



## Developing Alternatives For the Tuolumne River Plan

*The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to rigorously explore a range of reasonable alternatives when considering projects that would significantly affect the environment. NEPA also mandates an early and open process to determine the scope of issues surrounding the proposed action, to develop options for addressing those issues, and to provide for public review and comment on the environmental analyses presented in the project's draft environmental impact statement (Draft EIS). Following is a summary of the process used to develop the alternatives for the Tuolumne River Plan. The process is not linear, requiring revision to earlier steps as other steps produce more information.*

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### Step 1: Define river values to be protected and enhanced

The NPS began the process of identifying the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) for the Tuolumne River in 2005. The planning team conducted internal ORV workshops using available research and monitoring information, subject-matter expertise, peer review, government partners, management input, and expert guidance from other wild and scenic river professionals. Park planners also accepted public comment, including that from culturally associated tribes and groups on the ORVs numerous times between 2005 and 2010.

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### Step 2: Assess baseline conditions of river values

Park planners assessed the condition of the Tuolumne River ORVs beginning in 2006. Information used to evaluate the baseline condition of the Tuolumne River ORVs included research studies and models of natural systems developed specifically for this planning effort; historic photos, maps, and archival materials; and the professional judgment of subject matter experts with extensive experience in their fields. Park managers sought external peer reviews of specific research findings and the conclusions for overall river conditions where appropriate. The public also identified potential areas of concern related to the ORVs during project scoping and in later public outreach efforts.

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### Step 3: Define desired conditions, adverse impact, and degradation for river values

In concert with assessing river values, park managers determined what the desired condition should be for those values, based on guiding legislation, available research and monitoring information, best professional judgment of subject matter experts, and current trends in the relevant academic and public land management fields. For each river value, desired conditions are called *Management Standards*. Managers also defined *Adverse impacts* (a substantial reduction in the condition of a river value in relation to baseline conditions as a result of public use, development, and/or administrative use), and *Degradation* (the state in which a river value has been fundamentally altered by public use or development to the point that its value is lost for at least a decade). Both adverse impact and degradation are segment-wide and would require immediate action by the agency if they were present.

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### Step 4: Identify management concerns and corrective actions

This step involved a systematic scientific review of the river corridor to identify management concerns related to the free-flowing condition of the river; water quality; and hydrologic/geologic, cultural, biological, recreational, and scenic ORVs. The planning team also reviewed all of the public comments received during scoping to ensure that location-specific concerns were identified and paired with corrective measures. Park managers then devised corrective actions, using the expertise of NPS subject matter experts, current research and monitoring information, the latest restoration techniques, and best professional judgment.

**Step 5:  
Determine  
location  
and size of  
necessary  
facilities**

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act guidelines state that, “Major public use facilities such as developed campgrounds, major visitor centers and administrative headquarters will, where feasible, be located outside the river area. If such facilities are necessary to provide for public use and/or to protect the river resource, and location outside the river area is infeasible, such facilities may be located within the river area provided they do not have an adverse effect on the values for which the river area was designated.” Pursuant to this guideline, the National Park Service evaluated all existing major facilities and services within the river corridor for their necessity and relocation potential. As part of this step, park planners also evaluated the effects of existing facilities and services on river values. Any structures found to have negative effects were identified for removal, alteration to eliminate the effect, or mitigation.

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**Step 6: Solicit  
public input  
on organizing  
themes for  
alternatives**

From the outset of the alternatives development process, park managers solicited public input into the scope of the plan. Public input was regularly sought throughout the project, including two planning workbooks and “Planner for a Day Workshops”. The input received helped shape the alternatives substantially.

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**Step 7:  
Evaluate  
feasibility  
of draft  
alternatives**

Once draft alternatives were completed, park planners put them through several rounds of review and critique by NPS managers, field staff, resource experts, and the public. Planners examined all site proposals and management actions to ensure that no conflicts were present within individual alternatives. Planners also developed cost estimates for the alternatives to ensure that the proposed actions in the alternatives would be economically and operationally feasible. Most importantly, planners compared the preliminary alternatives to the constraints to which all alternatives were subject—wilderness boundaries, wild and scenic segment classification directives, site constraints like the presence of wetlands or rare plants, water withdrawal limits (for domestic consumption), and wilderness experience.

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**Step 8:  
Establish user  
capacities  
consistent with  
protection of  
river values**

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and Secretaries’ Guidelines direct managing agencies to address user capacity and “the kinds and amounts of public use which the river area can sustain without impact to the values for which it was designated.” User capacity experts developed a seven step process to address user capacity mandates. They integrated that process into this alternative development process, which helped define the estimates of the maximum use levels sustainable in the Tuolumne River corridor, given the constraints present therein (wilderness boundaries and experience, water supply, and other resource constraints). Adjusting those use levels to the experiences envisioned within each alternative, planners produced a range of user capacities and recreation types, all within the existing constraints and all protective of river values.

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**How  
to stay  
involved**

Learn more about this plan, including open house dates and other information on the Tuolumne River Plan website at [www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/trp.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/trp.htm). You can also follow this and other park plans on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/YosemiteNPS](http://www.facebook.com/YosemiteNPS).

Comment on this draft comprehensive management plan and environmental impact statement by visiting the Tuolumne River Plan Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at [http://parkplanning.nps.gov/trp\\_deis](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/trp_deis). Electronic comment submittal through PEPC saves resources and allows for direct entry into the NPS comment analysis system. Alternatively, your comments can be emailed to [yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:yose_planning@nps.gov), faxed to 209/379-1294 or mailed to:

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