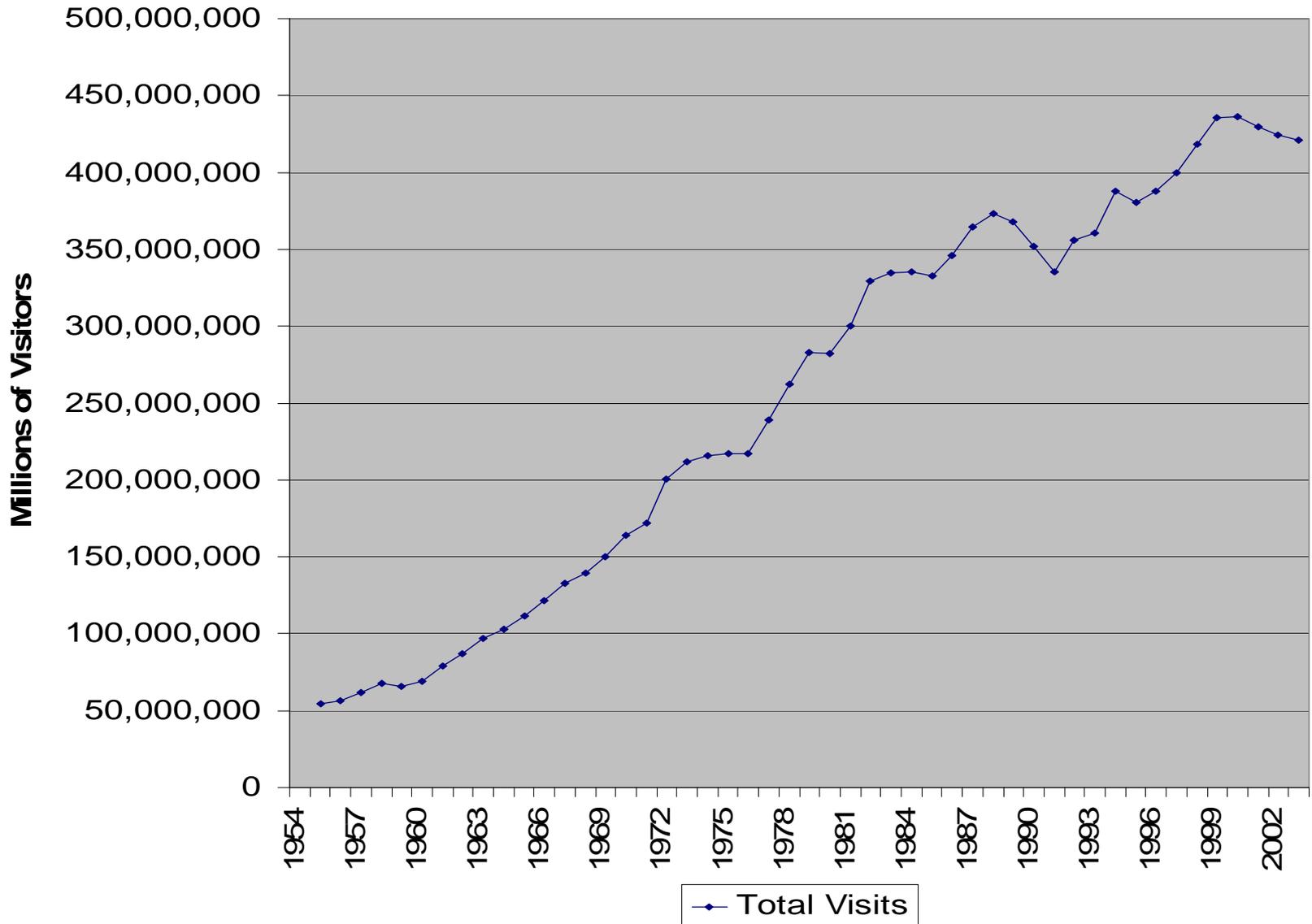


# National Parks

## Land-Use Facts

- 388 total “units” in the system; 84 million acres
- 2/3 of total acreage in Alaska
- 20 different types of NPS units (e.g., National Parks, Monuments, Seashore, Battlefields, Historical Sites, Recreation Areas, etc).
- 56 National Parks are the “crown jewels” of American conservation
- Yellowstone National Park, first park created by Congress in 1872
- New parks must be created by Congress, and enabling legislation spells out specific uses, which may include some historical resource use (remember that many parks started as National Monuments, and the interesting politics of that)
- Number of parks has continued to expand; in 1964 there were 31 National Parks, now there are 56
- Number of visitors has continued to expand

