

Yosemite National Park

MERCED RIVER PLAN... *PROVIDING ACCESS AND PROTECTING RESOURCES*

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS WORKBOOK

SPRING 2012



PURPOSE OF THIS WORKBOOK

The purpose of this workbook is to share the range of preliminary alternative concepts we have developed for the Merced River Plan and to solicit feedback. Our intent is to describe our planning process and to share our thinking at this point in time. We appreciate your involvement to-date and hope you will continue to stay engaged and provide additional input during this phase in the planning process.

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Cover Photo: The Merced River, designated as Wild and Scenic in 1987, flows between granite monoliths of Yosemite Valley. Photo by Christine White Loberg

Workbook Status: Alternative concepts are current as of early March 2012, and will be refined.

THE MERCED RIVER PLAN

The Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan will be the guiding document for protecting and enhancing river values and managing use within the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor in Yosemite National Park and the El Portal Administrative Site. This plan will call for site-specific actions to correct past impacts, establish numeric limits on use, and establish a long-term proactive monitoring program to ensure resource protection into the future. Additionally, decisions will be made regarding the retention, relocation, and/or removal of facilities within the river corridor.

GOALS OF THE MERCED RIVER PLAN

The overall goal of this plan is to provide for public recreation and resource use while protecting and enhancing the values for which the Merced River was designated wild and scenic. More specific goals of the plan are to:

- Promote the river's ability to shape the landscape, reducing impediments to free-flow, improving geologic/hydrologic processes, restoring flood-plains and meadows, and protecting water quality.
- Support opportunities for people to experience and develop direct connections to the Merced River and its unique values as a place of cultural association, education, recreation, reflection and inspiration.
- Institute a visitor-use management program that balances the provision of high-quality, resource-related recreational visitor use opportunities in the river corridor with the protection and enhancement of natural and cultural river values.
- Provide clear direction on land use and associated development in the river corridor, allowing for the infrastructure necessary to support public use while protecting and enhancing river values.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The National Park Service is committed to a collaborative, interdisciplinary planning approach with frequent opportunities for public involvement and information sharing. Within this *Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan Alternative Concepts Workbook*, the park outlines a set of preliminary alternative concepts for your consideration. Please bear in mind that these will be refined and developed in greater detail based on your feedback.

To comment on the material in the workbook, you may use the comment form at the end of the document or visit the Merced River Plan Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/MRPAlternatives>. Comments are easiest for us to use when they are made through this website. For other ways to comment, visit the MRP comment webpage at http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp_comment.htm. Comments can also be submitted by email to yose_planning@nps.gov or by U.S. mail sent to the following address:

Superintendent
Yosemite National Park
Attn: Merced River Plan
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Your feedback is most helpful if received before April 20, 2012.

WORKSHOPS AND SITE VISITS SCHEDULE

Please join us for a workshop, site visit, or webinar. We look forward to seeing you!

The input we receive during these workshops and site visits, along with comments provided on the workbook, will be considered in refining the alternatives to be analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), released later this fall.

MRP SPRING 2012 PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS WORKSHOPS

Event	Date and Time	Location
Webinar	March 27: 10 a.m.–Noon (PST)	Online at: Yose.webex.com
Workshop	March 28: 9–11:30 a.m.	Yosemite Valley Auditorium
Site Visit	March 28: 1–3 p.m.	Meet at Yosemite Valley Auditorium
Workshop	April 4: 5:30–8 p.m.	Golden Gate Room, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco
Webinar	April 11: 6:30–8:30 p.m.	Online at: Yose.webex.com
Site Visit	April 12: 2–4 p.m.	Meet at El Portal Community Hall
Workshop	April 12: 5:30–8 p.m.	El Portal Community Hall
Site Visit	April 13: 10 a.m.–Noon	Meet at Wawona Community Hall
Workshop	April 13: 1–3:30 p.m.	Wawona Community Hall

HOW TO STAY INVOLVED

There are many ways to stay engaged with the planning process via the Internet, the park's electronic newsletter, open houses and Facebook. The park has a website devoted to the Merced River Plan located at www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp.htm. At that website, you can sign up for our electronic newsletter. The newsletter provides information and announcements for all park plans, projects, and open houses. Yosemite's Facebook page is located at <http://www.facebook.com/YosemiteNPS>, so please friend us. We periodically send out hard-copy outreach materials to stakeholders who request this type of correspondence. To be added to this mailing list, please send an email request to yose_planning@nps.gov or mail your request to the Superintendent's address provided above.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLAN ELEMENTS

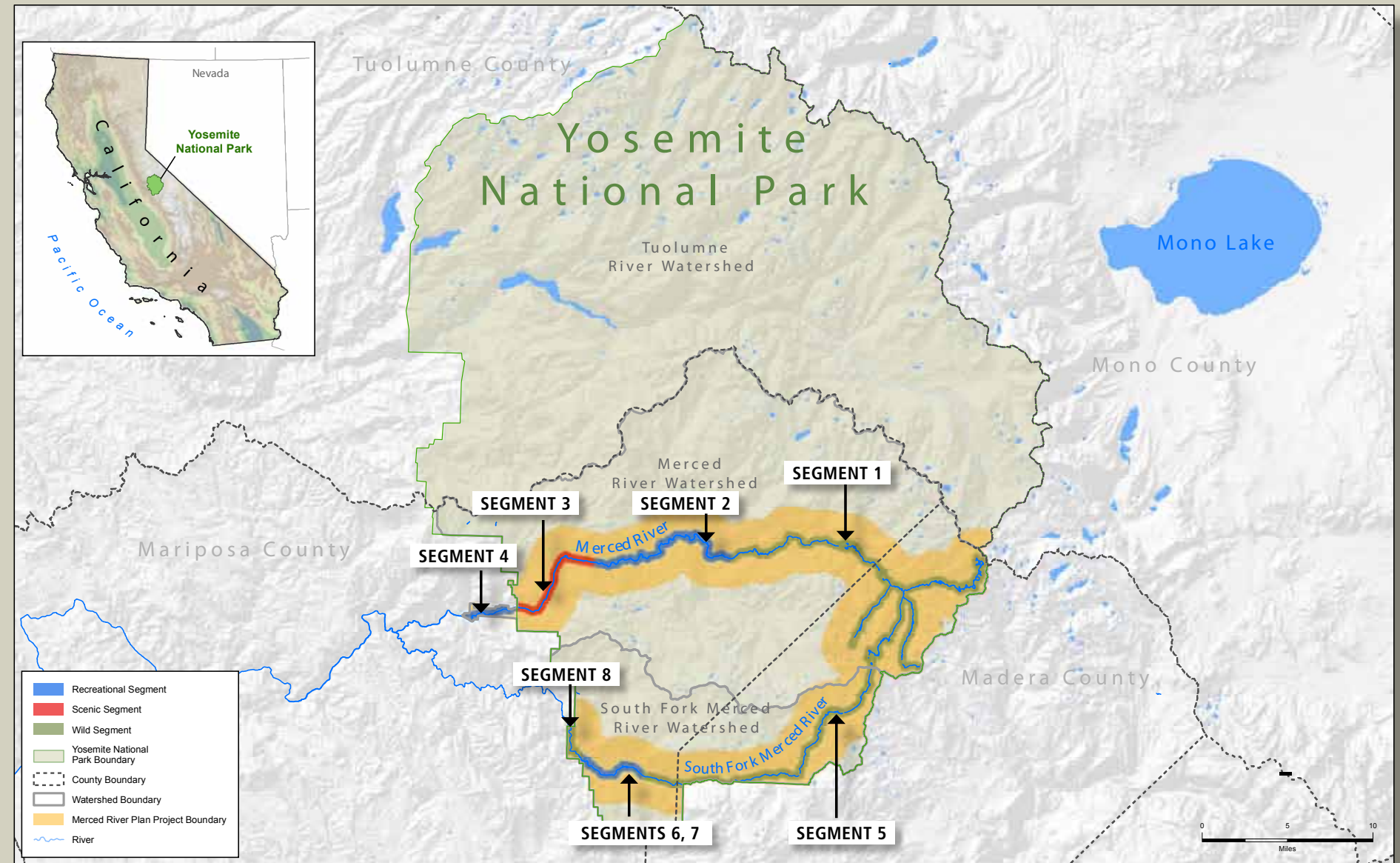
The Merced River was designated Wild and Scenic by Congress in 1987. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) stipulates that federal land managers must protect and enhance the values that merit a river's designation. Such values include the river's free-flowing condition, its water quality, and its "outstandingly remarkable values," which are the unique characteristics that make the river worthy of special protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

To protect and enhance these river values, the WSRA directs managers to prepare a comprehensive management plan for each wild and scenic river. The plan must "address resource protection, development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of this Act."

WHAT THE MERCED RIVER PLAN WILL DO

The Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan will:

- Document river boundaries to define the area to be protected
- Classify segments as wild, scenic, or recreational
- Provide for a process to review new or ongoing projects to protect the river's free-flowing condition
- Clearly describe the river's outstandingly remarkable values
- Establish a management program to protect and enhance the river's outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing condition and water quality
- Address user capacities; determine the quantity and mixture of recreation and other public use which can be permitted without adversely impacting or degrading river values
- Determine the type and location of lands and facilities (both current and future) necessary to provide for public use while protecting and enhancing river values



SEGMENTS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Section 2 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that each segment of the river be classified as wild, scenic, or recreational based on the level of development present in the river corridor at the time of designation.

The Merced Wild and Scenic River has eight classified segments: three Wild segments (Segments 1, 5, 8), four Recreational segments (Segments 2, 4, 6, 7), and one Scenic segment (Segment 3,) representing the management areas that have been established for the Merced River Plan.



Recreational: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. (Segment 2: Yosemite Valley; Segment 4: El Portal; Segments 6 & 7: Wawona)



Scenic: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads. (Segment 3: The Gorge)



Wild: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America. (Segments 1, 5 & 8: Wilderness)

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLAN ELEMENTS

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING RIVER VALUES

The Wild and Scenic River Act directs land managers to protect and enhance the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values; these three things are collectively referred to as "river values."

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) are those rare, unique, or exemplary characteristics that make the river worthy of national wild and scenic river designation.

MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES

BIOLOGICAL VALUES

- **Segments 1, 5:** The Merced River creates numerous, exquisite small meadows and relatively intact adjacent riparian habitats.
- **Segment 2:** The meadows and riparian communities of Yosemite Valley comprise one of the largest mid-elevation meadow complexes in the Sierra Nevada.
- **Segments 7-8:** The Sierra sweet bay (*Myrica hartwegii*) is a rare plant found along the South Fork Merced River.
- **Segment 4:** Valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*), a regionally rare species, occur in the El Portal area.

GEOLOGIC/HYDROLOGIC VALUES

- **Segment 1:** The upper Merced River canyon is a textbook example of a rare U-shaped canyon that was carved by glaciers.
- **Segment 2:** The meadows and riparian communities of Yosemite Valley comprise one of the largest mid-elevation meadow complexes in the Sierra Nevada.
- **Segment 2:** The El Capitan Moraine is an extraordinary example of a recessional moraine.
- **Segment 2:** The Merced River from Happy Isles to the west end of Yosemite Valley provides an outstanding example of a rare, mid-elevation alluvial river.
- **Segment 4:** The boulder bar in El Portal was created by changing river gradients, glacial history, and powerful floods. These elements have resulted in accumulation of extraordinary large boulders, which are rare in such deposits.

