

U N E S C O

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

NOMINATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Name: YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Identification No: 308

Date received by WH Secretariat: 30.12.83

Contracting State Party having submitted the nomination of the property in accordance with the Convention: USA

Summary prepared by IUCN (March 1984) based on the original nomination submitted by USA. This original and all documents presented in support of this nomination will be available for consultation at the meetings of the Bureau and the Committee.

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1. LOCATION: State of California, USA.

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

Publicly owned land administered by the USNPS under the Department of the Interior. The legislative summary includes 16 Acts, Proclamations and Resolutions made on the Park. Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias have the distinction of being the first scenic natural area to have been set aside for public benefit and enjoyment (1864). Formal national park status was given in 1890.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

Yosemite National Park lies on the west slope of the central Sierra Nevada Mountains in the Sierra Cascade Biogeographical Province of North America. Total size is 3079 sq km. The area was previously heavily glaciated and although no glaciers are still existent in the park the marks of their passing are everywhere. Glacial action combined with the granitic bedrock has resulted in unique and pronounced landform features. These include distinctive polished dome structures as well as the related glacial features of hanging valleys, tarns, moraines, and U-shaped valleys. Monolithic granitic blocks such as Half Dome and the perpendicular wall of El Capitan are classic distinctive reflections of the geological history of the area. Elevations vary from 579 m to 3998 m. The park is known for its many waterfalls including the Yosemite Falls and Ribbon Falls, the third highest free-leaping fall in the world (491 m). There are two major rivers which begin in the park and 300 lakes.

There is considerable climatic variation with mean temperatures varying some 20° between valleys and mountains. Precipitation also varies from 1270-2653 mm. In Yosemite are found 5 of the 7 recognized life zones of the US. The variety of flora is reflected in the existence of 6 distinct vegetation zones which are governed by altitudinal variation. Notable are 3 groves of the giant sequoia tree and extensive alpine meadows. There are 1200 species of flowering plants along with various other ferns, bryophytes, and lichens. There is one endemic, 8 threatened or endangered species of plants (US Federal Register).

The park has 67 mammalian species of which 32 are rodents. There are 221 bird species, 18 reptiles, 10 amphibians, and 11 fish species of which 6 are endemic. One bird species (bald eagle) is endangered and one bird species (peregrine falcon) is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN/ICBP Red Data Book.

In late prehistoric and historic times Yosemite was occupied by two main tribes of north American indians. There are 569 designated archeological sites within the park.

Four national forests surround the park and provide a buffer zone. A major highway bissects the park and allows easy access for visitation from major urban centres. The park received 2.7 million visitors in 1981. Intensive facility developments for tourism are located in the central Yosemite Valley portion of the park.

#### 4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

Much change has however occurred in the Yosemite landscape. Three species of animals are no longer found in the park (grey wolf, grizzly bear, and California Bighorn sheep). A few non-native species have been accidentally introduced (beaver, white-tailed ptarmigan). Suppression of natural fires and heavy stock and sheep grazing in the past has also altered the original vegetation. Construction of two dams in the park and development of facilities have also acted to modify the park ecosystems. Within park boundaries exist 727 ha of private inholdings.

Although portions of the park receive recreational use at peak periods that approach urban densities, 90% of the park is classified as wilderness zone where no development is permitted and access is provided by 1245 km of walking trails.

Yosemite has a comprehensive management plan completed in 1980 that addresses the above problems. The plan aims to significantly reduce visitor vehicle impacts by providing alternate transportation modes. Altered landscapes and vegetation are being restored through controls of grazing, exotic plant eradication and prescribed burning. The 1981 budget allotment was US\$ 14.5 million.