# National Park Visits 1954-2000



# Historical Background

## National Parks and American Culture

- 1872 Yellowstone: “...set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit of the people.”
- Initial justification for Yellowstone focused on geothermal “wonders and curiosities”
- Until 1916, Nat.Parks had different managers, and no clear vision of what uses should be allowed (I.e., Hetch Hetchy)
- National Parks as part of unique American experience with nature (Nash article)
  1. American character seen as benefiting from contact with wildness; American wilderness as contrast to European culture; Transcendentalism, Romanticism
  2. Scarcity was also recognized fairly early on (by some)
  3. Embedded in democratic ideals
  4. Sizable amount of undeveloped land
  5. Affluence allows preservation for non-utilitarian values

# Key Statutes

## **National Park Service Organic Act 1916**

“...purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund 1964**

- Land acquisition “trust fund” for NPS and other land agencies
- 90% of revenue generated from off-shore energy leases; \$900 million authorized annually
- Congress must appropriate money each year; \$12.5 billion out of possible \$24 billion since founding
- Used to purchase inholdings, expand park boundaries

## **National Park Service General Authorities Act 1970**

- Sets standards for inclusion into park system
  1. Possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources
  2. Suitable (means that it is not already represented) addition to the system
  3. Feasible addition to the system
  4. Require direct NPS management, instead of another agency.
- Reinforces “impairment” standard: NPS can only allow uses with resource impacts that do constitute permanent impairment

## **National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978**

- Required parks to prepare General Management Plans

# National Park Planning

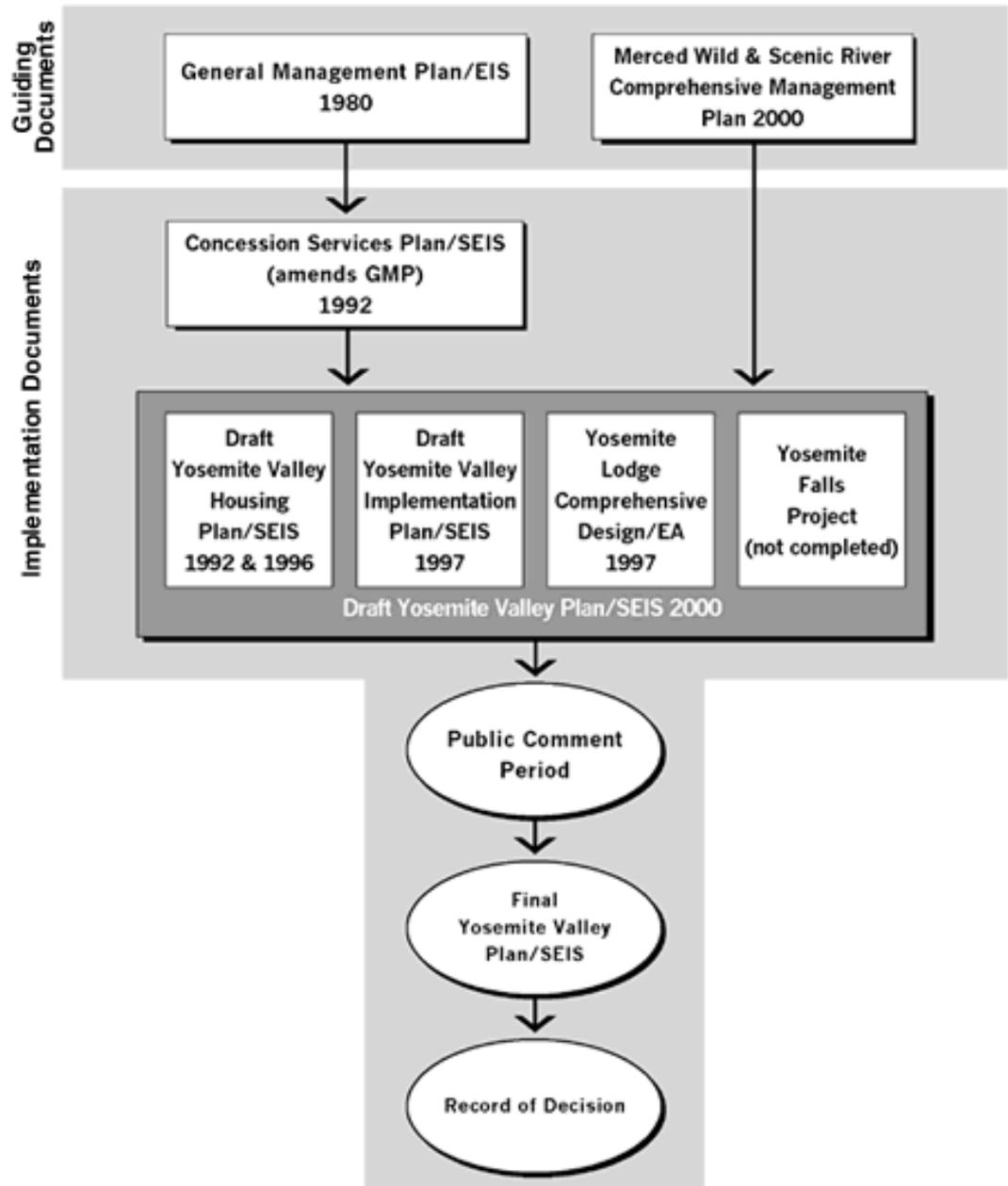
## General Management Plans (each NPS unit has one)