CULTURAL VALUES

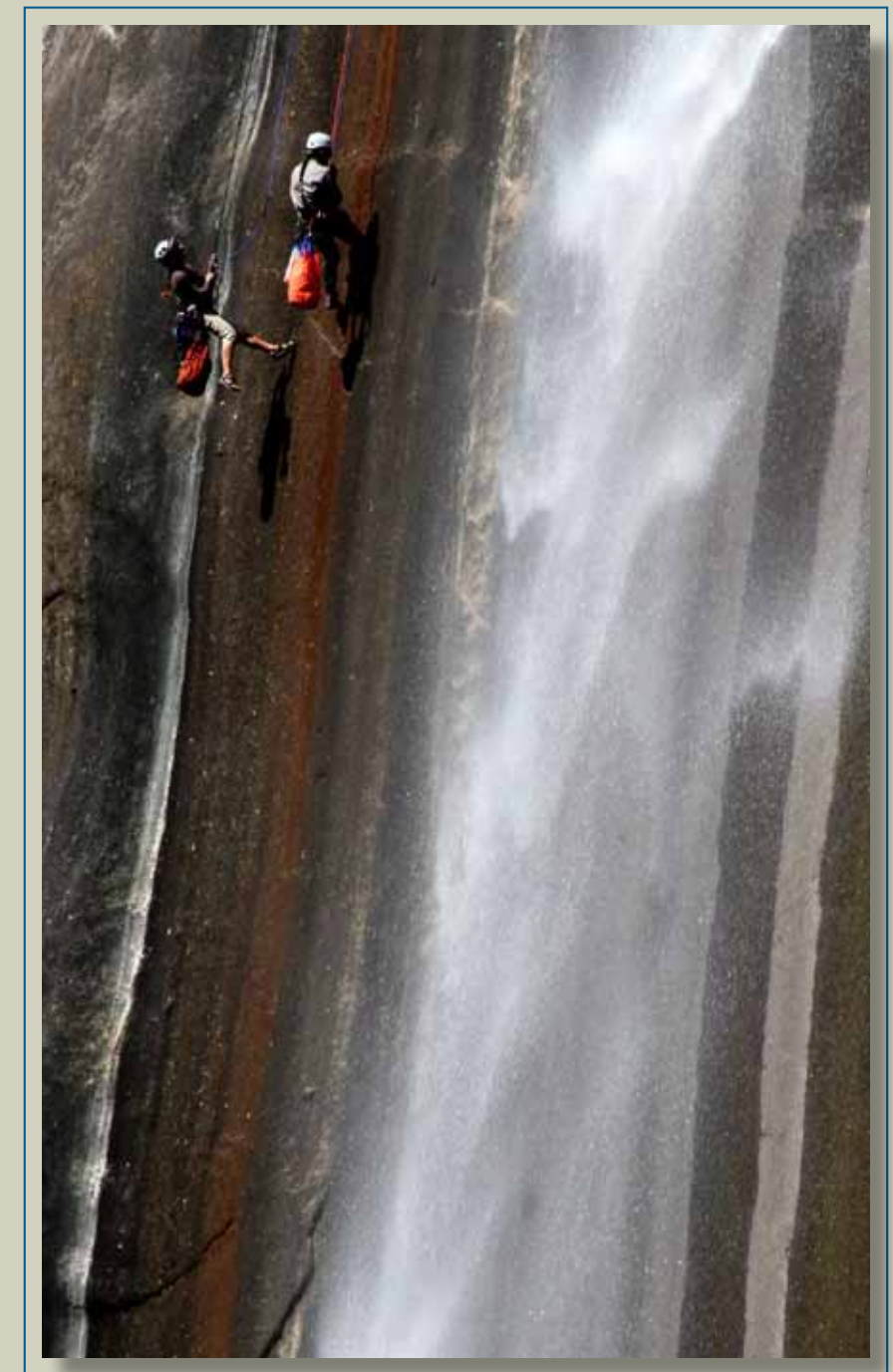
- **Segment 2:** Yosemite Valley American Indian ethnographic resources include a linked landscape of specifically mapped traditional plant gathering areas.
- **Segment 2:** The Yosemite Valley Archeological District is a linked landscape that contains dense concentrations of resources that represent thousands of years of human settlement along this segment of the Merced River.
- **Segment 4:** The El Portal Archeological District contains dense concentrations of resources that represent thousands of years of occupation and evidence of continuous, far-reaching traffic and trade. This segment includes some of the oldest deposits in the region and the Johnny Wilson Ranch, a regionally rare historic-era American Indian Homestead.
- **Segment 5:** This segment includes regionally rare evidence of indigenous settlement along the South Fork Merced River, including prehistoric rock ring features with wooden remains.
- **Segments 5, 6, 7, 8:** The Wawona Archeological District encompasses numerous clusters of resources spanning thousands of years of occupation, including evidence of continuous, far-reaching traffic and trade
- **Segment 7:** In this segment, remains of the U.S. Army Cavalry Camp A. E. Wood document the unique Yosemite legacy of the African-American Buffalo Soldiers and the strategic placement of their camp near the Merced River.
- **Segment 7:** The Wawona Covered Bridge is one of the few covered bridges in the region.

SCENIC VALUES

- **Segment 1:** Visitors to this wilderness segment experience scenic views of serene montane lakes, pristine meadows, slickrock cascades, and High Sierra peaks.
- **Segment 2:** Visitors to Yosemite Valley experience scenic views of some of the world's most iconic scenery, with the river and meadows forming a placid foreground to towering cliffs and waterfalls.
- **Segment 3:** The Merced River drops 2,000 feet over 14 miles; a continuous cascade under spectacular Sierra granite outcrops and domes.
- **Segment 5 & 8:** The South Fork Merced River passes through a vast area of natural scenic beauty.

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- **Segment 1:** Visitors to federally designated wilderness in the corridor engage in a variety of activities in an iconic High Sierra landscape, where opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, self-reliance, and solitude shape the experience.
- **Segment 2:** Visitors to Yosemite Valley enjoy a wide variety of river-related recreational activities in the Valley's extraordinary setting along the Merced River.



Water Quality standards stem from the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (a.k.a., Clean Water Act; CWA), as amended. The Merced River has exceptionally high water quality and the provisions in the plan would ensure that this quality is maintained.

Free-flowing condition is defined as "existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway." The Merced River Plan would identify opportunities to remove constraints on water flow and channel migration.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLAN ELEMENTS

USER CAPACITY

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) provides for public use and enjoyment of designated rivers, while ensuring that use will not degrade the values for which rivers were included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The WSRA and Secretarial Guidelines for Wild and Scenic Rivers include provisions for managing visitor use and addressing user capacity:

“The plan will state the kinds and amounts of public use which the river can sustain without impact to the values for which it was designated.”

“Studies will be made during preparation of the management plan and periodically thereafter to determine the quantity and mixture of recreation and other public uses which can be permitted without adverse impact on the resource values of the river area.”

The Merced River Plan will analyze a range of alternatives that specify the kinds and amounts of use that can occur without adversely impacting the river’s values.

ADDRESSING USER CAPACITY

User capacity is incorporated into the overall planning process, focusing on specific tasks as follows:

1. Describe river values to be protected and enhanced.
2. Identify indicators that will be used to monitor the condition of each river value.
3. Provide quantitative definitions for degradation and adverse impact for each river value. Activities will not be allowed to degrade river values or cause adverse impact.
4. Identify management standards for each indicator. These specify when changes to river values become unacceptable.
5. Analyze relationships among use levels, effects, and potential management actions that can be used to prevent effects from exceeding management standards.
6. Develop alternatives that include all of the above in a structure that is logically consistent. Alternatives represent different ways to protect and enhance river values and highlight the tradeoffs inherent in different approaches. This is an iterative process that may include revisiting steps 1 through 5.
7. Describe monitoring or related on-going studies that will be used to track use levels and impacts to ensure that river values remain protected while providing for visitor use.

The range of alternatives developed through this process will accommodate different kinds and amounts of use (have different capacities). The alternatives will include other visitor use management actions, such as boardwalks along meadows, improvements to road systems and formalized parking. Capacity decisions are based on best professional judgments, informed by biophysical and

social science studies, resource monitoring, and transportation modeling. In the plan, a summary of capacity decisions for each alternative will include these 4 elements:

1. Kinds of Use (desired visitor experiences and activities permitted in each alternative)
2. Indicators and Standards (that define unacceptable effects on river values)
3. Capacities (the highest use levels that can be accommodated without exceeding management standards)
4. Visitor Use and Capacity Management (specific management actions that help ensure use does not produce unacceptable conditions for river values)

KEY POINTS ON USER CAPACITY

Addressing user capacity is a comprehensive and complex effort, we have identified several common questions and offer answers below:

Q: Is user capacity a single number?

A: No. There are many user capacities within each alternative of the plan. For example, there will be capacities for overnight accommodations, developed campgrounds, backcountry areas, administrative housing, day-use parking, etc.

Q: Are capacities “predetermined” at the start of a planning process?

A: Capacities are not derived from a single equation or scientifically “discoverable” from resource characteristics. They are outputs from a comprehensive planning process that is informed by science, and includes management decisions about the acceptability of any associated effects on river values. Alternatives in the plan will present the tradeoffs between higher and lower use levels, impacts that result from those levels, and infrastructure required to provide those levels, along with actions that are necessary to mitigate any effects associated with those levels.

Q: Will user capacities limit my access to the river or park?

A: User capacities identify how much use can be accommodated, while protecting and enhancing river values. Capacities for different alternatives are combined with a variety of management strategies and tools, including measures that are designed to prevent use from exceeding capacities. For the alternative that is adopted, if use exceeds capacities, use limits would be needed.

Q: Will establishing user capacity for the Merced River prevent me from being able to drive my vehicle into Yosemite Valley?

A: Options for addressing traffic congestion may include restrictions (such as a day-use reservation system) on private vehicle access to the Valley at times when parking areas are filled to capacity. This is dependent on the supply of parking provided in each alternative. Although a stated goal of the park’s 1980 General Management Plan was to eliminate the use of private vehicles from the Valley, the MRP will amend this plan and establish new guidance for public access to the river corridor and Yosemite Valley.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS TOPIC

- www.nps.gov/yose/vuss
- www.nps.gov/yose/planning



LAND AND FACILITY MANAGEMENT

The Merced River Plan will evaluate facilities and services within the river corridor to determine if they are necessary for public use and whether they are adversely impacting river values. The range of alternatives would address whether facilities and services would remain in place, be relocated outside the river corridor, or be removed entirely.

A rigorous analysis of existing facilities within the river corridor has been performed and integrated into these preliminary alternatives concepts.

Additionally, any redevelopment would be designed to ensure the river’s free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values are protected and would be located 150 feet beyond the ordinary highwater mark (i.e., the 2.33 year floodplain).



COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

PAST: SCOPING, ORVS, BASELINE CONDITIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

The National Park Service is employing an extensive, frequent, and robust public involvement process in an effort to give all interested parties access to the planning process. Opportunities to interact, dating back to 2007, include public workshops with scoping, baseline condition reports, and outreach materials regularly mailed and e-mailed to stakeholders.

The initial scoping period for the Merced River Plan ended in 2010, however scoping comments from both the 2007 and 2010 Public Scoping Correspondence reports have helped shape the current planning process.

The NPS held public workshops to identify and describe the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs), and in 2011, published draft ORVs based on public comment and input from subject matter and user capacity experts.