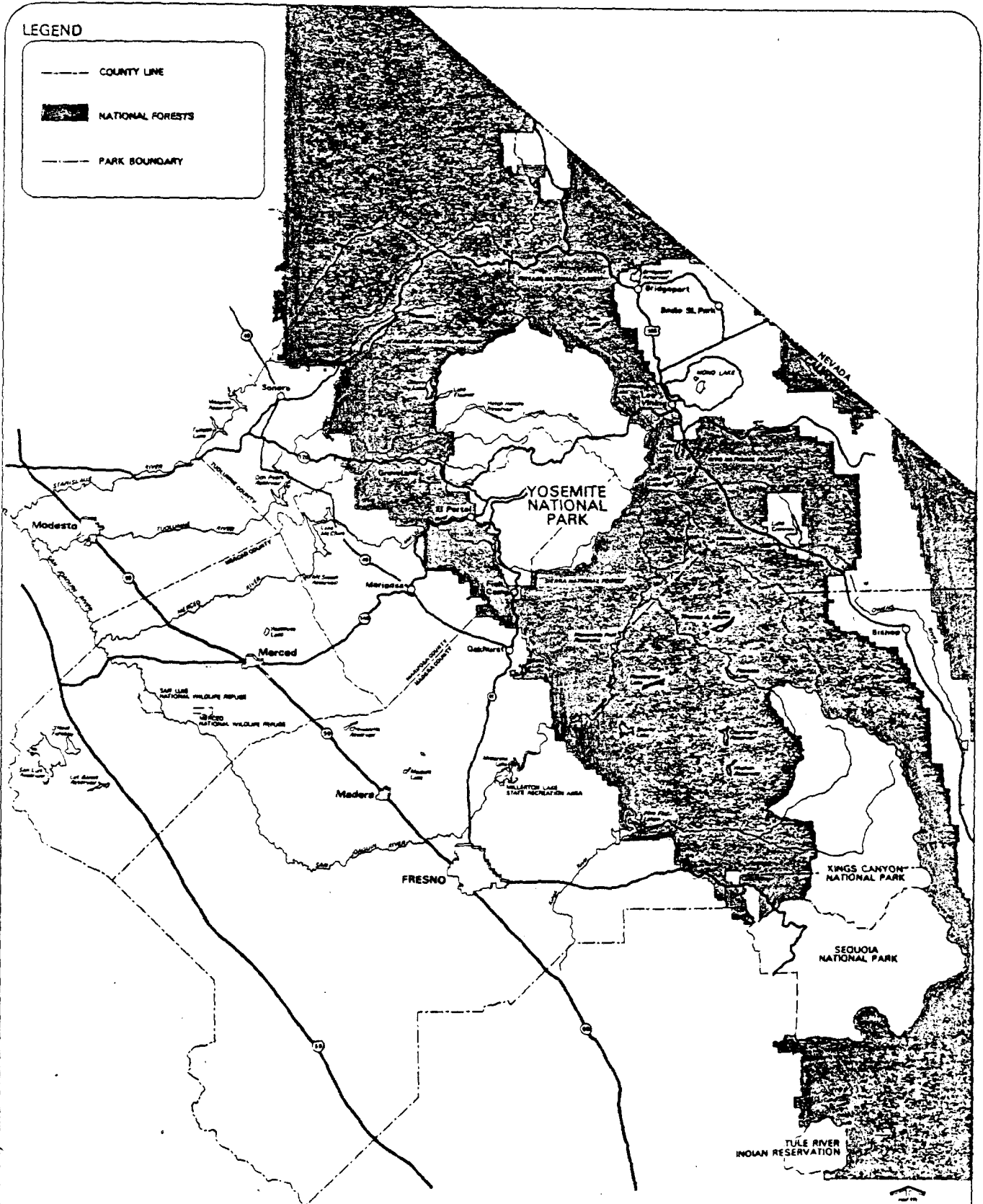
#### 5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

The Yosemite National Park nomination as presented by the Government of the United States provides the following justification for designation as a World Heritage property:

- a) Cultural property -- not applicable
- b) Natural property
  - (i) Earth's evolutionary history. The park gives vivid reflection of the glacial period on the Pacific slope of the continent. The effects of the Ice Age on the granitic bedrock structure are striking and uniquely portrayed in the Yosemite area.
  - (ii) Exceptional natural beauty. The concentration of distinctive landscape features in the Yosemite valley offers scenery that attracts millions of visitors per year. The park contains 5 of the world's highest waterfalls, outstanding examples of granitic domes, deeply incised valleys, and groves of the giant sequoias as possibly the oldest (c. 2700 years) and largest living things on earth.

LEGEND

- COUNTY LINE
- NATIONAL FORESTS
- PARK BOUNDARY



# The Yosemite Region

—Yosemite National Park—US. Department of the Interior—National Park Service—

308 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK (USA)

1. DOCUMENTATION

- (i) Nomination form, maps, park publications
- (ii) IUCN Data sheets
- (iii) Consultations: Dr. J.A. Kennedy
- (iv) Literature Consulted: numerous references given in nomination bibliography; US National Park Service, 1980. General Management Plan and, 1982, Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment; Huth, H. 1957. Nature and the American Mind: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes. Univ. Calif. Press. pp.134-135.

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

It is difficult to find a comparable area to Yosemite in the Nearctic Realm. Many North American parks have remnant glaciers and post-glacial landscapes but almost all of these have volcanic, sedimentary, or metamorphic substrates where glacial features are quickly lost to erosion or buried under the present ice pack. No other area portrays the effects of the ice age on the underlying granitic domes as does Yosemite.