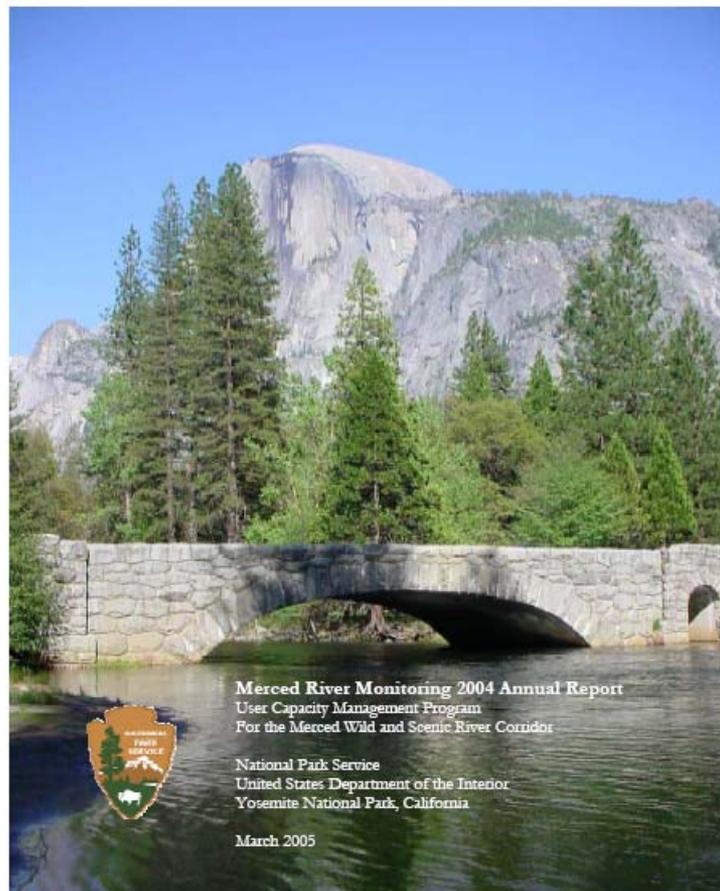
- The types of management actions required for the preservation of park resources
- The type/intensity of development
- Visitor carrying capacities and implementation commitments
- Potential modifications to the external boundaries
- A map that delineates zones or districts that correspond to management prescriptions.
- Modern plans place more emphasis on ecosystem function and preservation instead of tourism

## Other Planning Levels

- Implementation planning: Developed for specific projects or resources; may be ongoing or finite projects
- Government Performance and Results Act of 1996
- Strategic planning: 2-5 year schedule of implementation activities; generally consistent with GMP
- Annual performance Plans and Reports: Details specific planned activities at beginning of fiscal year, and progress

