



March 23, 2018

Woody Smeck, Superintendent
National Park Service
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, California 93271

RE: Public Scoping Comments - Wolverton and Mineral King Corrals

Superintendent Smeck:

It is with great enthusiasm that we submit these public scoping comments. We look forward to the opportunity to work once again with you and your staff. This time, to implement one of the first elements of the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks 2015 Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP), which in this case is intended to “enhance recreational opportunities for visitors who wish to use horses, mules, llamas, or burros as part of their park experience.” We couldn’t be more pleased to participate in this process.

About Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA)

Founded in 1973, BCHA is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit service organization. Our mission is to **perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and Wilderness** and to **ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use**. A large part of our mission includes assisting the various government agencies and non-profit organizations in the maintenance and management of public trails and horse camps. As you know, members of **Backcountry Horsemen of California’s High Sierra Unit** have long been partners with Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in addressing backcountry maintenance needs that include assistance in the abatement of invasive plants.

We greatly appreciate and value the recreational experience provided to horsemen and users of recreational pack and saddle stock in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. We take seriously our responsibility to demonstrate BCHA’s ethic and **commitment to preserving wilderness character**. This includes BCHA’s Leave No Trace™ Stock Users Education Program. BCHA has become the **primary national trainer** of stock users in Leave No Trace principles and practices through our Leave No Trace™ Master’s Education Program. The program is a partnership between BCHA, state and affiliate members, and the U.S. Forest Service the Leave No Trace™ Center for Outdoor Ethics.

59 Rainbow Rd. | East Granby, CT 06026
Toll Free 860-586-7540 | www.bcha.org

Our Understanding of the Project

Consistent with decisions made in the 2015 WSP, the National Park Service (NPS) is proposing two projects that would convert two existing administrative corrals to visitor stock use facilities at Wolverton and Mineral King in Sequoia National Park. As stated in the park's news release, dated March 5, 2018:

These projects would increase overnight front county stock facilities to accommodate equestrian access to park trails and wilderness. The projects would convert two existing administrative corrals to visitor stock use facilities, expand the parking areas to allow for truck and trailer parking and turnaround space, divide the existing corral space to accommodate one to two stock groups, and provide one to two campsites for short-term use. The campsites would be included in the NPS reservation system and would be open to visitors with stock.

Specific Comments on the Proposal

BCHA offers its enthusiastic support for the proposal for these two sites. **We strongly concur with the need to develop visitor pack stock use facilities, as identified in the 2015 WSP.** These facilities will help perpetuate the historic and traditional use of pack stock in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. BCHA will refrain from providing site-specific comments in this scoping letter. We instead defer to formal site-specific input and public scoping comments provided to you by BCH California's High Sierra Unit.

As you know, there is a long-standing tradition of using pack and saddle stock in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. BCHA carries on this tradition in modern times, as does the highly-respected pack stock program run by Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks that is used to support of park administration and scientific investigation.

Conclusion

BCHA maintains a five-year General Agreement with the Washington Office of the National Park Service (signed August 2014). In addition, several BCH chapters throughout the nation currently maintain unit-specific agreements with the Park Service. **We strongly encourage SEKI staff to tier from the national BCHA-NPS Agreement and consider how it might partner with local BCH California units** for maintenance and upkeep of the proposed horse camps, assist in the maintenance of trails, and other stewardship projects within the parks.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these public comments.

Sincerely,



Randy Rasmussen
Director, Public Lands and Recreation

copy: BCH California, High Sierra Unit