The two areas that come closest for comparison purposes are Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks, two contiguous parks 110 km south of Yosemite. All 3 parks are roughly comparable in alpine glacial terrain, elevation range, habitat and species diversity. Sequoia has the most superlative giant sequoias of the three and Kings Canyon has the highest canyon wall (2550 m) in North America. Neither park, however, can rival the scenic beauty of Yosemite with its unique concentration of cliffs, waterfalls, lakes, domes, and meadows.

3. INTEGRITY

Yosemite has clear and physically explicit boundaries. The upper reaches of the park follow the crest of the Sierra Nevada drainage divide, and the park encompasses the upper watersheds of two major rivers. The west boundary cuts across the terrain on arbitrary but manageable section lines.

The entire park is surrounded by four national forests, adjacent portions of which are designated wilderness areas, thereby providing important buffer functions.

The guiding document is a general management plan which consists of three sub-plans: natural resources; cultural resources; and visitor use, operations and development. The third sub-plan identifies the major threats and outlines measures to address them. The threats include excessive vehicle traffic, overcrowding, uneven distribution of use, inappropriate development and commercial services. Resolution of these issues is based on the Park Service receiving adequate funding and then modifying certain policies and laws. An estimated US\$85 million budgetary support is needed to implement the plan.

There are also two threats to Yosemite from proposed dam developments in the Tuolumne Valley within the park (water supply for San Francisco) and for the Merced River outside the park that would affect park fisheries. World Heritage status would help to deflect or at least offer more mitigative measures for these proposals.

#### 4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It is difficult to discuss the values of Yosemite without reference to John Muir, the early naturalist who is considered the "father" of Yosemite and who wrote eloquently about the park. His various books on Yosemite represent classic statements in the development of the national parks concept and are still often quoted today.

Although it is generally accepted that Yellowstone was the first national park ever established, Yosemite was the first concrete implementation of the national park concept when, 8 years prior to Yellowstone's establishment, Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were collectively the first area ever set aside by a government "for public use, resort, and recreation" in perpetuity. Yosemite's natural beauty was the impetus, then, for the first implementation of the national park concept as we know it today.

Adding to Yosemite's cultural importance are the archeological features found in the area. The 569 sites designated to date including stratified 2000 year-old middens, provide a significant resource for the study of paleo-cultural ecology and environmental change in western North America.

#### 5. EVALUATION

Yosemite National Park qualifies for World Heritage designation on criteria (i) and (ii). The Park provides a vivid reflection of the glacial period on the Pacific slope of the continent where the effects of the Ice Age on the granitic bedrock structure are unique in the world. Yosemite also qualifies under "exceptional natural beauty" with its combination of domes, granite walls, waterfalls, hanging valleys, giant sequoias, meadows, lakes, diversity of life zones and variety of species (criteria iii).

As suggested under point 4 above, the Park also may qualify as a cultural site under criteria 6 and should be evaluated by ICOMOS in this light.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Yosemite National Park should be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The National Park Service authorities should be encouraged by the Committee in their efforts to implement a series of conservation measures which would enhance the integrity of the site.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA-Yosemite National Park

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - California

NAME Yosemite National Park

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY II (National Park)  
X (World Heritage Site)

BIOGEOGRAPHICAL PROVINCE 1.20.12 (Sierra-Cascade)

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION Central portion of the Sierra Nevada in central California. 37°30'-38°11'N, 119°12'-119°53'W

DATE AND HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT Act of Congress of 30 June 1864 (13 Stat. 325) granted Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the state of California (regranted to the US government in 1906). Establishment of Yosemite National Park as a forest reservation on 1 October 1890 (26 Stat. 650) excluding Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove. Boundary adjustments were made in 1905. Park extension in 1929 of 4,846.47ha and further extensions in 1930, 1931, 1932, 1937, 1938 and 1984. Designated as a World Heritage site in 1984.

AREA 308,283ha. The park is surrounded by four national forests.

LAND TENURE Federal government ownership

ALTITUDE 671m-3,998m

PHYSICAL FEATURES Yosemite is dominated by the Sierra Nevada which is a tilted granite area. Granite underlies most of the park and is exposed as domes, partial domes, knobs and cliffs. There is exceptionally glaciated topography over most of the area including the spectacular Yosemite Valley, a 914m deep cleft carved by glaciers through a gently rolling upland. The valley is a widened portion of the prevailing narrow Merced River canyon which traverses the southern sector of the park from east to west. The massive sheer granite walls present a freshly glaciated appearance with little postglacial erosion. This area also contains many waterfalls and some 300 lakes. Other notable canyons in the park are the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne River and the Tenaya Canyon.