# Planning in Yosemite





The *General Management Plan* established maximum use levels for each developed area in the park, including Yosemite Valley and Wawona. The maximum daily use levels for developed areas in the Merced River Corridor are as follows:

LOCATION	VISITORS IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD
Yosemite Valley	18,241
Cascades/Arch Rock	360
El Portal	765
Wawona	3,311

# Yosemite Specifics

## **General Goals of 1980 GMP (as summarized in 2000 Yosemite Valley Plan)**

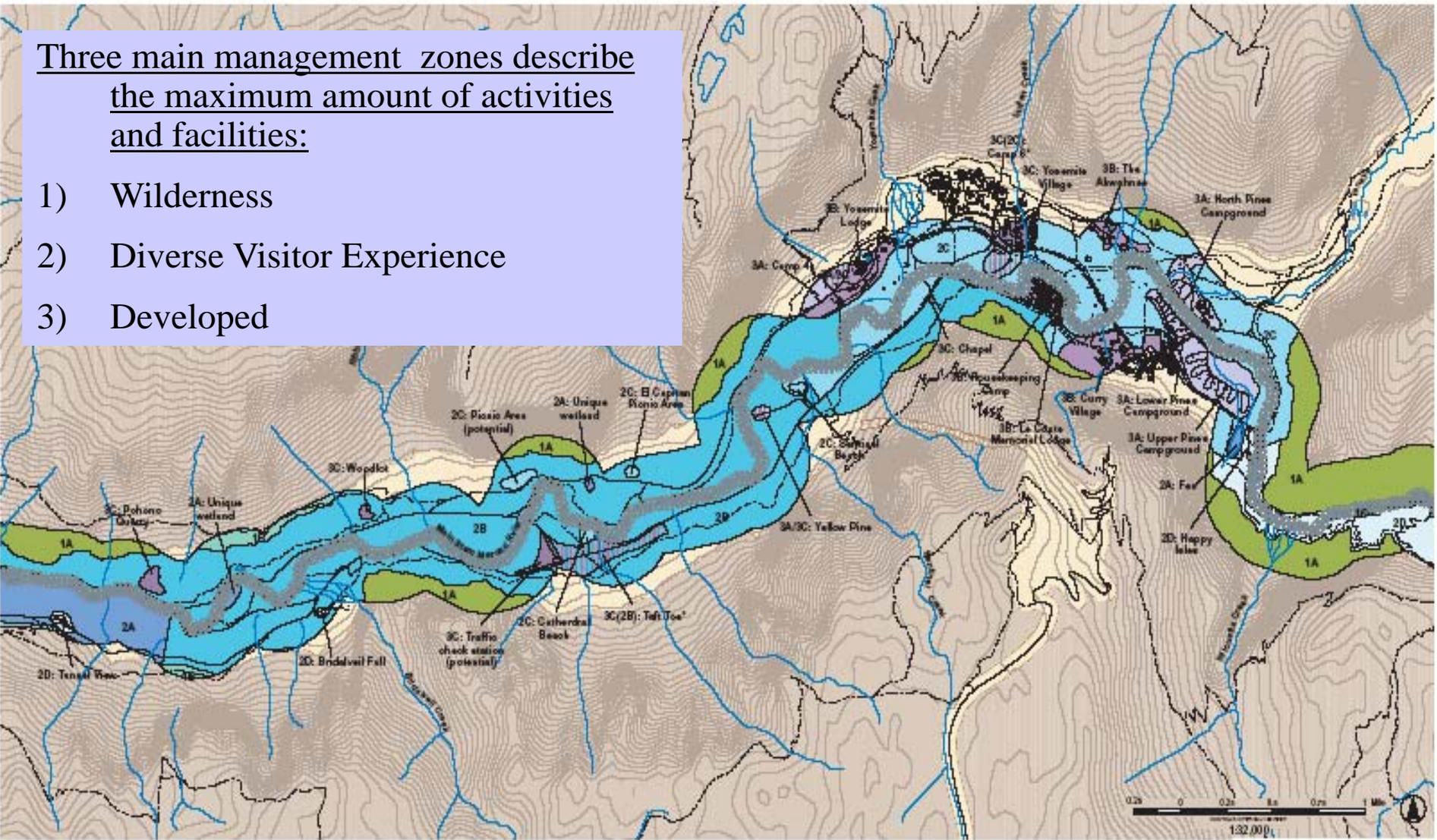
- Reclaim priceless natural beauty
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Allow natural processes to prevail
- Reduce crowding/establish carrying capacity
- Promote visitor understanding and enjoyment

