RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2020-245

MEETING: May 19, 2020

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Kevin Cann, District IV Supervisor

RE: Letter of Support

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:

This letter of support is appropriate considering recent actions by the state and local health officers.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
On March 13, 2020, the County Health Officer declared a local public health emergency in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This was followed by Board ratification on March 17, 2020.

On March 19th, the Governor and State Public Health Officer issued a statewide Stay at Home Order. With that action, major California cities were shut down which precipitated a concern of potential contamination from visitors coming to Yosemite National Park from outside areas. In response to that concern, the Board ratified a letter on April 7, 2020, which endorsed the Health Officer’s recommendation that Yosemite National Park be closed to visitors.

The Board has approved other letters of support for other issues in the past.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Alternatives: The Board may modify text in the letter.
Negative Action: If the Board does not approve the letter, it will not be submitted.
Individual Board members may write their own letters of support at that time, which may not carry the same weight as a letter from the entire Board.

ATTACHMENTS:
2020.05.14 Letter to Yosemite Superintendent (DOCX)

RESULT: ADOPTED BY CONSENT VOTE [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Rosemarie Smallcombe, District I Supervisor
SECONDER: Merlin Jones, District II Supervisor
AYES: Smallcombe, Jones, Long, Cann, Menetrey
May 19, 2020

Cicely Muldoon
Superintendent Yosemite National Park
Post Office Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Re: Letter in Support of Reopening Plan

Dear Superintendent Muldoon,

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors wants to sincerely thank you for the close working relationship you have fostered with the gateway counties throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. As you know, visitors to Yosemite account for a significant share of our regional economies. In Mariposa County, tourism is the overwhelming economic engine for our businesses and local government. It is with that recognition we write today to fully support your proposal for reopening the park with an initially restricted level of day use access and overall visitation.

Noting the challenges presented by reduced employee housing capacity and the inability to safely operate the Yosemite Valley shuttle system within reasonable Covid-19 guidelines, your proposal to open with target daily visitor access at approximately 50% of normal levels for June seems prudent. Obviously our local hotels, restaurants and retail businesses will continue to be fiscally devastated until we return to some semblance of normalcy; but gridlock and COVID outbreak in Yosemite would be an even greater long-term collapse.

We understand you are designing a temporary entrance pass reservation system and implore that the details for that plan and an expected opening date be communicated broadly as soon as possible. We don’t envy your challenge. We look forward to a full slate of public meetings as soon as possible in the counties and with the Gateway Partners organization to explain the visitation game plan and how we
can help ensure its success for Yosemite and the gateway businesses which provide services for over 70% of the visitors who overnight outside the park.

Yosemite NP and the gateway towns have become inextricably connected over the last 30 years as services and infrastructure have been removed from the park and recreated in the surrounding counties. As we have during floods, fires and all manner of natural disasters or government shutdowns, Mariposa County stands ready to assist in any way possible with the successful reopening of this Crown Jewel of the National Park System and our economic engine.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kevin Cann
Chair, Mariposa County Board of Supervisors