CLIMATE There is considerable climatic variation with mean temperatures varying some 20°C between the valleys and mountains. Annual precipitation is 1270mm-2652mm with most of the rain and snow falling at middle elevations from 1,220m-2,743m. The crests and peaks are relatively dry and the foothills and lower slopes are semi-arid.

VEGETATION There are 27 major vegetation communities, ranging from low elevation chaparral to alpine fellfields above 3,900m, the most extensive being white fir (15.18% of the park), lodgepole pine (20.45%) and red fir (12.38%). The park includes 16 major forest types with 37 tree species. Within these there are three highly significant stands of giant sequoia

Infobase produced by WCMC, January 1992

Sequoiadendron giganteum totalling 169ha, four meadow types and black oak Quercus kelloggii woodlands. The Mariposa, Merced and Tuolumne groves of sequoias are among the first discovered by European explorers and contain many important specimen trees, most notably the Grizzly Giant. The lower elevations are covered with chaparral woodland with digger pine Pinus sabaliana and live oak Quercus chrysolepis in the overstorey and extensive brush fields of Ceanothus spp., Arctostaphylos spp. and chamise Adenostoma fasciculatum or mixed coniferous forest with ponderosa pine Pinus ponderosa, incense-cedar Calocedrus decurrens, Douglas fir Pseudotsuga menziesii, white fir Abies concolor and California black oak Quercus kelloggii.

The next elevation zone comprises meadows of three distinct types: 'low elevation' below 1,829m, 'alpine and subalpine' which includes glacial (above 1,829m) and 'boggy' (above 1,829m) which are characterised by a very elevated water table in late summer or early fall. This zone also contains areas of red fir Abies magnifica with some western juniper Juniperus occidentalis, Jeffrey pine Pinus jeffreyi, western white pine P. monticola and one of the finest virgin sugar pine stands P. lambertiana in the world. Meadows are significant due to their species diversity. While meadows constitute less than 10% of the total vegetation in the Sierra Nevada and less than 4% of the park, they contain nearly 40% of the park's flora. This diversity in turn attracts an equally diverse fauna. The threatened great grey owl is directly dependent upon several meadow systems within the park. Likewise, the park's black oak woodland communities support both a diverse flora and fauna which are presently in decline throughout California.

The subalpine zone is dominated by lodgepole pine P. contorta which is also associated at higher elevations with mountain hemlock Tsuga mertensiana and whitebark pine Pinus albicaulis.

Above 3,048m there is alpine vegetation with alpine willow Salix petrophila, perennial herbs, grasses and sedges which are distinctive, sparse and lowgrowing.

The park contains a diverse flora of more than 1,400 species of flowering plant, ferns, bryophytes and lichens. Between the park and the El Portal administration site there is one endemic species Eriophyllud nubigenum, eight threatened or endangered (Federal Register), 19 locally rare species and 18 species rare for the Sierra Nevada range.

**FAUNA** Some 74 species of mammals and over 230 bird species have been recorded. The most commonly seen mammals include chipmunk Eutamias spp., yellow-bellied marmot Marmota flaviventris, ground squirrel Spermophilus spp., black bear Ursus americanus, coyote Canis latrans and mule deer Odocoileus hemionus. Resident but rarely seen are pine marten Martes americana, fisher M. pennati, wolverine Gulo luscus (rare in California), mountain lion Felis concolor and Sierra red fox Vulpes vulpes nescatoc (rare in California). Bighorn sheep Ovis canadensis were declared extinct in Yosemite in 1914 but were reintroduced in 1986. The avifauna includes the endangered southern bald eagle Haliaeetus leucocephalus (E) and peregrine falcon Falco peregrinus (V) which successfully breeds here. Great grey owl

Strix nebulosa (listed as endangered by the California Department of Fish and Game) nests in the park. Some 10 species of amphibians and 18 reptile species are endemic. The park contains 11 fish species including 6 endemic.

CULTURAL HERITAGE There are 1,000 designated archaeological sites recorded by visitors, park staff and during systematic archaeological surveys. Yosemite is viewed as a boundary zone between the two major cultural provinces of central California and Great Basin, principally Miwok and Paiute Indians.

VISITORS AND VISITOR FACILITIES Information not available

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FACILITIES A total of 63 active projects during 1988 included atmospheric research (3), biology/ecology (9), hydrology (3), geology (10), zoology and animal ecology (13), botany and plant ecology (9), sociology (7), forestry (6), physics (1), epidemiology (1) and Geographical Information Systems (1). There is a research library and a museum collection containing some 2,000 bird and mammal study skins, 2,000 insect specimens, 5,000 archaeological specimens, an herbarium with 5,000 plant specimens and over 20,000 historic photographs.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT Totally protected but sport fishing is permitted. The park is zoned as follows: Natural Environment Protection zone 6%, Outstanding Natural Features zone 2% and Special Use zone to accommodate 2 reservoirs 1%. The remaining area comprises Natural Environment, Historical, Archaeological and Development zones. 89% of the park was designated as wilderness by Congress in 1984. Surrounded by four national forests which provide important buffer zones.