## **Implementation: The Yosemite Valley Plan 2000 (among many, many detailed actions)**

- Preferred Alternative 2; amends GMP
- Reduce congestion with Shuttle Bus service and out-of-valley parking
- Restore Merced river (Wild and Scenic River implementation plan)
- Remove lodging from highly valued resource areas and floodplains; concentrate visitors on Yosemite village and specific parking lots
- Expand number of campgrounds

Three main management zones describe the maximum amount of activities and facilities:

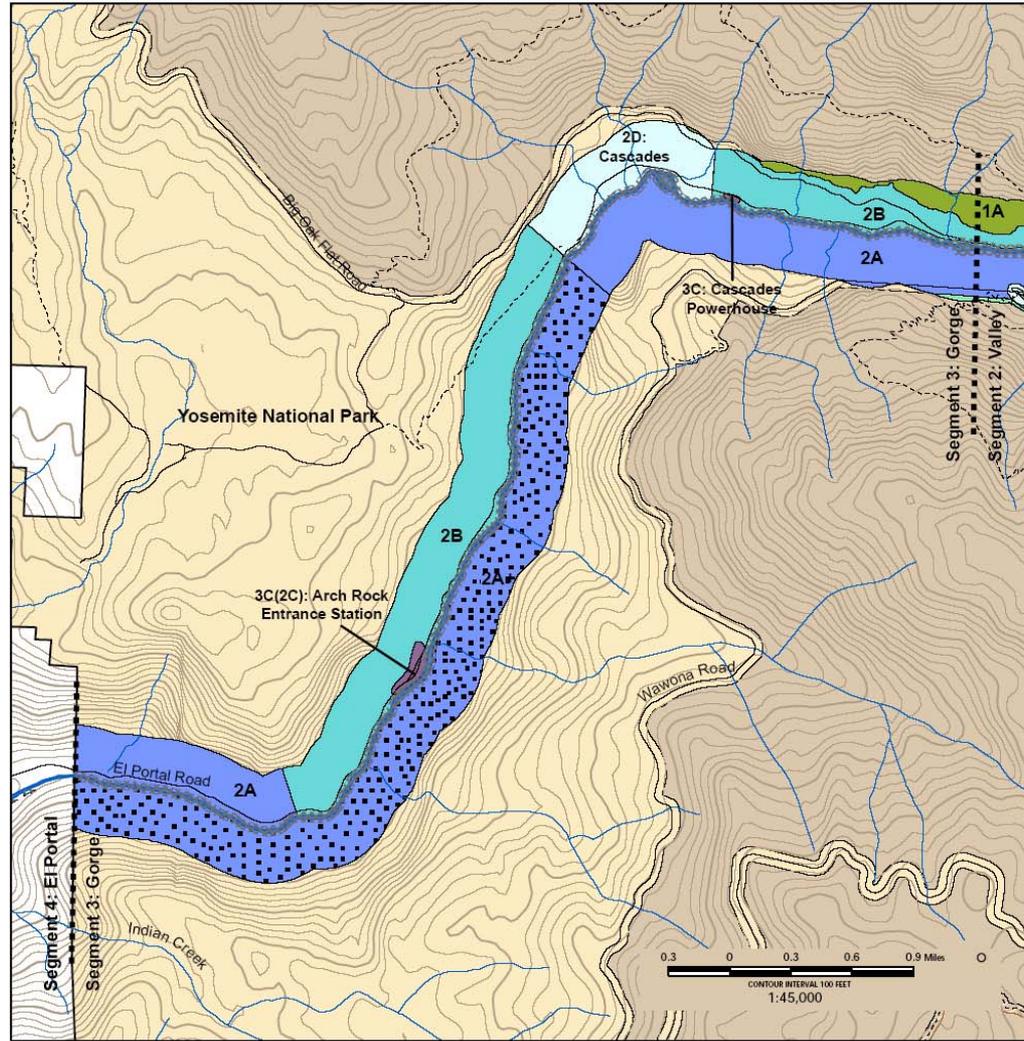
- 1) Wilderness
- 2) Diverse Visitor Experience
- 3) Developed