In spring of 2011, public workshops on foundational aspects of the plan, including the condition of the ORVs and the science related to user capacity and transportation were conducted. Additionally, a *Draft River Values Baseline Condition Report* was released for public review and comment.

In Fall 2011, the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Planning Workbook* was released for public review and comment. This publication included a set of site-specific and programmatic management actions necessary to protect and enhance river

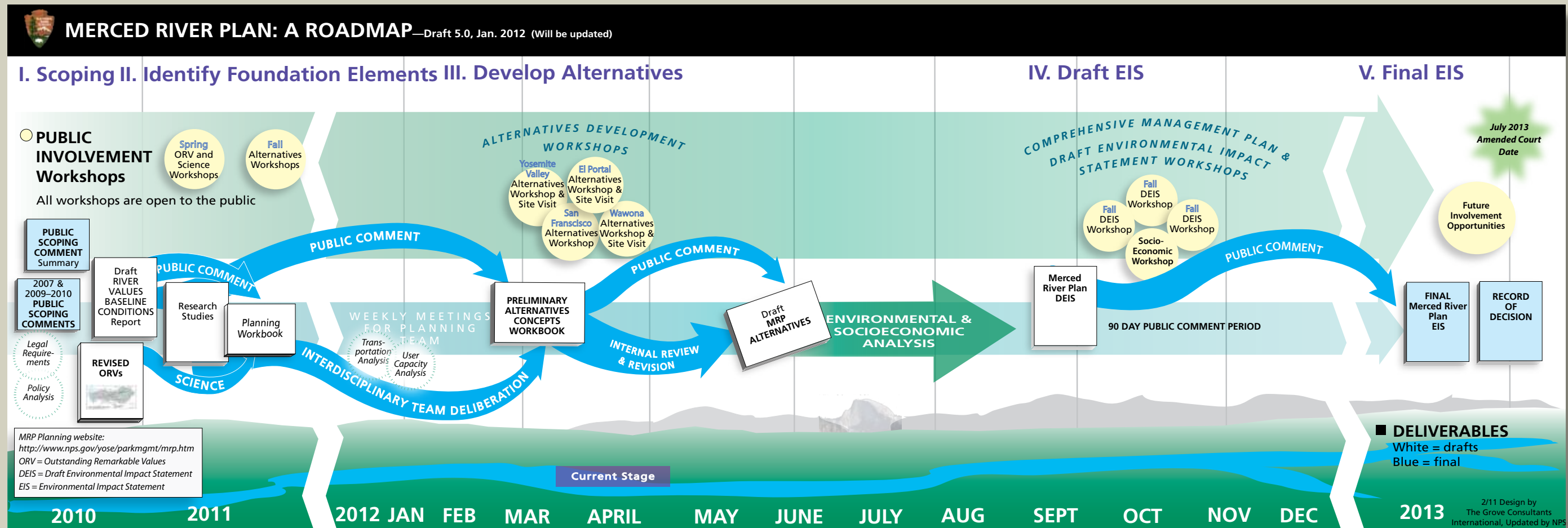
values. These ideas and the public feedback you provided formed the foundation of the preliminary alternatives concepts presented in this workbook. The NPS distributed more than 600 print copies of the workbook, held five public meetings and one webinar, and received 245 individual correspondences in response to this fall outreach effort.

PRESENT: PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

Spring 2012: With this *Merced Wild and Scenic River Preliminary Alternative Concepts Workbook*, a range of management options are provided for consideration by the public, stakeholders, and internal and external partners. Comments received will help the park finalize the set of the alternatives evaluated in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), to be released this fall.

FUTURE: DRAFT MERCED RIVER COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

In Fall 2012, the *Draft Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* will be released, followed by a 90-day public comment period. The NPS will hold a series of public meetings during the review and comment period. Public comments will be considered in development of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) scheduled for release in Summer 2013. The final decision on the alternative to be adopted as the official Merced River Plan will be made after the release of the FEIS.



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVES?

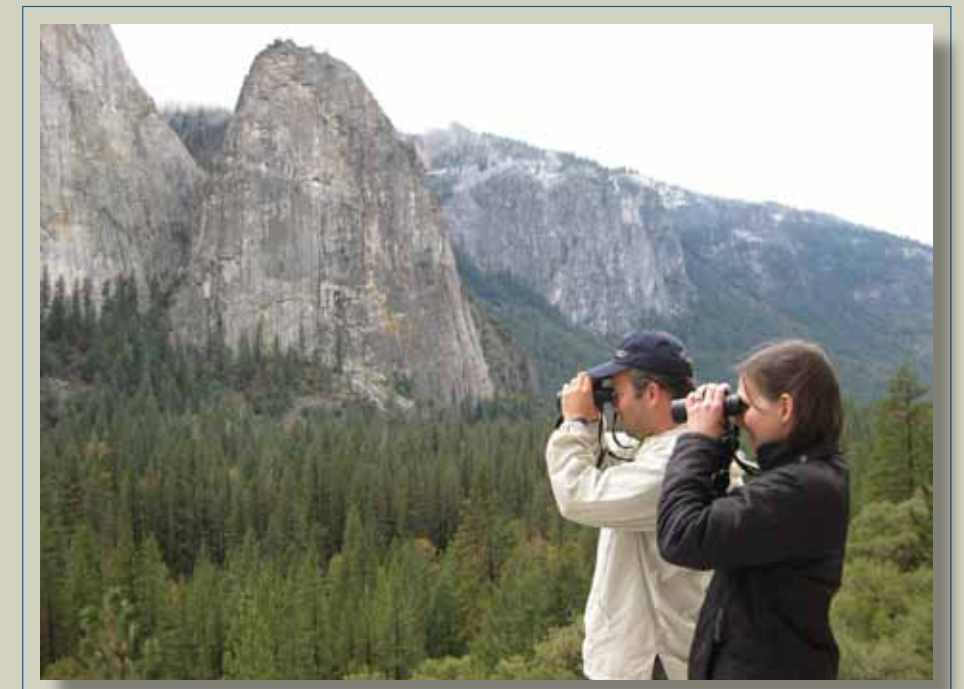
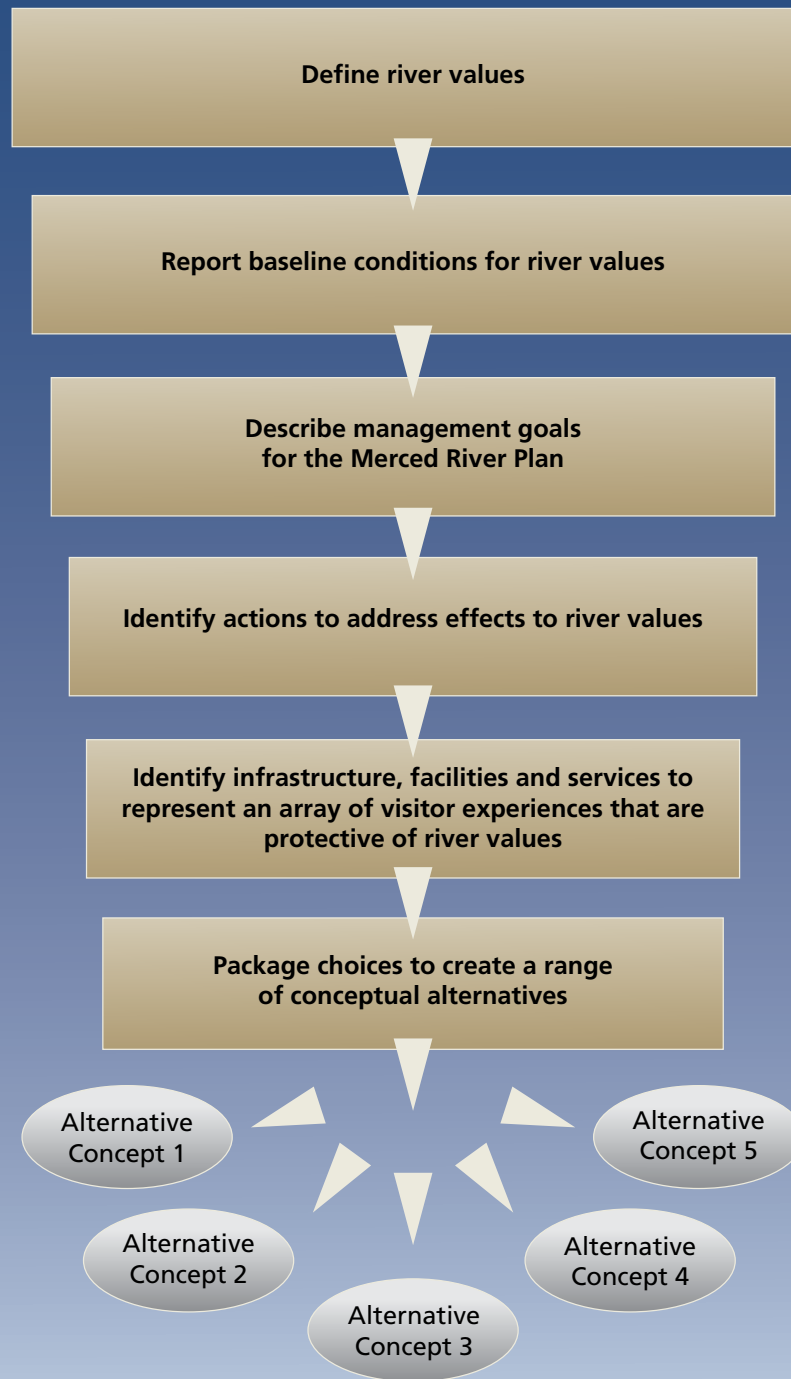
As a federal agency, the National Park Service must explore a range of alternatives, which are essentially different management approaches to solve problems. An alternative is a clearly articulated package of actions that represent a future management condition for the Merced River corridor. All alternatives must be responsive to a plan's goals.

Specific to the Merced River Plan, preliminary alternatives have been created through the following process:

- Beginning in summer of 2011, actions needed to correct past impacts to river values were identified for each segment of the river. Many of these were identified from the baseline conditions report prepared for the river values and additional data collection efforts the summer of 2011.
- A range of solutions to address localized effects on river values were developed, many of which are presented below as necessary to “protect and enhance” river values. A selection of these actions were presented in the Fall 2011 workbook.
- Facilities and services within the river corridor were also evaluated to determine if they were necessary for public use and whether they are adversely impacting river values. Numerous facilities and services were targeted to be removed, relocated, or repurposed.
- Several combinations of facility location and capacity were analyzed using computerized models to determine how different scenarios would function and to understand the limits of the transportation system.
- Given the overall system limits, user capacity calculations for each scenario were calculated and then adjusted for any actions necessary to ensure that the resulting visitor use levels will be consistent with protecting and enhancing river values.
- In the draft plan, all alternatives will include a rigorous monitoring program to ensure that the associated user capacities and management actions will be successful in meeting the mandates of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Management standards (minimum acceptable conditions) will be identified that are well above the level of adverse impact. Mandatory actions are triggered before conditions reach the management standard to ensure that adverse impacts and degradation will be prevented.

CREATING ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS FOR THE MERCED RIVER PLAN

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH



POTENTIAL ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE RIVER VALUES INCLUDED IN THE ALTERNATIVES

ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL

Under any of the preliminary alternative concepts, the following actions would take place. These actions have been identified as ways to protect and/or enhance river values, manage visitor use and capacity, or manage land use in the corridor.