Fire was reintroduced into the giant sequoia ecosystem and other fire-dependent communities in 1970 to ensure their perpetuation. Yosemite's General Management Plan was approved in 1980 under which facilities and vehicle traffic will be reduced in the valley. The management plan consists of three components: natural and cultural resources management; visitor use, operations and development; and interpretive prospectus. The second sub plan identifies major threats and outlines measures to address them. The Resources Management Plan identifies numerous conservation threats including concerns about air quality, alien plants and animals and impacts to vegetation from visitation, and programmes designed to mitigate these impacts.

MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS Extreme visitor pressure and development of modern accommodation facilities on a large scale have had a disturbing impact. Inappropriate development and commercial services have impacted large portions of Yosemite Valley. Two hydroelectric and water storage facilities permitted under special legislation cause significant local disturbance at Hetch Heetchy and Lake Eleanor in the north-west of the park. A major trans-Sierra road bisects the park. From 1890 to 1968 management suppressed natural fires which caused significant changes to the forests. The area was heavily grazed in the past which has resulted in changes in species composition and exotic plant introduction. Grizzly bear



Ursus arctos, California bighorn sheep Ovis canadensis californiana and possibly grey wolf Canis lupus disappeared from the area in the 1800s and early 1900s. A few non-native species, such as beaver Castor canadensis and white-tailed ptarmigan Lagopus leucurus, have been introduced. California black bear Ursus americanus has been adversely affected by human contact. Studies of Yosemite's backcountry areas have identified significant impacts due to campsites, trails and high Sierra camps.

STAFF About 300 year-round permanent, 300 seasonal and 1,800 concession employees in summer and 900 in winter.

BUDGET Annual budget US\$10,780,182 (1989)

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION Superintendent, PO Box 577, Yosemite National Park, California 95389

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DATE 1983, updated May 1990

0013U

Convention concernant la protection du Patrimoine mondial, culturel et naturel

PROPOSITION D'INSCRIPTION SUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

Nom : PARC NATIONAL DE YOSEMITE

N° d'ordre : 308

Date de réception par le Secrétariat : 30.12.83

Etat partie ayant présenté la proposition d'inscription du bien conformément à la Convention : ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

Résumé établi par l'UICN (mars 1984) à partir de la proposition d'inscription présentée par les Etats-Unis. Le document original et toutes les informations communiquées à l'appui de la proposition d'inscription pourront être consultés aux réunions du Bureau et du Comité.

1. LOCALISATION : Etat de Californie (Etats-Unis d'Amérique)

2. DONNEES JURIDIQUES :

Bien public administré par l'USNPS (Service des Parcs nationaux des Etats-Unis) sous l'autorité du Ministère de l'intérieur. Les dispositions législatives relatives au parc comprennent 16 lois, proclamations et résolutions. Yosemite Valley et les séquoias géants de Mariposa Grove présentent la caractéristique d'être le premier site naturel à avoir, pour ses qualités pittoresques, été constitué en zone d'agrément à l'usage du public (1864). Le statut officiel de parc national lui a été donné en 1890.

3. IDENTIFICATION :

Le Parc national de Yosemite s'étend sur la pente occidentale des monts du centre de la Sierra Nevada dans la province biogéographique "chaîne des Cascades". Il couvre une superficie totale de 3.079 km<sup>2</sup>. La région a subi dans le passé une forte glaciation et, s'il n'existe plus de glaciers dans le parc, ils ont laissé partout des traces de leur passage. L'action glaciaire conjuguée à la présence d'un socle granitique a produit des reliefs uniques et très accentués. On rencontre notamment des structures en dôme polies typiques, ainsi que les caractéristiques glaciaires associées : vallées suspendues, lacs de cirque, moraines et vallées en U. Des blocs granitiques monolithiques comme Half Dome et le mur vertical de El Capitan sont des vestiges caractéristiques classiques de l'histoire géologique de la région. L'altitude varie entre 579 mètres et 3.998 mètres. Le parc est connu pour ses nombreuses cascades, notamment Yosemite Falls et Ribbon Falls, dont les eaux tombent en une chute ininterrompue d'une hauteur de 491 mètres (troisième du monde). Deux grands cours d'eau prennent leur source dans le parc, qui contient en outre 300 lacs.