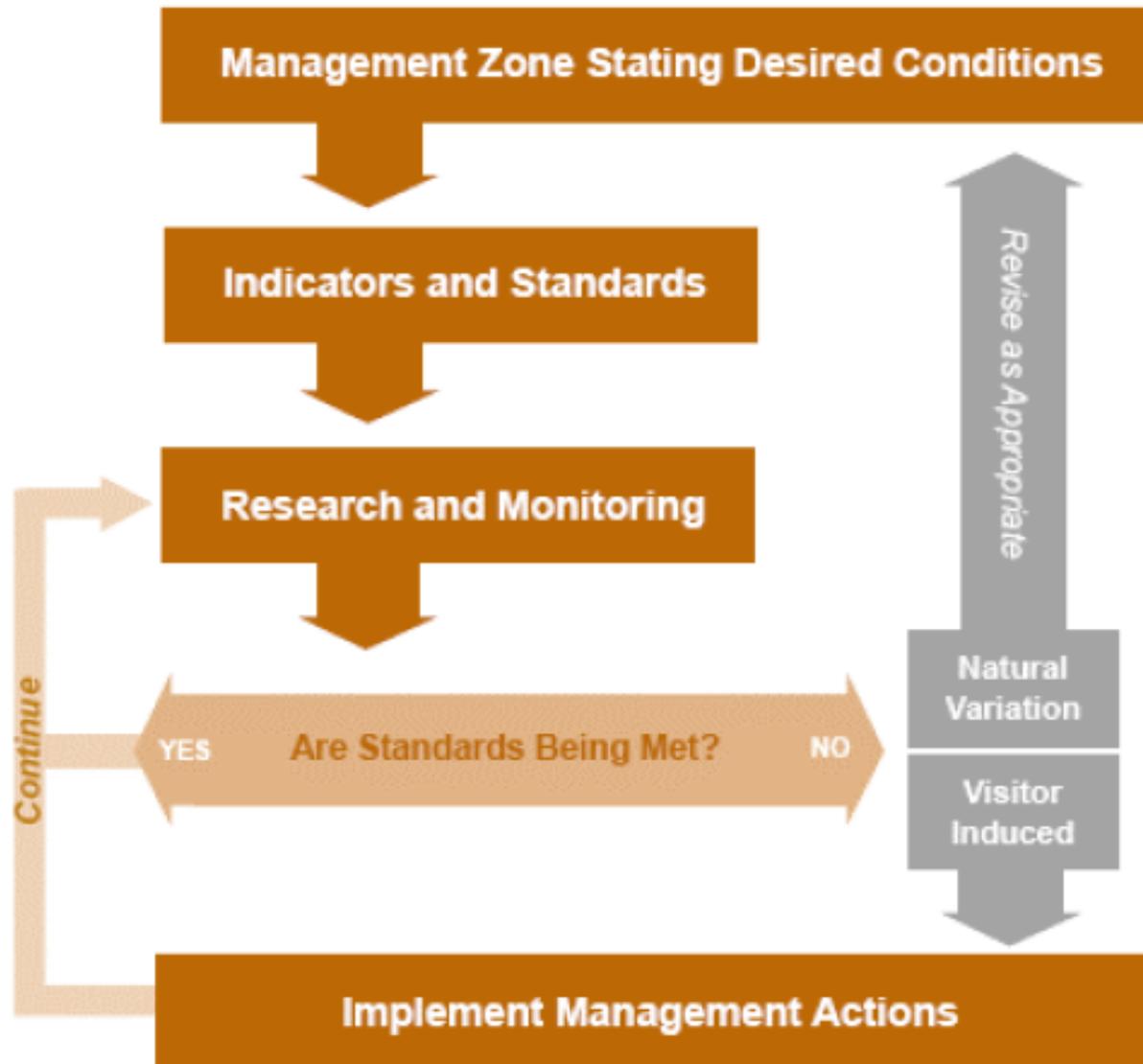
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Roads</li> <li>— Trails</li> <li>— Hatched River and Forks</li> <li>— Tributaries</li> <li>— Lakes</li> <li>— Non Wilderness</li> <li>— Potential Wilderness</li> <li>— Wilderness</li> </ul>	<b>Wilderness Zones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1A - Unimpaired</li> <li>1B - Trained Travel</li> <li>1C - Heavy Use Trail</li> <li>1D - Designated Overight</li> </ul>	<b>Diverse Visitor Experience Zones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2A - Open Space</li> <li>2A+ - Undeveloped Open Space</li> <li>2B - Discovery</li> <li>2C - Day Use</li> <li>2D - Attraction</li> </ul>	<b>Developed Zones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3A - Camping</li> <li>3B - Visitor Base and Lodging</li> <li>3C - Park Operations &amp; Administration (includes day-stair parking)</li> <li>— River Protection Overlay</li> </ul>
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**Figure 5**  
**Management Zones**  
**Yosemite Valley**

