

# **EDITORIAL: A sensible Yosemite plan**

## **National Park Service finds right balance for the Yosemite Valley.**

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/02/21/3784538/a-sensible-yosemite-plan.html>

By The Fresno Bee Editorial Board

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After years of battles among competing interests, the National Park Service has produced a plan that will cut congestion in Yosemite Valley and protect the wild and scenic Merced River.

Amazingly, it mollifies critics on all sides.

And it is a strong message that even in America's highly polarized political scene stakeholders can talk, listen and come to agreements that provide solutions.

This is a plan that most can live with, and it comes during the 150th anniversary year of the big push to set aside Yosemite for the people of the United States.

On Feb. 20, 1864, in the midst of the Civil War, Californian Israel Raymond wrote a letter to U.S. Sen. John Conness urging him to introduce a bill to preserve Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa grove of sequoias "to prevent occupation and especially to preserve the trees in the valley from destruction."

President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill that June, the first time any government set aside a natural area for use of all of the people, launching a national parks movement.

Battles over commercialism and development continued, however. Now, 150 years later, the Park Service has done a remarkable job of balancing access while preserving natural values.

Under the plan announced last week, the historic Sugar Pine stone bridge built in 1928 will stay. The number of campsites in Yosemite Valley will increase, though campsites within 100 feet of the river will be removed.

Horse rentals will be moved out of Yosemite Valley to Wawona, a less-crowded location. Bike rentals will be moved away from the river.

The Curry Village ice skating rink will be moved out of the river corridor and re-established as a seasonal use in the original historic 1929 location. Raft rentals will be limited to 100 boats per day, and boat storage moved outside the river corridor.

Though the guideline for visitors in Yosemite Valley will remain at 20,100 per day, remote parking with shuttle service will be increased, relieving traffic. Retail outlets will be consolidated.

The Park Service listened to tens of thousands of people who commented, and crafted appropriate compromises.

Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Elk Grove, who had threatened congressional interference in the public planning process, said in a statement: "The National Park Service has come a long way toward meeting the concerns expressed by park visitors, recreational groups and local business and community leaders."

Yosemite Valley will be a better experience for the American people and international visitors because of the public process, removal of congestion and clutter and restoration of the river corridor.

That's something to celebrate for the 150th anniversary.

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