Les fluctuations climatiques sont considérables, avec des températures moyennes variant d'une vingtaine de degrés entre les vallées et les montagnes. Les précipitations varient également de 1.270 à 2.653 mm. On rencontre dans le Parc de Yosemite cinq des sept zones biologiques reconnues des Etats-Unis. La variété de la flore se traduit par l'existence de six zones de végétation distinctes déterminées par la variation de l'altitude. On note la présence remarquable de trois futaies de séquoias géants et de grandes prairies alpines. Il existe 1.200 espèces de plantes à fleurs, ainsi que diverses autres espèces de fougères, de bryophytes et de lichens. On trouve une espèce végétale endémique et huit espèces menacées ou en danger d'extinction (Registre fédéral des Etats-Unis).

Le parc abrite 67 espèces de mammifères, dont 32 de rongeurs, 221 espèces d'oiseaux, 18 de reptiles, 10 amphibiens et 11 de poissons, dont 6 sont endémiques. Une espèce d'oiseau (l'aigle chauve) est en danger d'extinction et une autre (le faucon pèlerin) est classée comme "vulnérable" dans le Red Data Book de l'UICN/ICBP.

Aux époques préhistoriques tardives et historiques, la région de Yosemite était habitée par deux grandes tribus d'Indiens d'Amérique du Nord. 569 sites archéologiques ont été recensés dans le parc.

Quatre forêts nationales entourent le parc et constituent une zone tampon. Une grande voie routière le divise en deux et assure un accès facile aux visiteurs des grands centres urbains. Le parc en a accueilli 2,7 millions en 1981. L'infrastructure touristique est particulièrement développée dans Yosemite Valley, au centre du parc.

#### 4. ETAT DE PRESERVATION OU DE CONSERVATION :

Le paysage de Yosemite a toutefois beaucoup évolué. Trois espèces d'animaux ont désormais disparu du parc (le loup gris, le grizzli et le mouflon de Californie). Quelques espèces non indigènes y ont été accidentellement introduites (castor, téttras à queue blanche). La suppression des feux naturels et du pacage du gros bétail et des ovidés dans le passé a également modifié la végétation initiale. La construction de deux barrages dans le parc et la mise en place d'installations ont également eu une influence sur les écosystèmes. Le parc renferme 727 ha de propriétés privées.

Si certaines parties du parc reçoivent, aux fins de loisirs, un nombre de visiteurs approchant aux périodes de pointe les densités urbaines, 90 % de la zone est classée zone de nature protégée ("wilderness") dont l'accès est assuré par 1.245 km de sentiers.

Yosemite fait l'objet d'un plan de gestion général achevé en 1980, tenant compte des problèmes ci-dessus évoqués. Ce plan vise à réduire considérablement l'incidence des véhicules des visiteurs en offrant d'autres modes de transport. Les paysages et la végétation qui ont été altérés sont en cours de restauration grâce au contrôle du pacage, à l'élimination des plantes exotiques et aux brûlages contrôlés. Le budget de 1981 consacrait au parc une somme de 14,5 millions de dollars des Etats-Unis.

#### 5. JUSTIFICATION DE L'INSCRIPTION SUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL :

La proposition présentée par le Gouvernement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, visant à l'inscription du Parc national de Yosemite sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial invoque les critères suivants :

