

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****National Park Service****Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced Wild and Scenic River, Yosemite National Park, Madera and Mariposa Counties, California; Notice of Availability**

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to § 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Pub L. 91-190, as amended), and the Council of Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR Part 1500), the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement identifying and evaluating five alternatives for a Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan for segments of the river within Yosemite National Park, California. Potential impacts, and appropriate mitigations, are assessed for each alternative. When approved, the plan will guide management actions during the next 15–20 years which will be necessary to preserve the free-flowing condition of the Merced Wild and Scenic River and to protect and enhance the “Outstandingly Remarkable Values” (ORVs) for which the river was designated, pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1271).

**Proposal**

The proposed Merced River Plan (Alternative 2—Preferred) would manage the Merced River corridor by modifying the ORVs and boundaries from the present situation to reflect current information. No change is proposed in the present classifications of the river segments. This alternative also proposes implementing criteria to guide future decision-making and management actions. These measures include establishing management zones to appropriately constrain use and development, and creation of a river protection overlay along the river and its banks with the intent that natural processes will prevail.

*Alternatives*

In addition to the proposal, four other alternatives are identified and analyzed. Alternative 1 (“no action”) is a continuation of the existing situation, based on the ORVs, boundaries, and classifications as published in the 1996 Draft Yosemite Valley Housing Plan/Supplemental EIS. If approved, Alternative 1 will not impose decision-making criteria, and would establish

neither management zoning nor a river protection overlay.

Alternative 3 differs from the actions proposed (Alternative 2) with regard to boundaries, in that limits would be generally one-quarter mile from the river—except that in El Portal, all of Yosemite Valley, and Wawona, the 100-year floodplain and adjacent meadows and wetlands would define the extent of the boundary. In addition, management zones are differently allocated, the effect of which would be to promote more resource protection within the river corridor than would Alternative 2.

Alternative 4 is the same as Alternatives 2 and 3, except that: (i) The boundary would extend a continuous one-quarter mile from the river throughout the park; (ii) a change in classification from “Scenic” to “Recreational” is proposed in the east end of Yosemite Valley and in Wawona; and (iii) the allocation of management zoning promotes the most resource protection overall. Alternative 5 is the same as Alternative 4, except that no river protection overlay is proposed, and the allocation of management zoning promotes the greatest diversity of visitor experience opportunities.

*Planning Background*

The draft Merced River Plan/EIS was prepared pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and National Environmental Policy Act. A Scoping Notice was published in the **Federal Register** on June 11, 1999; and the Notice of Intent was published on August 23, 1999. An intensive scoping phase was undertaken during June and July, 1999, which included a series of six public meetings. The invitation letter requesting input into the development of the draft Merced River Plan/EIS was sent to the park’s general mailing list. In addition, the scoping effort was publicized via regional and local media and on the park’s Webpage. As a result of this outreach, over 330 responses were received and used in the development of issues upon which preparation of the draft Merced River Plan/EIS was based. A summary of the scoping process is available on the park’s Webpage (address noted below).

**Public Meetings**

In order to facilitate public review and comment on the draft Merced River Plan/EIS, the Superintendent has scheduled public meetings in the following California cities: January 31, Mammoth Lakes; February 1, Bakersfield; February 2, San Diego; February 3, Los Angeles; February 5, Palo Alto; February 6, Berkeley; February 8, Sacramento; February 9,

Merced; February 10, Mariposa; February 11, El Portal; February 14, Yosemite Valley; February 15, Fish Camp. Meetings on February 5 and 6 begin at 11:30 am; all other sessions begin between 4 and 5:30 pm and end at 9 or 9:30 pm.

Participants are encouraged to review the document prior to attending a meeting. Detailed information on location and times for each of the public meetings will be published in local and regional newspapers several weeks in advance, broadcast via radio and television stations, and listed on the park’s Webpage. Yosemite National Park management and planning officials will attend all sessions to present the draft Merced River Plan/EIS, to receive oral and written comments, and to answer questions.

**Comments**

The draft Merced River Plan/EIS will be direct mailed to the park’s general mailing list. Copies will be available at park headquarters in Yosemite Valley, the Warehouse Building in El Portal, and at local and regional libraries (*i.e.*, San Francisco and Los Angeles). Also, the complete document will be posted on the Yosemite National Park Webpage (<http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning>).

Written comments must be postmarked (or transmitted by e-mail) not later than 60 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of filing of the draft Merced River Plan/EIS in the **Federal Register** (anticipated to occur on January 7, 2000). All comments should be addressed to the Superintendent, Attn: Merced River Plan, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite National Park, California 95389 (or e-mailed to: [Yose\\_Planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_Planning@nps.gov)). All comments received will be available for public review in the park’s research library.

