

Questions from Representative Porter and Responses from Frank Dean, President of Yosemite Conservancy

1. The National Park Service recently announced that they will begin a public input process to find a long-term solution to Yosemite's visitor and traffic management issues. Why is it important to have park gateway communities and businesses involved in designing these solutions? **Yosemite National Park's gateway communities provide an important service to the visiting public as the lodging and restaurant facilities within the park are limited and unable to expand to avoid development impacts to the park. This results in many Yosemite visitors visiting during the day and lodging in nearby communities. It is prudent for the National Park Service to work with the gateway communities to better understand their perspectives, and plan for a sustainable approach for the increasing number of people seeking to visit Yosemite. It is also important to provide coordinated and consistent messaging to the public so they can plan their visit to the park.**

2. Based on your experience at Yosemite, would you recommend that other parks consider implementing day use reservation systems to address overcrowding? **Managed visitor access, including day use reservations or timed entry systems, are viable solutions to crowded national parks. I launched a reservation system at Muir Woods National monument while serving with the NPS in 2015. It has worked well since then and resolved traffic issues for the park and local community. Guiding and diverting visitors to less crowded areas of a national park can help, but most people will still want to see the parks most popular areas during their visit.**

3. Why do you think managing visitation to parks is a better solution to overcrowding than building more infrastructure, such as additional parking or shuttle buses? **Many national parks have some type of established capacity based on infrastructure and/or a visitor crowding metric. Construction of additional parking areas is expensive, may impact the park's resources, and might conflict with established limits on the number of people able to safely visit a prime park area. The need for additional parking and shuttle bus systems is also seasonal in most parks. Each park is unique, but the further a parking area is from the prime park resource the more buses and drivers are needed to provide frequent and reliable service. Establishing a managed visitor access or day use reservation system would enable Yosemite to manage their way to a solution rather than building new facilities, including housing for new bus drivers.**

4. Do many of the concessioners at major Park Service units have a geographic monopoly over basic services like food and lodging? **Yes, that has been the typical concession approach in**

national parks as there is economy of scale for the concessioner and just one contract to manage for the NPS. Some larger parks such as Grand Canyon and Yellowstone have two major concessioners given the scale of the operations.

5. What policies are in place to stop big concessioners like the ones in Yosemite or Yellowstone from charging whatever the market will bear these under monopoly conditions? **The rates are approved by the NPS, by comparing similar resort areas in the U.S. But affordability is an increasing concern.**

6. Is there anything else you would like to add for the hearing record? **There are many complaints about the recreation.gov reservation systems for campgrounds and other park areas. The interest in visiting parks and accessing them via recreation.gov appears to be insatiable. Learning more about how to improve these systems for the consumer might be useful.**