This section describes the overall programmatic intent for protecting river values and provides specific examples of actions that have been included as part of all preliminary action alternatives. In addition to these actions, the park is committed to monitoring each of the river values in an effort to prevent adverse impacts or degradation from occurring.

Adverse impact is defined as a significant reduction in the quality of a river value in relation to baseline conditions as a result of public use or development. Adverse impact is determined at a segment-wide scale and requires immediate attention by the agency. It may be detected by periodic monitoring or by other means.

Degradation is defined as 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 10 years. A river value has been degraded when recovery is only possible through a sustained change in park management and a significant investment of financial and natural capital. Degradation is a segment-wide condition and may be detected by the baseline condition assessment, by periodic monitoring, or by other means.



RIVER VALUES

FREE-FLOWING CONDITIONS

Where possible, the Merced River would be allowed to flow and migrate in its natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway. The Plan will address unnatural modifications within the bed and banks of the river so that free flowing conditions prevail.

- **Riverside rip-rap:** Remove rip-rap where riverbanks do not need stabilization to allow for channel migration. Replace rip-rap with bioengineered riverbanks, integrating native riparian vegetation, where riverbank stabilization is necessary for protection of critical infrastructure. Leave rip-rap in place if a high degree of protection is necessary for critical infrastructure.
- **Footings at the former Happy Isles footbridges:** Remove footings from the bed and banks of the Merced River. Revegetate denuded areas and improve way-finding between Happy Isles and the Mist Trail from the shuttle stop.
- **Bridges:** Remove, redesign or increase channel complexity around bridges in Yosemite Valley.
- **Pohono Bridge Gauging Station:** Remove unnecessary infrastructure in the bed and banks of the river.

WATER QUALITY

The plan would maintain water quality in Yosemite above the Federal and State water quality standards by monitoring and managing water quality throughout the corridor.

- Continue to implement the water conservation plan for Wawona, including minimum flow thresholds.
- Close the stock trail between Happy Isles Bridge and Clark's Bridge to stock use and re-route stock traffic to Valley Loop Trail.
- Ensure compliance with water quality mandates at the bulk fuel storage facility in El Portal.
- Move parking lots away from the river and/or construct storm water runoff mitigation measures that incorporate Best Management Practices.

GEOLOGICAL / HYDROLOGICAL VALUES

Natural processes, such as overbank flooding and channel migration, would be protected and enhanced particularly in recognition of their interconnectedness to the biological river values, meadow and riparian communities.

- **Large wood:** Manage large wood according to a management plan, leaving large wood that does not compromise visitor safety or infrastructure. Large wood would not be removed to accommodate paddling use, except where safety issues warrant mitigation. Incorporate wood into riverbanks to provide structure for highly eroded riverbanks and increase habitat quality.

- **Channel widening:** Revegetate river channel between Clark's Bridge and Sentinel Bridge with native riparian shrubs and trees, and strategically place wood to promote bar formation and natural channel narrowing. Conduct intensive revegetation and use bioengineering techniques to rebuild riverbanks if necessary (such as between Clark's Bridge and the Ahwahnee Bridge, the rafting put-in at Stoneman Bridge, and denuded areas between Devil's Elbow and El Capitan Meadow.)



BIOLOGICAL VALUES

Biological river values, valley oaks, Sierra sweet bay and riparian and meadow ecosystems, would be protected and enhanced. These resources would be documented, monitored and evaluated to avoid adverse impacts. The plan would address both direct effects to meadows and riparian habitats, as well as effects to the fundamental fluvial processes that sustain riparian and meadow communities and maintain connectivity to the floodplain. Localized effects from human use in Yosemite Valley include vegetation trampling, accelerated riverbank erosion, channel widening, reduced overbank flooding, altered patterns of surface and groundwater flows, and lack of large wood that affects channel structure and complexity. The plan would address effects to valley oak habitat. Both Sierra sweet bay and valley oak populations would be monitored to ensure that they continue to be stable and are represented by all age classes.

Riparian Floodplains

- **Denuded riverbanks:** Revegetate river channel between Clark's Bridge and Sentinel Bridge with native riparian shrubs and trees, and strategically place wood to promote bar formation and natural channel narrowing.
- **Denuded riverbanks:** Utilize temporary closures to sensitive resource areas to allow natural recovery, especially along riverbanks.
- **River Access:** Re-direct use to more stable and resilient river access points such as sandbars, and designate formal river access sites. Establish fencing and signage to protect sensitive areas; install boardwalks where appropriate, and actively revegetate where needed.
- **River Access:** Construct hardened structures at designated river access points where needed to facilitate and concentrate safe visitor access. Fence and sign sensitive areas and reestablish riparian vegetation.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE RIVER VALUES INCLUDED IN THE ALTERNATIVES

- **Riparian area northwest of Lower Pines Campground:** Restore to natural floodplain conditions.
- **Riparian buffer:** Locate any new structures at least 150 feet from the ordinary high water mark. Relocate or remove all campsites at least 100' away from the ordinary high water mark.

Meadows

- **Informal trails in meadows:** Remove informal trails in meadows where they negatively impact native meadow species or fragment meadow habitat. Delineate trails or install boardwalks, if necessary.
- **Ditching in meadows:** Fill ditches in meadows if they are not currently serving operational needs.
- **Potential meadow restoration:** Return fire as an ecological process to 88 acres of conifer-dominated woodland to restore meadows.
- **Bridalveil Meadow:** Address headcuts in the stream on the west edge of the meadow by planting willow cuttings in the impacted area, along riverbank, and adjacent meadow. Remove encroaching conifer saplings.
- **El Capitan Meadow:**
 - Reroute the climber use trail on the north side of the meadow from meadow habitat to appropriate upland route (a few yards to the east) and rehabilitate the social trail through the meadow.
 - Replace existing culverts and install more culverts to improve water flow at El Capitan Straight on Northside Drive.
 - Remove encroaching conifer saplings.
- **Ahwahnee Meadow:** Restore the former golf course and tennis courts to meadow and oak woodland and reconnect currently disjunct portions of Ahwahnee Meadow by removing the fill material associated with a former roadbed and removing conifers.

SCENIC VALUES

The Merced River Plan would include a Visual Resources Management Program to protect and enhance the scenic resources of the river corridor. The MRP would identify key observation points, viewing corridors, visitor attraction sites, and specific management actions that would maintain visual access to features and landforms in the foreground and distance.

The NPS would eliminate unnecessary development and limit the extent of new development in the river corridor, preserve viewpoints and scenic vistas along roadways and trails, and manage vegetation so that it does not interfere with the visitor's visual experience. The MRP would protect and enhance distant views of prominent landmarks and granite features, and preserve meadows and open spaces and views across the river.



CULTURAL VALUES

Cultural resources would be protected and enhanced, including historic, archeological, and ethnographic resources identified as part of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values. These resources would be documented, monitored and evaluated to avoid adverse impacts.

Archeological Resources

- **Protect Archeological Sites in Yosemite Valley, El Portal, Wawona and Camp A.E. Wood.** Sustain and improve efforts to protect sites from theft and vandalism and manage visitor use in the vicinity of archeological sites, cultural landscapes, and other areas of cultural significance sites, using natural features to divert foot traffic.
- **Protect Archeological sites above Wawona in Segment 5.** Restrict camping or re-route trails to avoid sensitive rock ring features.
- **Preserve Wawona Covered Bridge.** Continue to preserve the bridge in accordance with the Secretary's Standards for Historic Properties, NPS cultural resource management guidelines, and the park's programmatic agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the California State Historic Preservation Officer.

Ethnographic Resources and Traditional Uses:

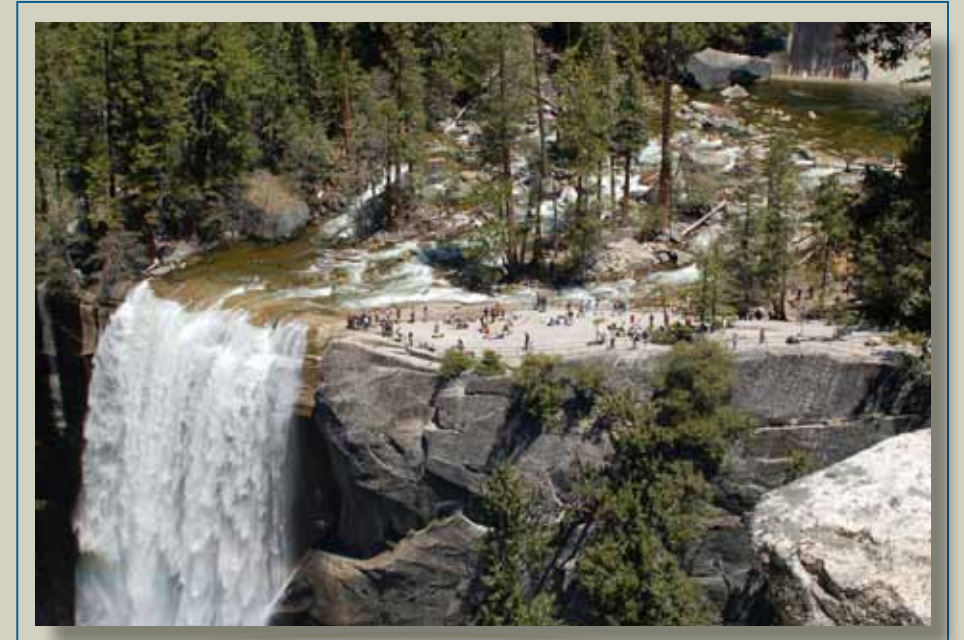
- **Protect Traditional Use Plants.** Continue to document, monitor, and evaluate areas where traditional use plants and other resources are found in the river corridor and manage visitor use in the vicinity of traditional use plants using natural features to divert foot traffic.

RECREATIONAL VALUES

The recreational outstandingly remarkable values of the Merced River in the wilderness and Valley segments would be protected and enhanced through a series of management actions. Other visitor experience opportunities would vary across the alternatives depending on the desired conditions proposed, but would not be permitted in a manner or at levels that would adversely impact river values.

Specific management strategies for the protection of recreational values common to all alternatives in the Wild segments of the river include, but may not be limited to the following:

- Provide opportunities for solitude in the segments of the river within designated wilderness.
- Provide education on Leave-No-Trace and minimum impact practices.
- Continue use of the Wilderness trailhead quotas and permit system.
- Conduct Ranger patrols to promote resource stewardship and visitor protection.
- Maintain regulations on food storage.
- Continue to impose existing regulations on group size limits, area closures, and others.
- Conduct routine trail maintenance.
- Conduct resource monitoring and study the effects of visitor use.



POTENTIAL ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE RIVER VALUES INCLUDED IN THE ALTERNATIVES

Specific management strategies for the protection of recreational values common to all alternatives in the Valley segment of the river include, but may not be limited to the following:

- Sustain opportunities for a diversity of high-quality resource-based recreational and interpretive opportunities.
- Boating use would be managed to prevent resource impacts including designating put-in and take-out locations; conducting periodic checks of vessels for invasive aquatic species; and continuing the prohibition on motorized boats.
- Swimming and water play would be allowed on all segments of the river in all alternatives, except where disallowed in the Superintendent's Compendium.
- Improving signs and wayfinding to better orient visitors so they can make the most of their visit.
- Continue use of campground and lodging reservation systems.
- Maintain and/or improve facilities such as restrooms and trails.
- Ensure access by private vehicle while providing Valley shuttle and other transit services to promote visitor access options.
- Improve infrastructure to promote access for disabled persons.
- Conduct resource monitoring and study the effects of visitor use.