Figure II-4  
Gorge Management Zones for the Merced Wild and Scenic River



# The Iterative Model of the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) Framework



# Example Indicators

**INDICATOR:** CAMPSITE NUMBER  
**ZONES:** 1A Untrailed, 1B Trailed Travel

**STANDARDS:**  
Zone 1A No net increase in number of active (non-recovering) campsites over the baseline identified in the Wilderness Impact Monitoring System (WIMS).  
Zone 1B No net increase in number of active (non-recovering) campsites over the baseline identified in the Wilderness Impact Monitoring System (WIMS).

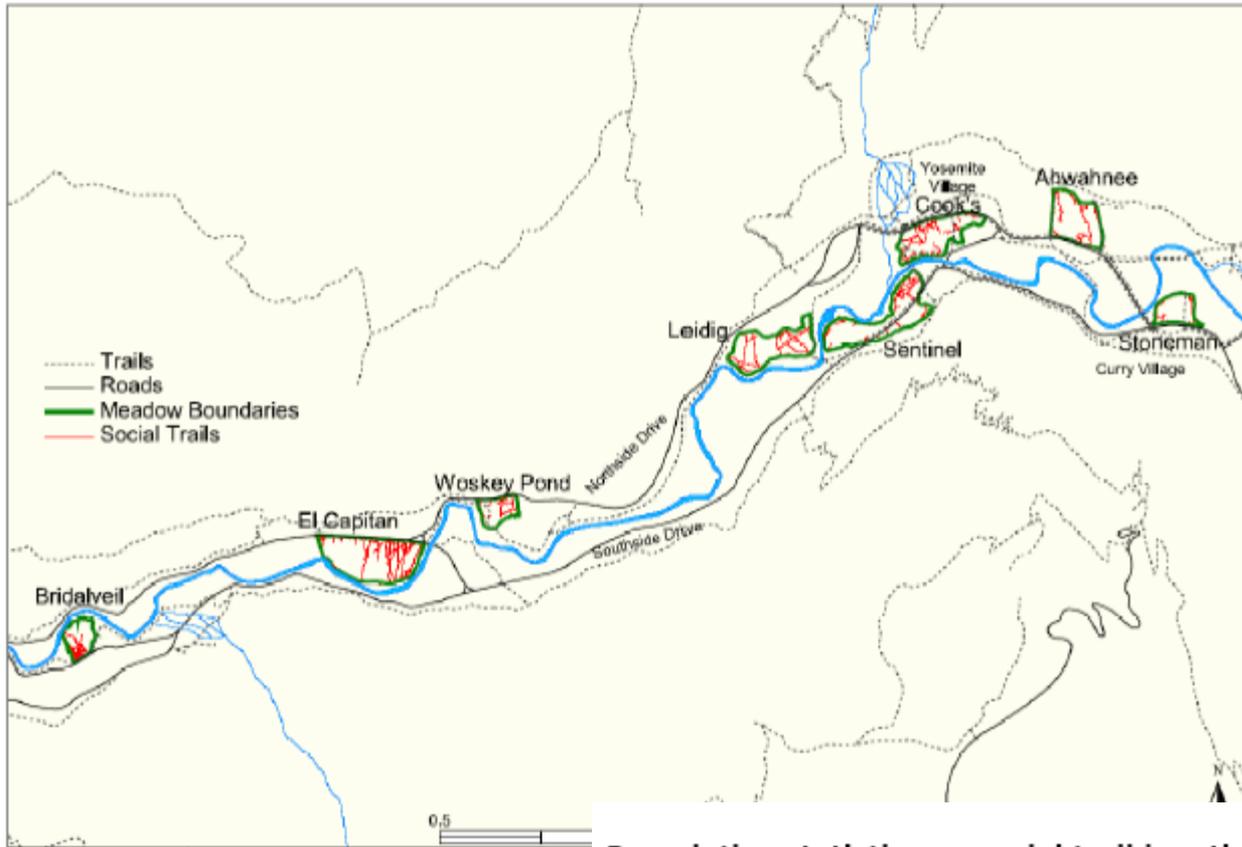
**INDICATOR:** EXPOSED TREE ROOTS  
**ZONE:** 1D Designated Overnight

