comes up with over the above scenario any day.”

Comment: “In addition, we encourage the planning process to disclose park operation funding levels to ensure monitoring is being conducted and critical resource conditions are being met. As the planning process progresses, we are encouraging the park to establish additional scientifically based and peer reviewed indicators, standards, and thresholds for measuring visitor quality and resource conditions in all visitation areas, including the park's wilderness area. These additions will ensure success and public credibility as the Visitor Access Management Plan is implemented in the future.”

**Visitor Access Management Plan Winter 2022-2023
Civic Engagement Summary and Comment Report**