ACTIONS REGARDING LAND USE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The park has performed a rigorous analysis of facilities and services within the river corridor in accordance with the 1982 WSRA Guidelines that state:

“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 protect the river resource, and location outside the river area is infeasible, such facilities may be located within the river corridor provided they do not have an adverse effect on the values for which the river area was designated.” (WSRA Guidelines, 1982)

All preliminary alternative concepts include the removal or relocation of some facilities and services that are currently within the river corridor. Other services are reduced and other facilities are retained on-site but repurposed. The following sections summarize the changes to facilities and services that are currently included in all preliminary alternatives.

FACILITIES & SERVICES PROPOSED FOR REMOVAL ACROSS ALL ALTERNATIVES

- NPS Volunteer Office
- Happy Isles Snack Stand
- Yosemite Lodge Housing (1000's Cabins)
- Highland Court Housing
- Boys Town Housing Area
- Yosemite Lodge Post Office
- Yosemite Lodge Swimming Pool & Snack Stand
- Wawona Stables Operation
- NPS Finance Trailer in El Portal
- Ahwahnee Tennis Court and Former Golf Course



POTENTIAL ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE RIVER VALUES INCLUDED IN THE ALTERNATIVES



ACTIONS RELATED TO TRAFFIC CONGESTION, PARKING AND THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Each preliminary alternative includes a set of actions to improve the transportation system in the river corridor to meet the needs of the visiting public, employees, and park partners. Road and intersection improvements address congestion and improve traffic flow. Parking area improvements ensure visitors can reach their destination quickly and connect directly to the resource where they can have their most meaningful experiences. Improved transit options offer alternatives to private vehicle access to the river corridor. Other best management practices related to transportation include:

- Use Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and related traffic and parking information to inform visitors of conditions on a real-time basis so that they can make informed decisions about the timing and locations of their visit to the river corridor.
- Improve signs and wayfinding so that visitors can easily locate destinations throughout the corridor.
- Use traffic and parking management staff during peak use periods to improve traffic flow and parking efficiency.
- Delineate parking areas to prevent the encroachment of vehicles on sensitive vegetation and soils.
- Add bicycle racks to Valley shuttle buses to promote multi-modal access.
- Improve key intersections to mitigate pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.
- Enhance public transit on all roadway corridors.

DISMISSED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

Public scoping and subsequent public meetings and comment periods have resulted in requests to include certain actions that, while relevant to the management of Yosemite National Park, are outside the scope of this planning effort. Some of these suggestions could be better addressed in different projects. Others were found to be unreasonable or infeasible as they would violate law or policy, or would contribute to other resource concerns or hazards. Actions that were considered but dismissed from further analysis in this plan include:

- Elimination of all private vehicles and tour buses from Yosemite Valley
- Elimination of all stock use on hiking trails
- Restriction of all floating, rafting, and paddling from all segments of the river
- Removal of all employee housing, commercial services, and infrastructure from Yosemite Valley
- Development of additional campgrounds outside of Yosemite Valley
- Alterations to the wilderness boundaries within Yosemite National Park
- Restoration of El Capitan moraine
- Provision of special access privileges to local residents, Californians, or US citizens

FACILITIES & SERVICES PROPOSED FOR RELOCATION ACROSS ALL ALTERNATIVES

- Residence 1
- Concession Services Garage
- Primary Concession General Office
- Yosemite Lodge Housekeeping/Maintenance
- Bicycle and Raft Rentals

FACILITIES PROPOSED FOR REPURPOSING ACROSS ALL ALTERNATIVES

- Yosemite Village Sports Shop
- Convenience Shop
- Nature Shop

FACILITIES REDUCED ACROSS ALL ALTERNATIVES

- Camp 6 Day-use Parking Area
- Wawona Campground
- Lower Pines Campground
- Curry Village Residence Area
- Yosemite Valley Backpackers' Campground



EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CURRENT MANAGEMENT (FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES)

This section describes and represents conditions as of 2010, when several research studies were completed to close gaps in our knowledge-base about resource conditions in the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor. It provides a baseline for evaluating and measuring the environmental effects of the actions in the other alternatives.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Water Quality: Water quality throughout the corridor is high, with isolated instances of minor contamination, which are well within water quality standards. Water quality monitoring studies are conducted on a regular basis.

Free-flowing Condition: Bridges, rip-rap, levees and impoundments affect the free-flowing condition of the river in some segments.

Geologic/Hydrologic Processes: Large wood removal occurs where there is a risk to visitor safety or infrastructure. The river channel is expected to continue widening. Surface and groundwater patterns are altered by the presence of roads and trails.

Biological: Historic land use practices, infrastructure, invasive plants, conifer encroachment, vegetation trampling and riverbank erosion have site-specific effects on meadow and riparian habitat in Yosemite Valley. Groundwater and surface flows that sustain meadow and riparian habitat are diverted by ditches, roads and trails.

Valley oaks, in El Portal, maintain high integrity as a vegetation community. However, additional sapling recruitment is limited by development and soil compaction due to the existing development within the drip line.

Sierra sweet bay, in Wawona, is abundant along the South Fork Merced River.

The park administers natural resource and ecological restoration programs that manage visitor use in sensitive habitats and protect special status species. Invasive species control continues through the Invasive Species Management Plan. Conifer encroachment is addressed through the Fire Management Plan.

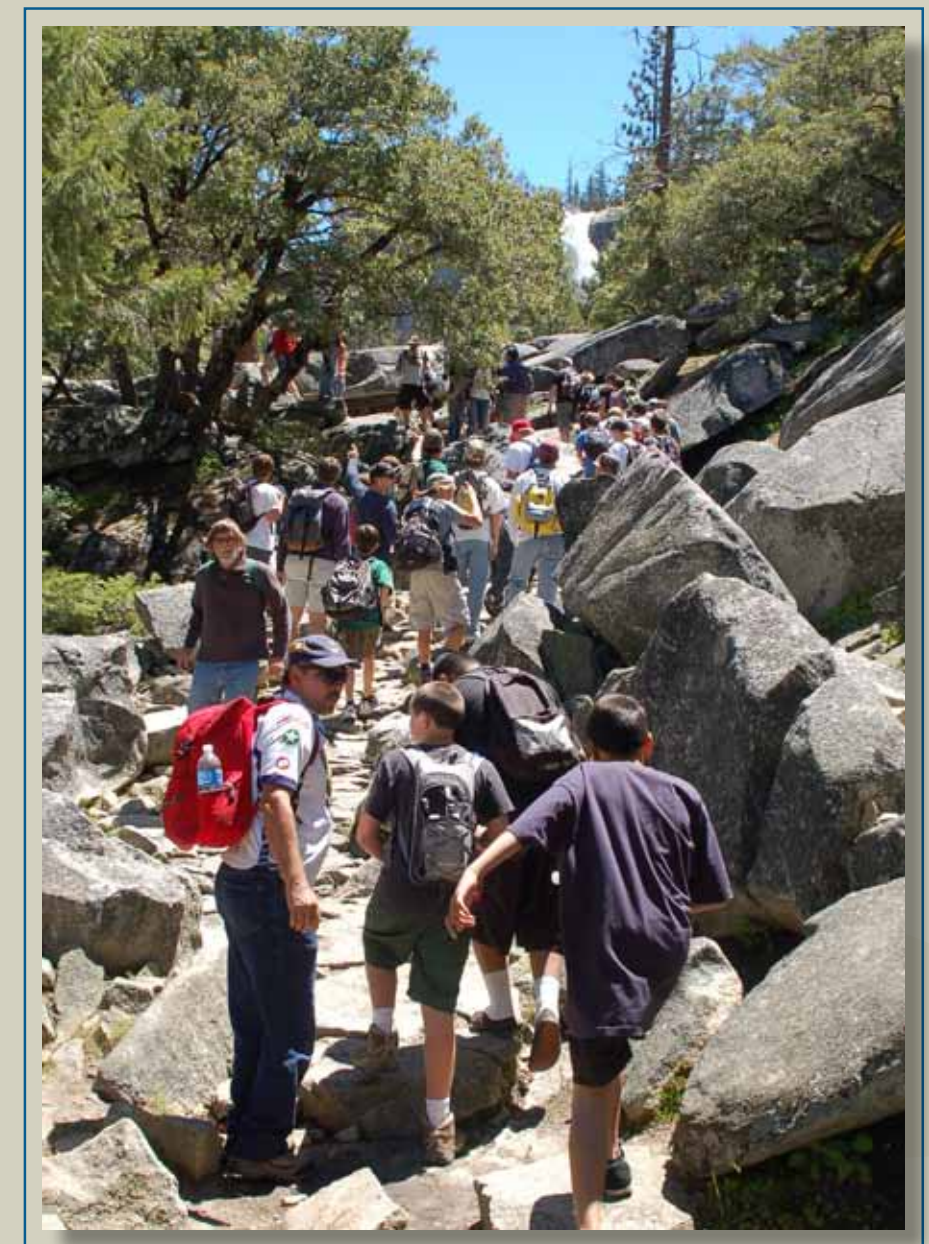
Scenery: The NPS manages park lands to prevent the exploitation of resources, and minimize construction and visual intrusions that might detract from a visitor's scenic experience. Scenery may be affected by intermediate vegetation and tree growth, manmade structures and facilities, and air quality.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Archeological: The Park would continue to comply with the Acts that protect archeological resources such as, National Historic Preservation Act 1966 as amended, Archeological Resources Protection Act 1979, Antiquities Act 1906, Archeological and Historic Preservation Act 1974, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 1990 as amended.

Ethnographic: The Park encourages traditional cultural practices by American Indians. The Park recognizes the importance of these practices for cultural survival. Additionally, these practices and values are protected through the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.



VISITOR USE AND CAPACITY

Visitor Experiences and Activities: The existing spectrum of recreational experiences range from solitude to social, resource-based to facility-based. Recreational opportunities include both primary and secondary river activities. Primary activities are those that occur within the river such as swimming and boating, while secondary activities are those that occur along the shore lands such as hiking and camping. Current recreational activities include, day hiking, camping, overnight backpacking, sightseeing and nature study, rock-climbing and bouldering, fishing, picnicking, bicycling, river rafting and floating, horseback riding, wading and swimming, ice skating, and artistic pursuits (photography, painting, etc.), among others. New forms of recreational activities are considered pursuant to the guidance found in NPS's 2006 Management Policies.



EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CURRENT MANAGEMENT (FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES)

Visitor Use Levels and Capacities: Visitor use levels are relatively high during the peak summer season. In 2011 the park received more than 4 million visitors, the vast majority of whom spent at least some time during their visit in the Merced River corridor. For example, studies show that approximately 89 percent of all visitors to the park reach Yosemite Valley. On busy days in 2011 the Valley received more than 15,000 visitors and on the busiest days use levels reached nearly 20,000. Generally, use is highly concentrated during the summer months with June, July, and August accounting for nearly 46 percent of annual park visitation.

Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tools: A wide range of strategies and tools are currently used to manage visitor use in the river corridor. These range from education and interpretation to regulations and permit systems. For example, Leave-No-Trace education programs inform visitors of how to reduce their impact on the environment while enjoying the river corridor. Regulations and permits, such as the wilderness trailhead quota system and related bear canister regulations, are used to protect wilderness in remote areas of the upper Merced River corridor.



LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Services: Commercial services include shuttle bus service in Yosemite Valley and Wawona, raft rentals, horseback riding, bike rentals, food services, ice skating, swimming pool, and Valley floor tours.