**STANDARD:** Not more than 4 trees, or moderate level of exposed roots in majority of trees, per target campsite

**INDICATOR:** LENGTH OF SOCIAL TRAILS IN MEADOWS  
**ZONES:** 2B Discovery, 2C Day Use

**STANDARDS:**  
Zone 2B No net increase in length from 1990 baseline  
Zone 2C No net increase in length from 1990 baseline

Meadows in Yosemite Valley assessed for social trails in 2004.



- 2004 Social Trail Analysis used to establish baseline

Descriptive statistics on social trail length.

Meadow	Social Trail Segments (#)	Social Trail Length (m)			
		Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Sum
Ahwahnee	81	29.5	21.8	24.9	2390.4
Bridalveil	212	11.4	7.1	12.9	2426.7
Cooks	115	23.6	18.3	21.9	2717.9
El Capitan	247	23.8	17.4	25.0	5881.3
Leidig	100	32.6	23.7	32.9	3257.3
Sentinel	121	26.3	19.2	23.8	3178.0
Stoneman	25	31.0	20.3	30.7	774.5
Woskey Pond	47	25.1	18.1	22.5	1181.8
<b>Overall</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>21807.9</b>

# National Parks: Loved to Death?

## Facility Strains

- National Parks have received increasing amount of visitors and many new federal “unfunded mandates” (e.g. OSHA)
- NPS traditionally underfunded
- Increased visitation places strain on facilities; 1988 maintenance backlog \$1.9 billion; 2002: \$4-6 billion
- Park services being cut back (e.g., closed campsites, less tours, no lifeguards)
- Insufficient knowledge about status of cultural/natural resources; lack of baseline and ongoing monitoring of natural resources
- Underlying problem of building political support through visitor services (conflict with preservation?)

## Possible Solutions

- Increased Congressional appropriations
- Cut back on visitor services and reduce size of NPS system
- Increased visitor fees (1995 estimate; Park Service received \$0.33 in fees for each visit, but each visit cost \$4.12); 1996 Fee Demonstration allows 80% fee increase
- Private concessions and partnerships
- Implement better budget management tools

# **External Threats to National Parks**

## **Neighboring Economic Development**

- Tourist communities emerge to serve park visitors
- NPS emphasizing economic development on park borders
- Water pollution, air pollution, invasive species invade from boundaries

## **Disconnect between Park and Ecosystem Boundaries**

- Animals with large ranges leave park
- Animals go on to private property; state laws often apply
- Parks share ecosystems with other public lands
- External extractive uses (e.g. development of geothermal energy sources outside Yellowstone)

## **General Environmental Issues**

- Air pollution (Grand Canyon)
- Water pollution and supply (Everglades)
- 1994 GAO Report, Park Managers identified 600 threats to park resources (including internal: personal water craft/snowmobiles; air tours)

## **Solutions**

- Land acquisition and boundary adjustment
- Ecosystem management

# 2006 Political Events

## House Resources Committee Action

- Pombo's floats language as part of budget reconciliation that proposes selling 16 NPS units, and requires selling ads on maps, guides, and transportation
- Part of the same budget rider that contained ANWR drilling, but currently both are not in House bill; Senate/House conference could change this

## Changes in NPS Management Policies

- "Management Policies" are NPS interpretation of key statutes and provide guidelines for planning and management
- E.g., instead of stating that "conservation is to be predominant", new policy says "Service has broad discretion"
- Other concerns about commercial sponsorship, air quality, and removing limits on off-road vehicles

<http://www.eande.tv/main/?date=110305>