

DEPARTMENT: Visitors Bureau BY: Steve Hayes PHONE: 966-2456

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION: (Policy Item: Yes No)

Request that the Board authorize the Visitors Bureau Director to sign the attached letter developed cooperatively by a coalition of Yosemite region county and city visitors bureaus for submittal to Mr. Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior. The other coalition members are currently reviewing this letter with their boards. The letter has received good initial response with a few revisions already incorporated. Minor changes requested after the members have reviewed this letter with their boards are anticipated. If significant changes are requested then the final letter will be re-submitted to the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors for their approval.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

On November 12, 1996 the Board heard a report regarding the meeting attended by Chairman Balmain, Supervisor Reilly, and Steve Hayes, Tourism Assistant with B.J. Griffin, Superintendent of Yosemite National Park, her staff, and representatives of Madera and Tuolumne Counties. The Board has taken prior action on December 2, 1996 and on December 10, 1996 resulting in a letter sent to Secretary Babbitt.

LIST ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

- 1) There are no other regional entities available and willing to speak to the effects of the fee increases and to other National Park Service policies that are forthcoming in the next year.
- 2) No action.

The fee increase is an opportunity for this coalition to establish its existence which is important if it will be able to participate effectively in the discussion of future policy developments. Actions by similar coalitions in other areas have been effective. No action or negative action would delay the coalition in establishing its presence and eliminate the possible positive effects that may occur in the current matter regarding fee increases.

COSTS: (X) Not Applicable
A. Budgeted current FY \$
B. Total anticipated costs \$
C. Required additional funding \$
D. Internal transfers \$

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
List the attachments and number the pages consecutively:

Draft Letter Dated 12/5/96

SOURCE: () 4/5ths Vote Required
A. Unanticipated revenues \$
B. Reserve for contingencies \$
C. Source description:
Balance in Reserve for Contingencies,
if approved: \$

CLERK'S USE ONLY:
RES. NO.: 97-11 Ord. No. _____
Vote - Ayes: _____ Noes: _____
Absent: _____ Abstained: _____
() Approved () Denied
() Minute Order Attached () No action necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.
Date: _____
ATTEST: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
County of Mariposa, State of California
By: _____
Deputy

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:
This item is on agenda as:

Recommended
Not Recommended
For Policy Determination
Submitted with Comment

Comment: _____
A.O. Initials: *JH*

MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: STEVE HAYES, Visitors Bureau Director
FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board *MW*
SUBJECT: LETTER TO BRUCE BABBITT, SECRETARY OF INTERIOR

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,
ADOPTED THIS Order on January 7, 1997

ACTION AND VOTE:

Steve Hayes, Visitors Bureau Director;

A) Resolution Authorizing Visitors Bureau Director to Sign Letter Developed Cooperatively by a Coalition of Yosemite Region County and City Visitors Bureaus for Submittal to Mr. Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior Regarding Fee Increases
BOARD ACTION: Discussion was held. (M)Balmain, (S)Pickard, Res. 97-11 adopted approving letter, with direction given for Visitors Bureau Director to work with County Administrative Officer and County Counsel to draft amendment language in the letter to address the current disaster situation/Ayes: Balmain, Stewart, Pickard; Excused: Reilly, Parker.

cc: Janet Hogan, County Administrative Officer
Jeff Green, County Counsel
File

February 3, 1997

The Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary
United States Department of Interior
1849 'C' Street, NW, Room 6156
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Babbitt:

In light of the recent flooding the undersigned coalition of counties and cities surrounding Yosemite National Park desires to support Yosemite National Park in improving the visitor experience. We appreciate the consideration given by postponing the fee increase. We concur that it is important for the National Parks to have additional funds to improve and maintain: public infrastructure; public transit; public education and interpretive programs. However, it seems that the process proposing fee increases precludes a collaborative approach.

From our perspective we represent not only the economic tourism interests but the interests of the traveling American and more specifically the Yosemite devotees who receive valuable sociological, emotional, and inspirational benefit, a value which has not received enough import in federal policy decisions related to public lands. For many, Yosemite is a beloved tradition, a connection as strong as going home for the holidays. Yosemite devotees provide a large infusion of private funds to Yosemite in addition to their tax dollars. The challenge before all of us is to find creative solutions to keep Yosemite from being a victim of its own success in fulfilling the ideal of the national park concept.

The fee increases in the National Parks have created concern. In an effort to re-establish a collaborative approach to solving Yosemite National Park challenges we suggest the following considerations that contribute to the perceived goals of Yosemite National Park and make Yosemite even better for Americans.