##### Bien naturel

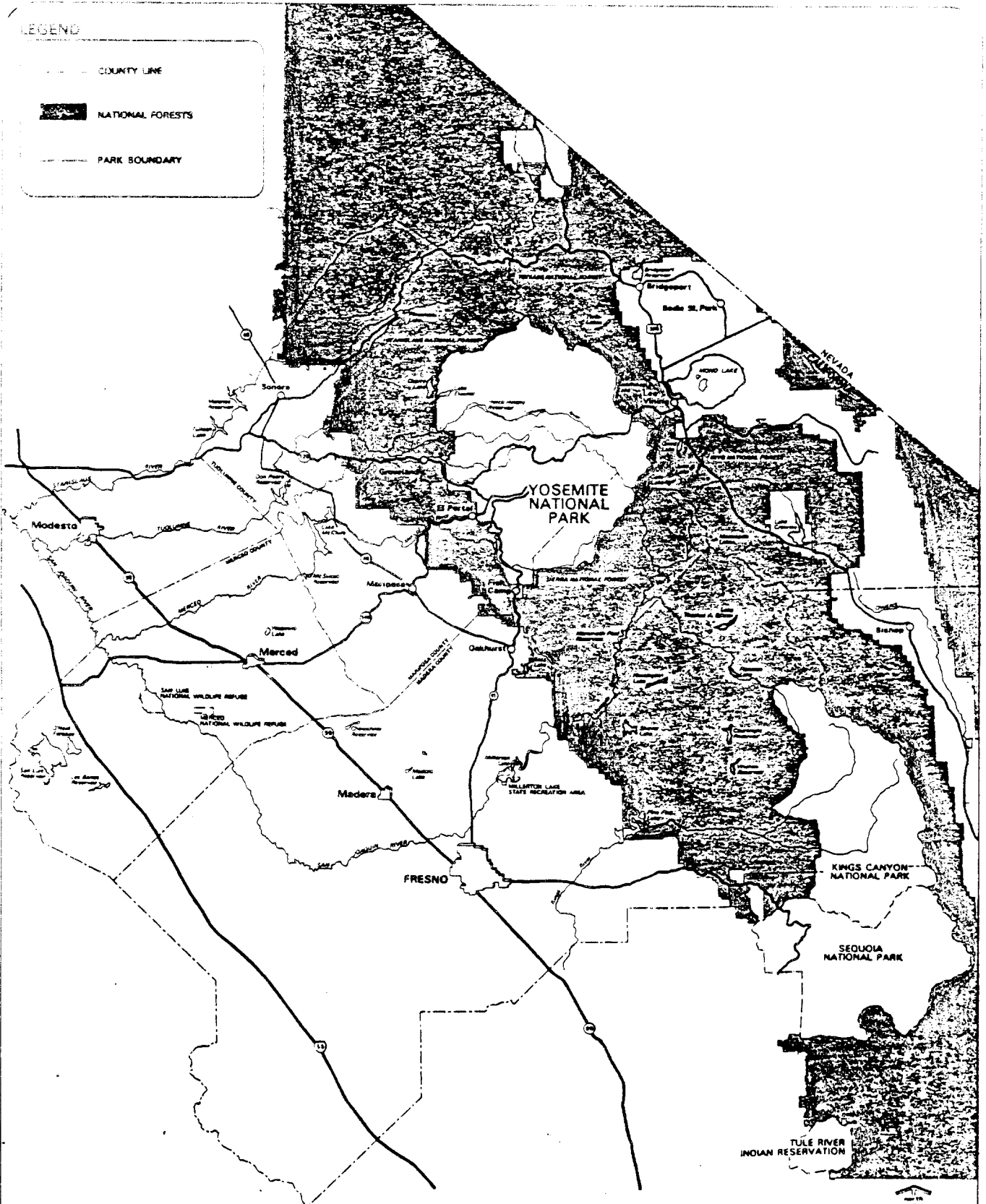
- (i) histoire de l'évolution de la terre. Le parc offre des témoignages spectaculaires de la période glaciaire sur la partie du continent drainée vers le Pacifique. Les incidences de l'ère glaciaire sur la structure du socle granitique sont frappantes et la région de Yosemite en est un exemple unique.
- (iii) beauté naturelle exceptionnelle. La concentration d'éléments pittoresques typiques dans la Yosemite Valley offre un paysage qui attire chaque année des millions de visiteurs. Le parc contient cinq des plus grandes chutes d'eau du monde, des exemples exceptionnels de domes granitiques, des vallées profondément encaissées et des futaies de séquoias géants, qui sont peut-être les êtres vivants les plus anciens (environ 2.700 ans) et les plus grands sur terre.

LEGEND

COUNTY LINE

NATIONAL FORESTS

PARK BOUNDARY



# The Yosemite Region



10 MILES  
1:500,000  
DEC. 1966

Yosemite National Park—US Department of the Interior—National Park Service

EVALUATION TECHNIQUE PAR L'UICN

308 PARC NATIONAL DE YOSEMITE (ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE)

1. DOCUMENTATION

- i) Formulaire de proposition d'inscription, cartes, publications sur le parc
- ii) Fiches signalétiques de l'UICN
- iii) Consultant : M. J.A. Kennedy
- iv) Documents consultés : nombreuses références indiquées dans la bibliographie accompagnant la proposition d'inscription ; US National Park Service, 1980. General Management Plan, et, 1982, Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment ; Huth, H. 1957. Nature and the American Mind: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes. Univ. Calif. Press. P. 134-135.

2. COMPARAISON AVEC D'AUTRES REGIONS

Il est difficile de trouver une région comparable à celle de Yosemite dans le domaine néoarctique. De nombreux parcs d'Amérique du Nord présentent des vestiges de glaciers et des paysages postglaciaires, mais presque tous ont des substrats volcaniques, sédimentaires ou métamorphiques, dont les caractéristiques glaciaires disparaissent rapidement sous l'action de l'érosion, ou sous les amas de glace actuels. Aucune zone ne représente comme Yosemite les effets de la période glaciaire sur les dômes granitiques sous-jacents.

