UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

May 3, 2013

Don L. Neubacher, Superintendent
P.O. Box 577,
Yosemite, CA 95389
ATTN: Mariposa Grove DEIS,

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Restoration of the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias Project; Yosemite National Park, California. (CEQ# 20130050)

Dear Mr. Neubacher:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias Project; Yosemite National Park, California. Our review is provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The EPA supports the National Park Service's (NPS) commitment to restore giant sequoia habitat, wetlands, and soundscapes through removal of unnecessary infrastructure from within the grove, removal of the commercial tram operation, and re-routing a road out of wetlands. Based on our review of the DEIS, we have rated the Preferred Alternative 2 as *Lack of Objections* (LO) (see enclosed "*Summary of Rating Definitions*").

We commend the NPS on the DEIS' thorough description of the possible effects of climate change on regional hydrology and overall ecosystem resilience, and discussion of the need for adaptation to climate change. We also recognize the NPS' effort to prepare for the possible listing of the Pacific fisher, currently a Candidate species, under the Endangered Species Act. EPA recommends that the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) include the biological assessment regarding the Pacific fisher that is referenced on page 3-32 of the DEIS, as well as an update on the fisher's listing status and any consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Page 2-18 of the DEIS discusses a potential road realignment that would include relocation of a creek crossing for the purpose of improving safety, controlling erosion, and avoiding giant sequoias. We recommend that, when considering designs for that crossing, preference be given to infrastructure that would also maximize species protection measures, such as connectivity, minimal ground disturbance and fish passage; for example, a bridge that completely spans the creak, or a bottomless arch culvert that maintains the natural stream bottom with sufficient width to avoid constricting the channel during high flow.

We noticed that the list of "cumulative impact projects" in Appendix B includes the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan, but does not include the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan. We recommend that the NPS consider, if it has not already done so, whether the Tuolumne Plan may also contribute to cumulative impacts relevant to the proposed project.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review this DEIS. When the FEIS is released, please send one hard copy and one CD to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or have your staff contact James Munson, the lead reviewer for this project. James can be reached at (415) 972-3852 or Munson.James@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

For Cornell Cummings

Kathleen Martyn Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

Enclosure:

Summary of the EPA Rating System