1. Yosemite National Park Dynamic -The fee structure will strategically affect NEPA projects that are planned for public input late in 1996 and in 1997. The notion that fee increases are only a demonstration project with a limited term does not mitigate the potential immediate impacts of the fee structure on these projects. Specifically, the fee structure will impact the existing and anticipated public transportation which is integral to the following NEPA projects: 1) the Housing Management Plan, expected to be released for public review on December 6, 1996; and 2) the Valley Implementation Plan which we anticipate will also include a day use reservation component. These projects will have a long term affect consequently a long term policy regarding public transit would be most appropriate.

Consideration #1 - A meaningful incentive in the fee structure for those who use public transit would increase ridership and increase private incentives to participate in the development and enhancement of an adequate public transit alternative. Since the National Park service would want their employees to lead the way in decreasing vehicular congestion and pollution from private vehicles, a dramatic increase in the demand for public transportation would be created if the majority of employee housing were relocated out of the park through implementation of the housing management plan. The current understanding of the Valley Implementation Plan indicates a need for an increase in public transportation service. An onerous fee for public transit users will hamper the ability of the Yosemite region to participate in the public transit solution.

2. Yosemite National Park Dynamic - The fee structure could encourage off peak usage which would contribute to the Yosemite National Park perceived goal to spread the visitorship more evenly throughout the year. A 'demonstration' project provides the mechanism to try some strategic applications with fees. If effectiveness in stimulating off

peak usage could be demonstrated a simple economical alternative to the Valley Implementation Plan would be available. Public perception of a fee demonstration test that could save millions of dollars by eliminating the need for a large portion of the Valley Implementation Plan including eliminating the prospect of a new or relocated parking lot in Yosemite would have broad support.

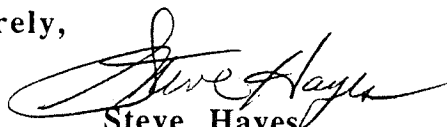
Consideration #2 - A seasonally tiered one time entrance fee: 1) would provide a window for the lower income American to enjoy Yosemite; 2) would give regional (the largest segment of day users) American day users an incentive to reschedule their use to off peak periods; 3) would encourage existing off peak seasonal users such as skiers; 4) a seasonally tiered fee structure may appeal to advocates of a phased in approach to fee increases.


3. Yosemite National Park Dynamic - The term demonstration connotes that something will be learned from an endeavor. Currently the gates at Yosemite are not manned 24 hours per day. Since the fee demonstration project will cover the costs of manning the entrance stations continuously a more accurate count of visitors will be achieved. However, comparing this to the previous visitor estimates would not help us learn much since both the monetary and numerical numbers will have little correlation with the historical records. In addition the quantity of Yosemite visitors is not necessarily indicative of the Yosemite visitors' spending in the gateway communities .

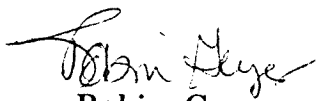
Consideration #3 - A careful consideration about what exactly is desired to be learned and how that will be measured is needed. A regional effort in establishing a measurement threshold and accumulating data that accurately reflects the affects of the strategic use of fees from both the park and gateway community perspectives is possible and important.

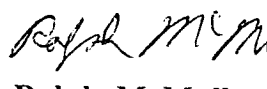
In conclusion the Yosemite Region Coalition of Convention and Visitors Bureaus will work with our respective congressional and senatorial representatives to keep the affect of new revenue inflow to the National Parks from being negated through budget offsets. We have observed an aptness in Superintendent Griffin and her staff for collaboration which we appreciate. In the future we hope to work collaboratively with the National Park Service. Thank you for your time in reviewing these considerations.

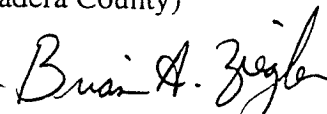
Sincerely,

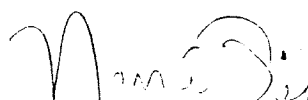

Steve Hayes,
Director
Mariposa County
Visitors Bureau

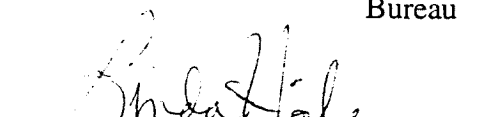

Peggy Kukulus
Executive Director
Sierra Yosemite
Visitors Bureau
(Oakhurst, Madera County)


Robin Geyer
Executive Director,
Merced County
Visitors Bureau


Ralph McMullen
Tourism Director
Mammoth Lakes
Visitors Bureau


Brian A. Ziegler
Vice President
Fresno City
Convention and Visitors
Bureau


Nanci Sikes,
Executive Director,
Tuolumne County
Visitors Bureau


Linda Hoile
Manager,
Modesto
Convention and Visitors Bureau