Facilities: Visitor facilities include campgrounds, parking and picnic areas, lodging, interpretive and orientation facilities, and food service. There are approximately 1,200 overnight lodging units in the corridor, and approximately 570 fee-based campsites.

The park and concessioner headquarters and administrative functions are in Yosemite Valley. During the peak season, existing permanent and temporary housing inventory in Yosemite Valley provides housing for approximately 1,200 employees of the primary concessioner and 68 employees of the National Park Service.

Transportation: Yosemite Valley receives high levels of visitor use during peak visitation periods. Parking demand during peak use periods exceeds the formally designated parking supply, leading to traffic congestion and other impacts associated with informal roadside parking. In 2011, for example, on 68 out of the 100 days of the peak summer season there were more vehicles in Yosemite Valley than there were parking spaces. Traffic Management staff is required to manage traffic circulation, flow, and parking. Traffic is diverted at El Capitan crossover during extreme peak use.

Transit is provided to and around Yosemite Valley using a combination of in-Valley free shuttle bus service, regional transit, and private tour buses. Transit systems being implemented on major corridors include Highway 120, Highway 140, and Highway 41. Additionally, relocating office spaces to El Portal and Mariposa will decrease impacts on the transit system and reduce commuting traffic to El Portal and Yosemite Valley.



HOW TO READ AND INTERPRET THE ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT PRESENTATIONS












Existing conditions and current capacities of the major planning areas for the Merced River Plan are presented on pages 14 -15. This base data aims to help readers understand current conditions as a basis for comparison with each of the preliminary alternative concepts that follow.

Five preliminary alternative concepts are detailed on pages 16 - 25. In addition to the information presented for each concept, remember that the “Actions Common to All” on pages 8-11 would take place under every alternative.

Each alternative concept package includes these elements:

- Concept title and three guiding principles
- Alternative concept overview presented as a narrative statement
- Summary of salient points related the overall management of river values; visitor use and capacity; and land use
- A selection of numbered, site-specific management actions that help define and differentiate the concept. Icons on the maps show the type of action to be taken.

SITE-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ACTION ICONS

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|------------|
|  | Meadow & Riparian Restoration |  | Services |
|  | Free-flowing Condition |  | Camping |
|  | User Capacity |  | Lodging |
|  | Boating |  | Housing |
|  | Picnicking |  | Operations |
|  | Parking | | |

EXISTING CONDITIONS

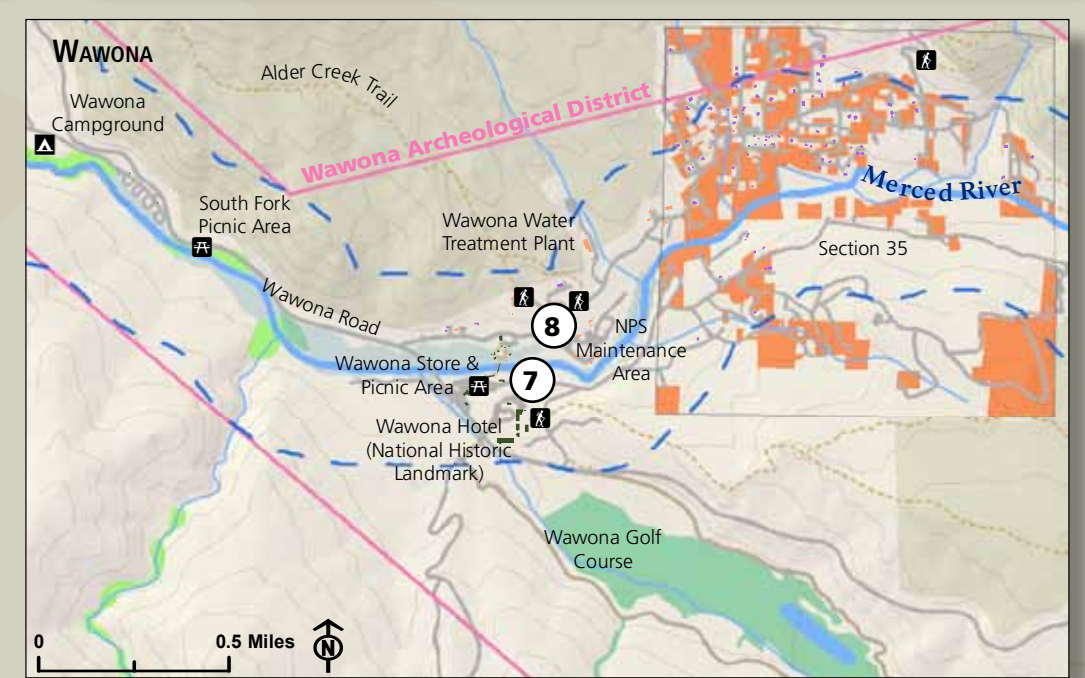
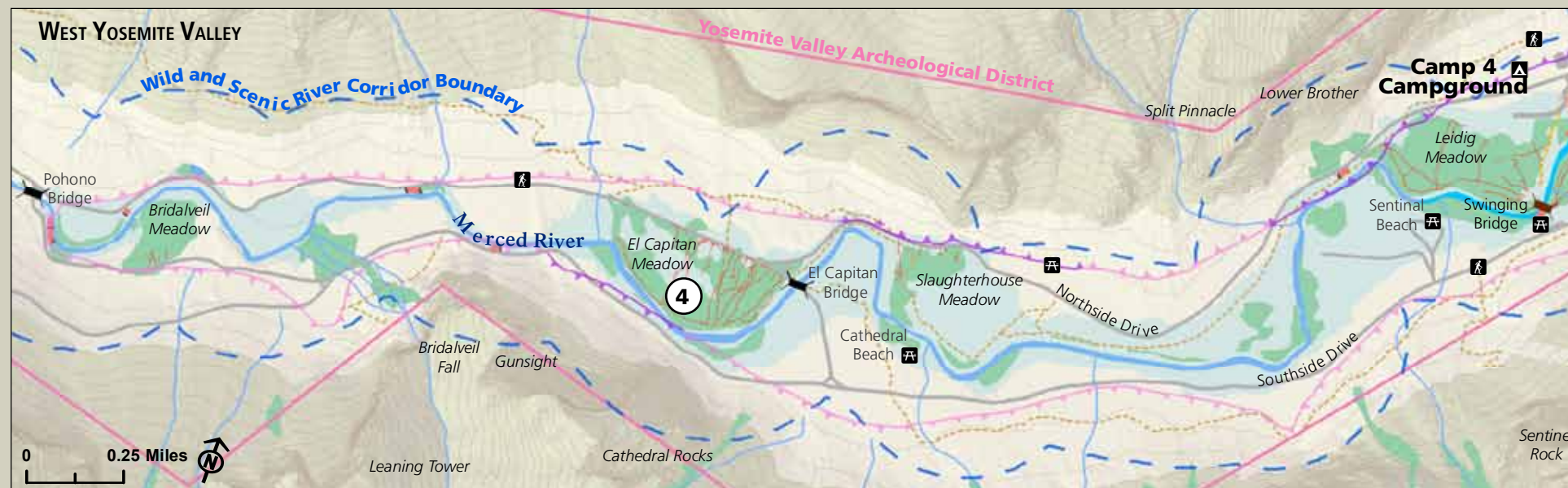
REPRESENTATIVE, SITE-SPECIFIC EXISTING CONDITIONS¹

1. Greenmeyer sandpit: Fill material alters floodplain hydrology and riparian habitat
2. Abbeville and Trailer Village: Two underutilized areas have potential for more efficient land use
3. El Portal Valley oaks: Soil compaction within the dripline of valley oaks precludes seedling recruitment
4. El Capitan Meadow: High visitor use in some areas of the meadow leads to vegetation trampling and soil compaction
5. Merced Lake High Sierra Camp: Existing lodging inventory of 60 beds
6. East Valley Campgrounds: Proximity of some campsites to the river causes trampling and riverbank erosion that inhibits riparian vegetation growth

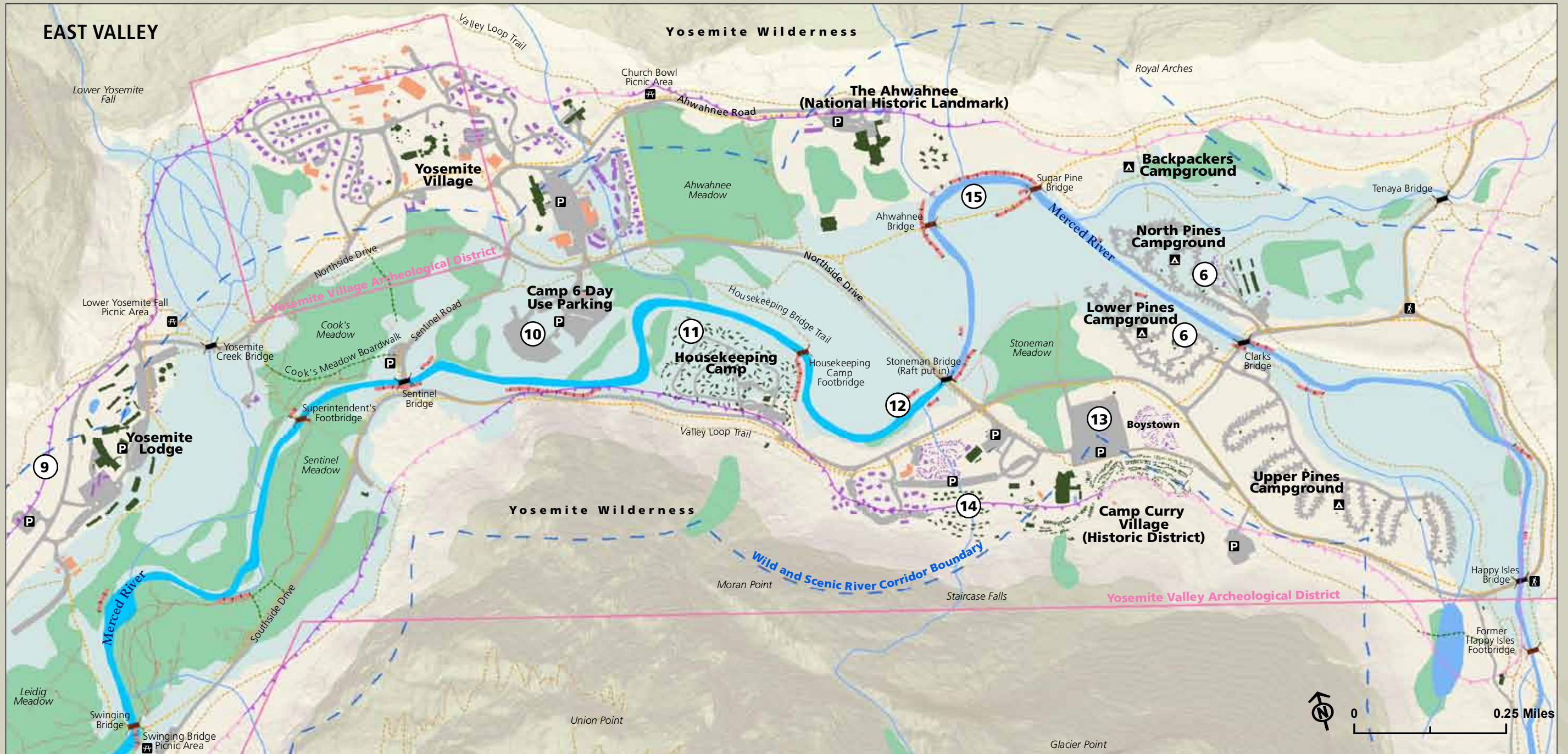
7. Picnic Area in Wawona: Picnic area near Pioneer History Center is on a steep riverbank; river access at this point has caused erosion.
8. Wawona Maintenance Yard: Footprint extends to the riverbank, the yard is devoid of vegetation, soils are compacted and non-native fill material covers the lot
9. Yosemite Lodge: Existing lodging inventory of 245 units
10. Camp 6: Existing parking capacity at Camp 6 is 800-900 parking spaces with intensive traffic management; however, this parking lot is in close proximity to the river potentially affecting water quality and riparian habitat
11. Housekeeping Camp: Located within the 100-year floodplain, has an existing capacity of 266 lodging units
12. Raft Put-in Near Stoneman Bridge: Located in a sensitive riparian habitat area, subject to erosion and loss of riparian vegetation