**Decision Process**

Depending upon the degree of public interest and response from other agencies and organizations, at this time it is anticipated that the Final Merced River Plan/EIS will be completed during June, 2000; availability of the document will be duly noticed in the **Federal Register**. Subsequently, notice of an approved Record of Decision would be published in the **Federal Register** not sooner than thirty (30) days after the final document is distributed. This is expected to occur by mid-July, 2000. The official responsible for the decision is the Regional Director, Pacific West Region, National Park Service; the official responsible for implementation

is the Superintendent, Yosemite National Park.

Dated: December 22, 1999.

**John J. Reynolds,**

*Regional Director, Pacific West Region.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### **Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Washington**

**AGENCY:** National Park Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The National Park Service will prepare a General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) for Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

A General Management Plan sets forth the basic management philosophy for a unit of the National Park System and provides the strategies for addressing issues and achieving identified management objectives for that unit. In the GMP/EIS and its accompanying public review process, the National Park Service will formulate and evaluate the environmental impacts of a range of alternatives to address distinct management strategies for the park, including resource protection and visitor use. The plan will guide the management of natural and cultural resources and visitor use of those resources for the next 15 years. Development concept plans for selected facilities may be included with the GMP.

Scoping is the term given to the process by which the scope of issues to be addressed in the GMP/EIS is identified. Representatives of Federal, State and local agencies, American Indian tribes, private organizations and individuals from the general public who may be interested in or affected by the proposed GMP/EIS are invited to participate in the scoping process by responding to this Notice with written comments. All comments received will become part of the public record and copies of comments, including any names, addresses and telephone numbers provided by respondents, may be released for public inspection.

Among the major issues likely to be addressed in the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site GMP/EIS are: (1) Interpretation and resource management, including the NPS role in

relation to Vancouver National Historic Reserve; (2) partnership opportunities with the McLoughlin House National Historic Site; (3) cultural resources research and protection; (4) accessibility and availability of park collections; (5) park maintenance and sustainability; and (6) park administration. A full range of alternatives, including "no action", will be considered in the GMP/EIS to address these and other issues that may emerge during the planning process.

The draft GMP/EIS is expected to be available for public review by the fall of 2000, with the final version of the GMP/EIS and the Record of Decision to be completed by summer 2001.

Because the responsibility for approving the GMP/EIS has been delegated to the National Park Service, the EIS is a "delegated" EIS. The responsible official is John J. Reynolds, Regional Director, Pacific West Region, National Park Service.

**DATES:** Public scoping meetings will be held on Wednesday, January 12, 2000, 6:30-9 p.m. at the Vancouver Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, WA, and Thursday, January 13, 2000, 2-4:30 p.m., at the McLoughlin House National Historic Site, 719 Center Street, Oregon City, OR. Written comments on the scope of the issue and alternatives to be analyzed in the GMP/EIS should be received no later than March 1, 2000.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments concerning the GMP/EIS should be sent to Superintendent, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, 612 E. Reserve Street, Vancouver, WA 98661.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Superintendent, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, at the above address, or phone (360) 696-7655, ext. 13.

Dated: December 16, 1999.

**Rory D. Westberg,**

*Superintendent, Columbia Cascades Support Office, Pacific West Region.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### **Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Notice of Meeting**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (PL 92-463) that the Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council will meet on Thursday, February 10, 2000. The meeting will convene at 4:00 pm at the New England Aquarium, in the

Conference Center, Long Wharf, Boston, Massachusetts.

The Advisory Council was appointed by the Director of National Park Service pursuant to Public Law 104-333. The 28 members represent business, educational, cultural, and environmental entities; municipalities surrounding Boston Harbor; and Native American interests. The purpose of the Council is to advise and make recommendations to the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership with respect to the development and implementation of a management plan and the operation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area.

The Agenda for this meeting is as follows:

1. Approval of minutes from December 9, 1999.
2. Review status and progress of Spectacle Island: sustainability issues.
3. Report from nomination committee: status of interest groups nomination.

The meeting is open to the public. Further information concerning Council meetings may be obtained from the Superintendent, Boston Harbor Islands. Interested persons may make oral/written presentations to the Council or file written statements. Such requests should be made at least seven days prior to the meeting to: Superintendent, Boston Harbor Islands NRA, 408 Atlantic Ave., Boston, MA 02110, telephone (617) 223-8667.

Dated: December 28, 1999.

**George E. Price, Jr.,**

*Superintendent, Boston Harbor Islands NRA.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### **Mojave National Preserve Advisory Commission; Notice of Meeting**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act that a meeting of the Mojave National Preserve Advisory Commission will be held January 24 and 25, 2000, assemble at 1:00 p.m. at the Primm Valley Hotel Conference Room, Primm, Nevada.

The agenda: Revisions to the General Management Plan and Value Analysis for Kelso.

The Advisory Commission was established by Public Law 103-433 to provide for the advice on development and implementation of the General Management Plan.

Members of the Commission are: Micheal Attaway, Irene Ausmus, Rob