Les deux zones les plus comparables seraient les Parcs nationaux de Kings Canyon et des Séquoias, deux parcs contigus situés à 110 km au sud de Yosemite. Les trois parcs sont relativement comparables en ce qui concerne le relief glaciaire alpin, l'altitude, la diversité des habitats et des espèces. Le Parc national des Séquoias contient les plus remarquables séquoias géants des trois et le Parc de Kings Canyon, le cañon le plus encaissé (paroi de 2.550 mètres) d'Amérique du Nord. Aucun des deux ne peut toutefois surpasser la beauté du paysage de Yosemite, avec sa concentration unique de falaises, cascades, lacs, dômes et prairies.

3. INTEGRITE

Le Parc national de Yosemite a des limites naturelles très nettes. Ses parties hautes suivent la crête de la ligne de partage des eaux de la Sierra Nevada et il englobe les bassins versants supérieurs de deux grands cours d'eau. A l'ouest, ses limites sont arbitraires mais facilement localisables.

Le parc entier est entouré de quatre forêts nationales, dont certaines portions adjacentes désignées comme des zones de nature protégée jouent le rôle important de zones tampons.

Le document directif est un plan de gestion général subdivisé en trois sections : ressources naturelles ; ressources culturelles ; tourisme, services et mise en valeur. La troisième section recense les principales menaces et indique les mesures destinées à y faire face. Parmi ces menaces on citera la circulation automobile excessive, le trop grand nombre de visiteurs, la répartition inégale des utilisations, une mise en valeur intempestive et les services commerciaux. Ces problèmes seront résolus si l'Administration du parc bénéficie de fonds suffisants et modifie ensuite certaines politiques et dispositions législatives. Il est nécessaire d'obtenir l'aide financière, estimée à 85 millions de dollars des Etats-Unis, pour mettre en oeuvre le plan.

Deux autres perspectives menacent également le Parc national de Yosemite : les projets de barrages proposés dans Tuolumne Valley à l'intérieur du parc (pour l'alimentation en eau de San Francisco) et sur Merced River hors du parc, qui auraient une incidence sur la pêche dans le parc. L'inscription sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial permettrait de repousser ces mesures, ou du moins d'en proposer de moins radicales.

#### 4. OBSERVATIONS SUPPLEMENTAIRES

Il est difficile d'évaluer l'intérêt du Parc national de Yosemite sans faire référence à John Muir, ce naturaliste de la première heure qui est considéré comme le "père" de Yosemite et qui a écrit des passages très éloquents sur le parc. Les divers ouvrages qu'il lui a consacrés font autorité dans l'élaboration du concept de parc national et sont encore souvent cités aujourd'hui.

S'il est généralement admis que Yellowstone est le premier parc national qui ait jamais été créé, Yosemite a été la première concrétisation du concept de parc national lorsque, huit ans avant la création de Yellowstone, Yosemite Valley et Mariposa Grove ont formé ensemble la première zone à avoir été instituée par un gouvernement "comme lieu de séjour et de loisirs à l'usage du public" à perpétuité. La beauté naturelle de Yosemite a donc été le point de départ de la première mise en pratique du concept de parc national tel que nous le connaissons aujourd'hui.

L'importance culturelle de Yosemite est renforcée par la découverte de vestiges archéologiques dans la zone. Les 569 sites désignés à ce jour, notamment les débris domestiques stratifiés datant de 2.000 ans, constituent un atout considérable pour l'étude de l'écologie paléoculturelle et l'évolution de l'environnement dans l'ouest de l'Amérique du Nord.

#### 5. EVALUATION

L'inscription du Parc national de Yosemite sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial est justifiée par les critères (i) et (ii). Le parc offre des témoignages frappants de la période glaciaire sur le versant Pacifique du continent où les effets de l'époque glaciaire sur le soubassement granitique sont uniques au monde. Yosemite mérite aussi de figurer sur la Liste en raison de la "beauté naturelle exceptionnelle" de son ensemble de dômes, murs de granit, cascades, vallées suspendues, séquoias géants, prairies, lacs et de la diversité des zones biologiques et de la variété des espèces.

Comme l'indique le paragraphe 4 ci-dessus, le parc peut aussi être considéré comme site culturel en vertu du critère (vi) et doit être évalué par l'ICOMOS dans cette optique.

#### 6. RECOMMANDATIONS

Le Parc national de Yosemite doit être inscrit sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial. L'Administration du parc national doit être encouragée par le Comité dans ses efforts visant, par l'application d'une série de mesures de conservation, à améliorer l'intégrité du site.