- 13) Curry Orchard Day Use Parking: Existing capacity of ~420 parking spaces
- 14) Curry Village Lodging: Existing capacity of ~ 503 lodging units, including temporary tent cabins at Boys Town
- 15) Free-flowing Condition of the River: Affected by Sugar Pine and Ahwahnee Bridges

¹Site-specific management actions are representative of major components of alternative concepts, but are not all-inclusive. Related capacities are approximate, based on initial analysis, and may be refined based on full analysis of alternatives.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



Parking Area	Revetment	Road Bridge	Private Parcel	<u>Buildings (By Functional Class)</u>
Existing Campground	Calculated Rockfall Hazard Line	Foot Bridge	Merced River (Rafting Prohibited)	Housing
Ranger Station	Inferred Rockfall Informal Trail	100 Year Floodplain	Merced River (Rafting Permitted)	Management Activities & Services
Picnic Area	Informal Trail	Meadow & Riparian Vegetation	Surfaced Area	Visitor Based Activities & Services
Trailhead	Bike Path	Sierra Sweet Bay Vegetation	Designated Wilderness	<u>Wild & Scenic River Classification</u>
Stream	Boardwalk	Valley Oak Vegetation	Archeological District	Recreational Segment
100 ft. Contour	Trail			Wild Segment
				Scenic Segment

Major restoration within the 100-year floodplain
Accommodates lowest visitor use levels
Significant reduction in facilities and services

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT OVERVIEW

This alternative would restore a total of 336 acres to natural conditions within the Merced River corridor and result in a substantial reduction in commercial services. Significant restoration would take place at Stoneman and Ahwahnee Meadows, the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds, Ahwahnee Row and Tecoya Dorm housing area, Wawona golf course, the Curry Village Stables, and the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp. Lodging would be cut by half, with the complete removal of lodging units within the 100-year floodplain. Campsites at North Pines, Upper Pines, Lower Pines and Backpackers' Camp within the 100-year floodplain would be removed. The Camp 6 parking lot would be moved north, protecting wetlands and reducing parking within the 10-year floodplain. Free-flowing conditions of the Merced River would be improved through the removal of Stoneman, Sugar Pine, and Ahwahnee Bridges and over one mile of rip-rap. This alternative would manage peak daily visitation within Yosemite Valley at approximately 14,200 people, an approximate 31% reduction from current peak visitation levels.

RIVER VALUES

Natural and Cultural Resources ~ Free-flow ~ Water Quality ~ Scenery

- Ecological Restoration: 336 acres
 - Restore 87 acres of wet meadow in Yosemite Valley
 - Open 88 acres of previous meadow habitat in areas that have converted to conifer-dominated forests within Yosemite Valley
 - Restore 161 acres of riparian and floodplain habitat in Yosemite Valley
- Free-flow: Free-flowing condition improved by strategic removal of roads and three bridges

VISITOR USE AND CAPACITY

Visitor Experience and Activities ~ Visitor Use Levels and Capacities ~ Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tools

- Visitor Experience and Activities: Improved orientation in day-use parking areas. Commercial raft rentals eliminated. Limited private paddling allowed on Valley river segments by permit only. No commercial paddling allowed
- Visitor Use Levels and Capacities: Accommodates lower maximum daily visitation than today. Daily visitation to Yosemite Valley limited to ~14,200 people to allow for increased resource restoration and reduced crowding and congestion
- Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tool: Day-use permits and reservation system would be required during peak summer season. Permits checked at entrance stations

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

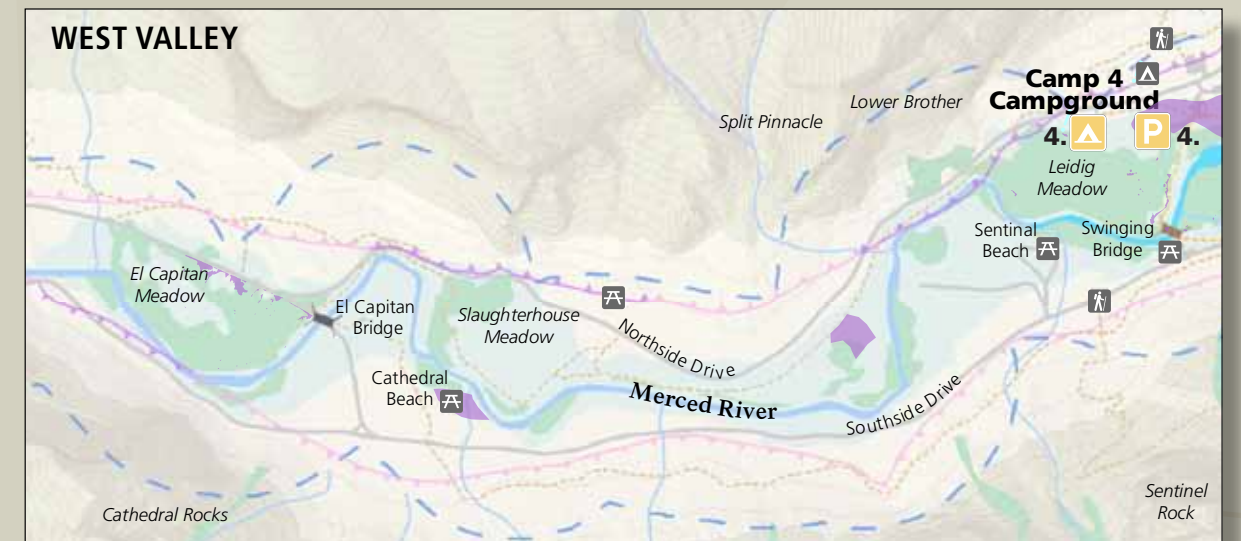
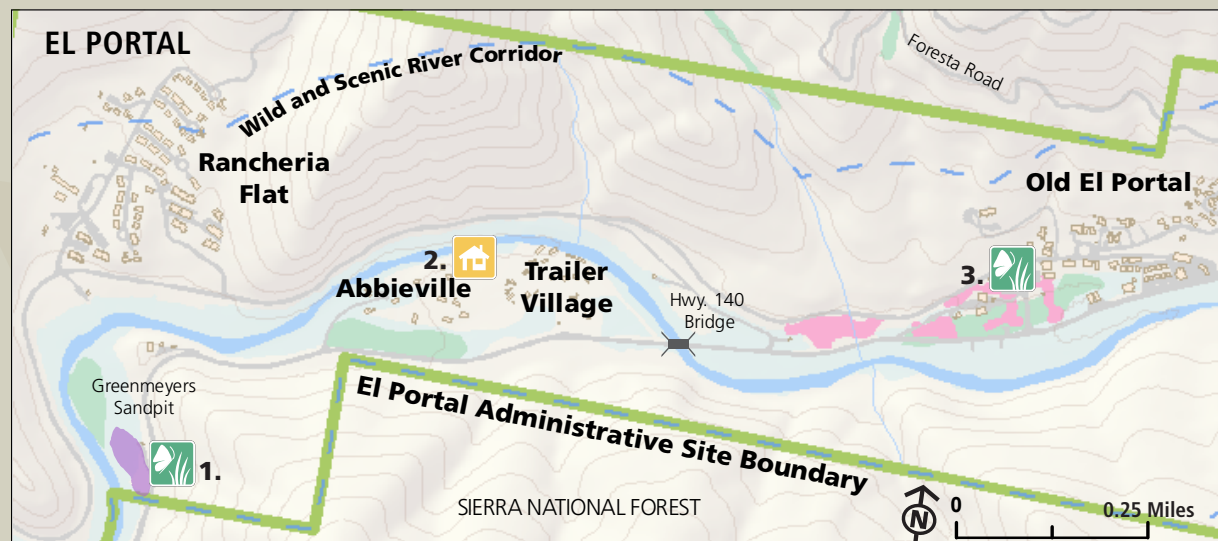
Facilities ~ Parking ~ Circulation ~ Services ~ Transportation ~ Operations

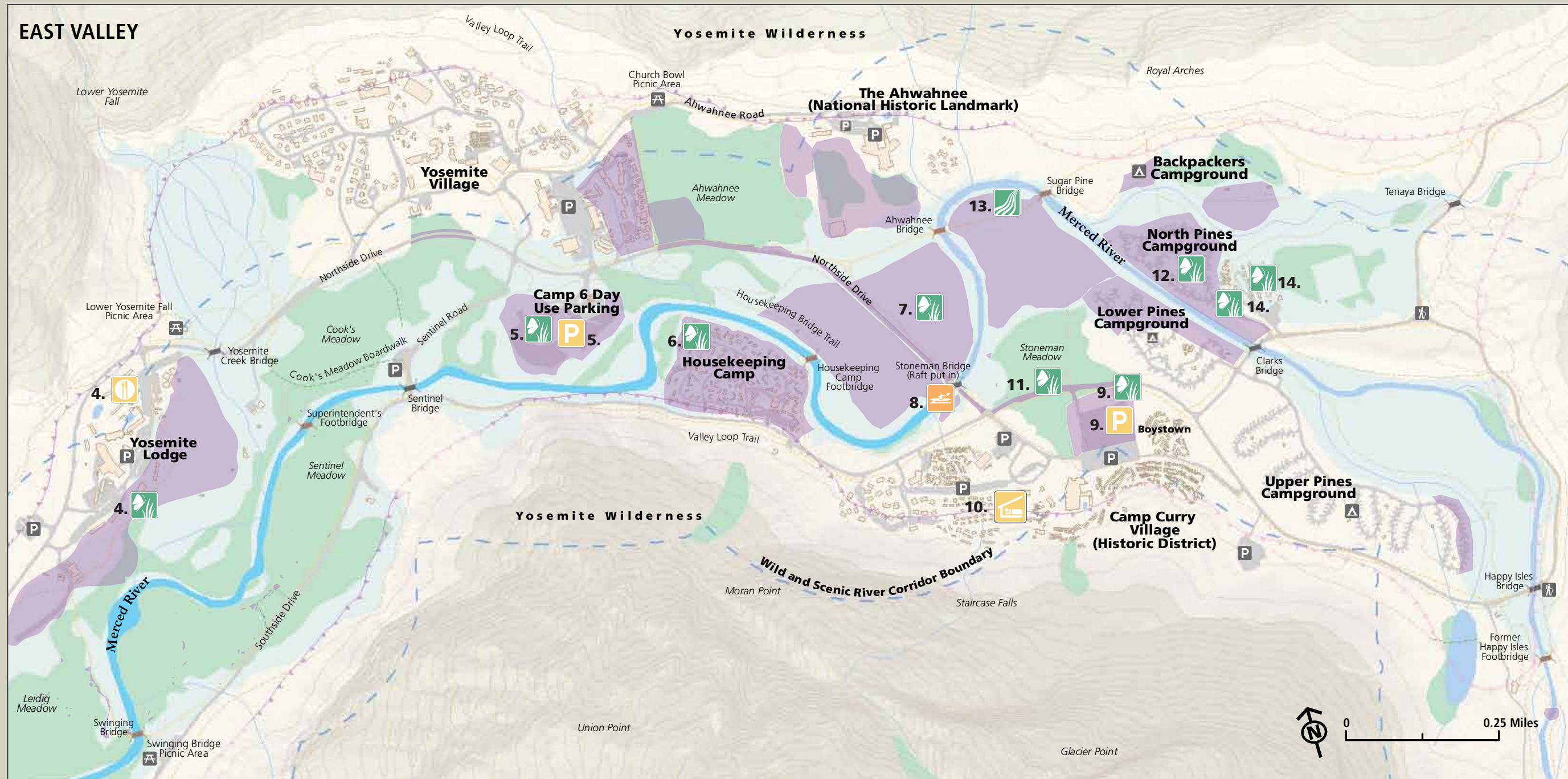
- Lodging: Lodging reduced by ~620 units (51%) throughout the corridor
- Camping: Camping reduced by ~50 sites (9%) throughout the corridor
- Transportation: Limited transit and bus options. Overall parking in corridor accommodates ~6,500 vehicles with ~4,000 spaces in Yosemite Valley
- Park Operations: Housing for ~600 concession employees provided for in Yosemite Valley with ~260 relocated to El Portal

