



For Immediate Release:
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Leading Conservation and Recreational Organizations Take Legal Action Supporting National Park Service

Organizations File Amicus Brief in U.S. Court of Appeals Supporting Efforts to Protect the Merced River and Visitor Access in Yosemite

Yosemite National Park, Yosemite, Calif., (May 11, 2007) – A diverse group of seven leading conservation and recreational organizations today announced they have taken legal action supporting the National Park Service’s appeal to uphold the Comprehensive Management Plan for preserving and protecting the Merced River area in Yosemite, a plan on hold since a District Court ruling in 2006.

The group of supporters filed a “Friends of the Court” brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals (9th Circuit) in San Francisco, pointing out flaws in a November 2006 District Court ruling that halted several important habitat restoration, trail repair, traffic relief, and campground expansion projects. These projects will protect both the natural habitat and visitor access while significantly shrinking the overall human footprint in the Merced River corridor, which includes Yosemite Valley.

Possessing an impressive track record of environmental stewardship and involvement in Yosemite, the organizations include The Yosemite Fund, Friends of the River, The American Alpine Club (AAC), Access Fund, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), California Trout and The Wilderness Society.

The primary issue at stake in the Park Service appeal is “user capacity.” The District Court ruling required limiting the number of visitors in the Merced River corridor including Yosemite Valley. The Park Service maintains that imposing numeric limits on visitors without scientifically derived reasons is impractical and unfair to visitors. Its protection program, created with substantial public input, will adjust visitor access *when needed* to protect natural habitat and wildlife.

In the brief, the organizations assert that the Park Service’s Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced River is a sound plan that reflects current scientific research and the many interests of those who seek to protect, preserve, restore and enjoy Yosemite.

The organizations also share concern that replacing the Park Service’s adaptive management plan with strictly numeric limits will reverse decades of progress by national experts and professional land managers, requiring complete overhaul of a scientifically sound program that skillfully seeks to identify and prevent environmental harm and correct unacceptable impacts before they become impairments.

The organizations do not take their involvement in the appeal lightly. Indeed some have been at odds with the Park Service in the past, yet these disputes were resolved through constructive engagement and cooperation. The Yosemite Fund, an organization that has avoided involvement in court matters, supports the Park Service and advocates that restoration projects placed on hold as a result of the litigation move forward.

The case will be heard in the San Francisco U.S. Court of Appeals (9th Circuit) in fall 2007. The brief will allow the organizations to speak in support of the Park Service during the appeal process.

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