

groups and individuals involved with the Park agree on the same general goals: protect natural and scenic resources and provide for their enjoyment, provide a quality visitor experience and support a profitable tourist trade.

That given, why can't we do better? Why isn't it feasible to expect a better tourist experience? Isn't it possible that tourism and resource protection are more alike than contradictory? Isn't it possible that commercial tourism and recreation managed by public agencies are more independent than interdependent?

John Muir said that everything in the universe is connected to everything else. What we really need, as we begin our second century, is a new paradigm that is holistic or systematic in the widest sense. Any proposed action in this tourist region should be considered in light of its effects on the whole system of which it is a part. Certainly, Native Americans, whose presence in Yosemite predates its "discovery," believed in a more global perspective of this place.

It would be wonderful to think that a hundred years from now, at Yosemite's bicentennial, this centennial year will be remembered as the year we broadened our field of vision of this place by looking at the macroscopic instead of the microscopic.

Using its guest list as a mailing list, the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., the sole concessionaire at the Park, is mailing 93,000 letters urging former guests to lobby the National Park Service to abandon its 1980 plan to ease congestion in the glacier-carved Valley.

—San Francisco Chronicle, December 5, 1989

Over the years, the Park Service has spent \$2.3 million to refurbish the Wawona [Hotel]. It leases it to the Curry Co. for \$19,000 a year. At that rate, it will take more than a century for the [NPS] to recoup its investment.

—San Francisco Chronicle, January 7, 1990

Yosemite Needs You

Memories and emotions that last a lifetime are sparked by the unparalleled majesty of Yosemite Park—its waterfalls, sheer granite cliffs, alpine rivers and lakes, and valleys. The allure of vistas from Glacier Point, the sunset's glow at Tuolumne Meadows and the majesty of Yosemite Valley attract millions of visitors, even more admirers and, recently, people who are giving their time and money to help preserve and protect Yosemite's grandeur.

What motivates a person—whether a tourist, hiker, backpacker, or climber—to become an active supporter or advocate? Usually, a problem.

The transition from enjoyer to supporter may be subtle, the motivating force highly personal. My transformation was gradual. I have visited Yosemite several times a year throughout my life and hiked most of its trails. The joys of uncrowded trails, unique vistas and starlight camping spawned repeated visits.

But one day I was hiking in Matterhorn Canyon, a magnificent alpine area in the northeast corner of Yosemite when I encountered tree avalanches that blocked the trail for over a quarter mile. For me, this unmaintained trail was the last straw in a series of deteriorated trail conditions that I had experienced during the course of several summers. That evening I resolved to do something about it and became an advocate.

Yosemite has approximately 800 miles of trails, with about 100 distinctively identifiable trails. Through the mid-1960s, those trails were maintained annually by five crews. That financial commitment and work force diminished to only two back-country crews in 1987 and only one such crew in 1988 and 1989—and those were privately funded. As a result of Congressional and Presidential neglect over many years, the cost of restoring Yosemite's trail system is now estimated to be \$11,000 per mile.

Yosemite's budget (both operating and capital) for 1988-89 was \$10.7 million. According to the General Accounting Office,

Volunteers assist in a

Park survey.

Courtesy of the Yosemite Fund.

Yosemite has a deferred capital and maintenance liability of \$74 million, including highway rehabilitation, water and sewage improvements, quarters repair and a hazardous waste program.

While Yosemite's allure has contributed to overcrowding, it also makes the Park a unique focus of concern for the American people. The Yosemite Fund was established in 1985 to raise money to help preserve the grandeur of Yosemite, as the Park Service was not provided the funds required to preserve the quality of the park. Since then, the Fund has raised more than \$3 million from approximately 5,000 donors. The chapter in Contra Costa County, California (of which I was the founding chairman) was the first community-based organization established by the Yosemite Fund. Our chapter is 100 percent volunteer with no professional staff or rental obligations.

Our chapter was established to help preserve Yosemite through support of specific, earmarked projects and to bring the Yosemite experience closer to the community. Supporting an earmarked project makes it clear that participation with the chapter benefits Yosemite, as opposed to an amorphous organization. In this way, progress can be monitored and donors take particular pride in identifying their contributions with an actual result.

Our chapter selected the restoration of the Happy Isles area in Yosemite Valley as the target for fund-raising. More than 12 years ago the National Park Service (NPS) sketched its design plans, for which federal funds have never been available, to restore Happy Isles at the beginning of the John Muir Trail.

Most people pass through Happy Isles on their way to Vernal Fall and the Mist Trail, approximately one mile east of the trailhead. Visited by more than a million people annually, Happy Isles has borne the brunt of human impact. Project goals include improving access for handicapped people, establishing two nature trails, creating new exhibits for the family-oriented nature center, restoring the Junior Ranger Program facility (the oldest environmental education program for children offered by the NPS), building a boardwalk across the fen and establishing paths to pre-

vent visitors from trampling the area and replanting native plants. More than \$80,000 has been raised toward a goal of \$336,000.

Funds for the project have been raised through events including an auction attended by more than 300 people, which raised \$47,000, and a high-profile weekend trip to Yosemite attended by two cabinet members. Recently, Safeway stores promoted the Happy Isles restoration project on grocery bags.

To further encourage community participation, our chapter offers activities fostering the Yosemite experience (such as lunch with the Park superintendent, the "take a hike" auction and a program on trails and geological conditions), and other events at the Park for the benefit of those who donate time or money to chapter activities.

Yosemite's constituency crosses economic, political and sociological lines. Evidencing the Park's bipartisan appeal, Democratic Congressman George Miller (chair of the Interior Subcommittee on Water and Power) and Republican State Assembly Member William Baker have served as very active, honorary co-chairs of the chapter. Each has a personal commitment to Yosemite, giving time and personal funds to the cause, and soliciting support from their own friends.

As Yosemite approaches its centennial celebration, we must remember that not only was its establishment and protection as a national park the result of private effort, but so too will be its preservation. With federal funding needed for so many necessary services, those who care about Yosemite and recognize the importance of environmental protection for future generations must maintain their vigilance. They must continue to monitor the politics of park funding and must be willing to support the Park by donating their time and money. Yosemite may be trapped by its own allure, yet it is that attraction that can insure its everlasting protection.