SITE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- Greenmeyer Sandpit: Restore the sandpit to natural conditions; remove fill material and recontour
- Abbieville and Trailer Village: Facilitate removal of temporary housing in Yosemite Valley through development of high density housing outside 100 year floodplain; housing will accommodate ~260 employees
- El Portal Valley Oaks: Designate oak protection area encompassing drip-line of trees and remove infrastructure and parking in the area
- Yosemite Lodge: Converted from lodging to day use, parking and camping (~160 sites)

- Camp 6: Restoration of floodplain and riparian area; relocation of parking northward, away from river and wetland areas for a total of 550 day-use parking spaces
- Housekeeping Camp: Restoration of the riparian and floodplain ecosystems in Housekeeping Camp; removal of ~270 units within the 100-year floodplain
- Former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds: Restoration of riparian zone and 10-year floodplain
- Paddling: Private paddling allowed on all stretches of Valley river segments, including wilderness, by permit; commercial boating prohibited
- Curry Orchard Parking: Partial restoration of the parking area to facilitate Stoneman Meadow restoration; removes ~220 spaces to allow for a total of ~200 parking spaces
- Curry Village: Reduction in lodging at Curry Village, including removal of ~40 units within the rockfall hazard zone, and ~100 tent cabins at Boys Town for road re-alignment. Retention of a total of 358 units
- Stoneman Meadow Restoration: Removal of Southside Drive segment through Stoneman Meadow and realignment of road through Boys Town area
- North Pines Campground: Restoration of the 100-year floodplain in North Pines Campground; removal of ~80 camp sites and restoration of native plant communities
- Free-flowing condition of the river improved through the removal of Stoneman, Ahwahnee, and Sugar Pine Bridges
- Stables Area: Restoration of the Concessioner Stables area and Merced Lake High Sierra Camp





River Values	Visitor Use and Capacity	Land Use Management	Other Features	Wild & Scenic River Classification
Meadow & Riparian Restoration	Visitor Experience	Parking	Stream	Recreational Segment
Cultural Resource Protection	Boating	Circulation	100 ft. Contour	Wild Segment
Free Flow	User Capacity/Amounts of Use	Services	Calculated Rockfall Hazard Line	Scenic Segment
Water Quality	Management Tool	Camping	Inferred Rockfall Hazard Line	
	Picnicking	Lodging	Road Bridge	
		Housing	Foot Bridge	
		Operations	100 Year Floodplain	
			Meadow & Riparian Vegetation	
			Valley Oak Vegetation	
			Surfaced Area	
			Designated Wilderness	
			Merced River (Rafting Prohibited)	
			Merced River (Rafting Permitted)	
			Restoration	
			Trail	
			Informal Trail	
			Boardwalk	
			Bike Path	
			Ranger Station	
			Picnic Area	
			Trailhead	

Significant restoration within 150 feet of the river
Accommodates lower use levels than today
Marked reduction in visitor facilities and services

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT OVERVIEW

This alternative would see a total of 293 acres restored to natural conditions, with significant restoration at Stoneman and Ahwahnee Meadows, the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds, Wawona golf course, and the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp. To promote free-flow conditions, Sugar Pine and Ahwahnee Bridges would be removed, as would more than a mile of rip-rap. Campsites at North Pines, Lower Pines and Backpackers' Camp would be removed if they are located within 150 feet of the high water mark. Upper Pines, however, would be expanded by approximately 40 sites. Housekeeping Camp would be re-purposed as a day-use area, and the Camp 6 parking lot would be moved north, protecting wetlands and reducing parking within 150 feet of the river. In terms of recreation, limited private paddling would be allowed by permit on river stretches within all segments. No commercial paddling would be allowed. Lodging, in total, would be reduced by approximately 400 units, campsites would decrease by approximately 20 sites, and peak daily visitor use levels within Yosemite Valley would be managed at around 14,900 people, a roughly 27% decrease compared to current peak visitor use levels.

RIVER VALUES

Natural and Cultural Resources ~ Free-flow ~ Water Quality ~ Scenery

- Ecological Restoration: 293 acres
 - Restore 76 acres of wet meadow in Yosemite Valley
 - Open 88 acres of previous meadow habitat in areas that have converted to conifer-dominated forests within Yosemite Valley
 - Restore 129 acres of riparian and floodplain habitat in Yosemite Valley
- Free-flow: Free-flowing conditions improved by strategic removal of roads and three bridges

VISITOR USE AND CAPACITY

Visitor Experience and Activities ~ Visitor Use Levels and Capacities ~ Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tools

- Visitor Experience and Activities: Focus on resource sensitive activities with reductions in services and amenities. Moderate expansion in picnicking opportunities. Commercial raft rentals eliminated, limited paddling in privately-owned crafts allowed on all segments
- Visitor Use Levels and Capacities: Accommodates lower maximum daily visitation than current levels. Total peak daily visitation to Yosemite Valley limited to ~14,900 people to allow for increased resource restoration and reduced crowding and congestion
- Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tool: Day-use permits and reservation system implemented during peak summer season. Permits checked on-site at parking areas

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Facilities ~ Parking ~ Circulation ~ Services ~ Transportation ~ Operations

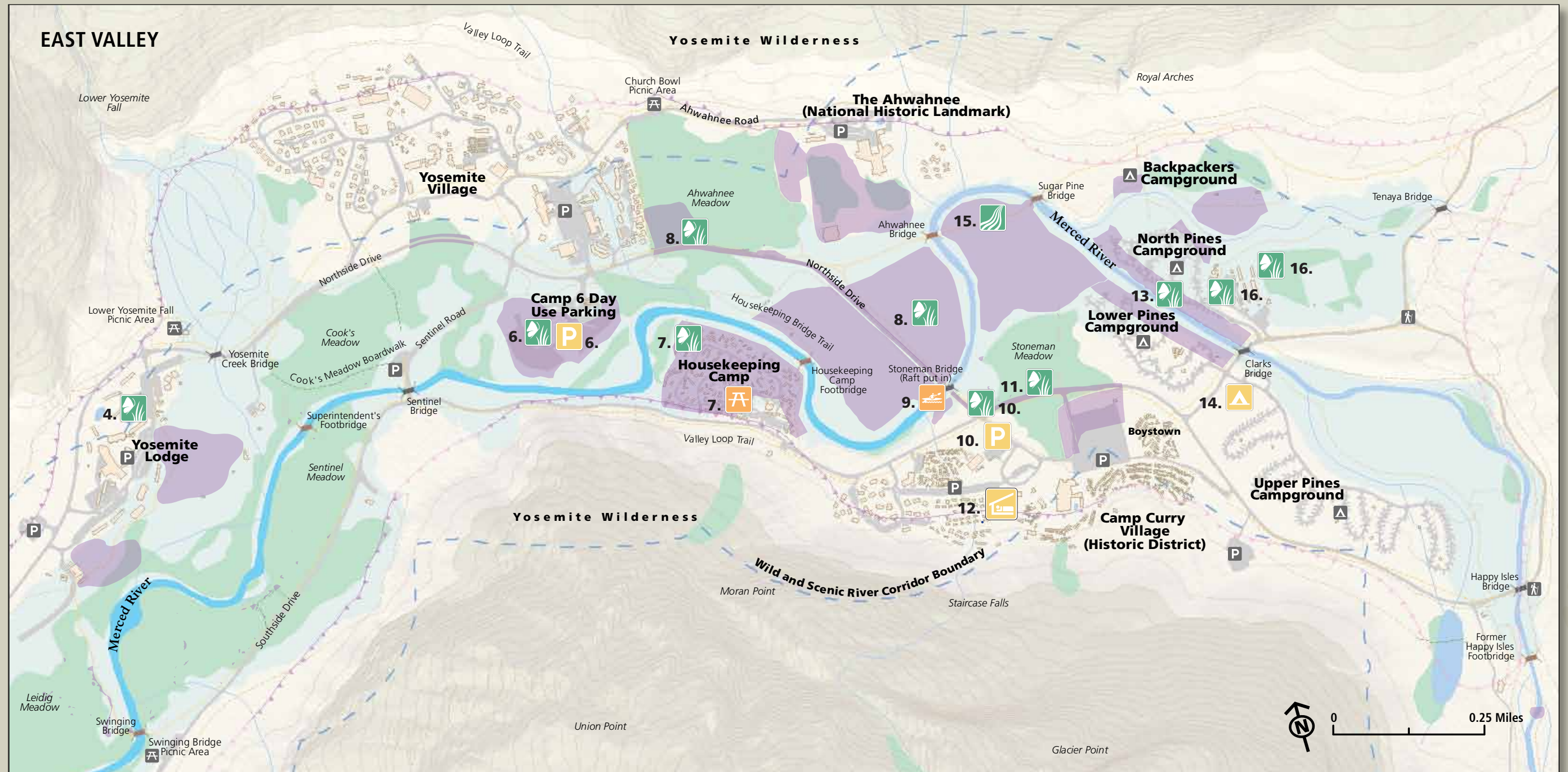
- Lodging: Lodging reduced by ~400 units (33%) throughout the corridor
- Camping: Camping reduced by ~20 sites (4%) throughout the corridor
- Transportation: Limited transit and bus options. Reduced parking in corridor accommodates ~6,700 vehicles with ~4,400 of those in the Valley
- Park Operations: Housing for ~920 concession employees provided in Yosemite Valley with ~60 relocated to El Portal

SITE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. Restoration of the Greenmeyer Sandpit to natural conditions; removal of fill material and recontouring
2. Abbieville and Trailer Village: Facilitate removal of temporary housing in Yosemite Valley through development of high density housing outside 100 year floodplain; housing will accommodate ~30 employees
3. Concessioner General Office: Function relocated from Yosemite Valley to El Portal; office building constructed

4. Restoration: Four buildings in the 100 year floodplain removed at Yosemite Lodge; retain ~140 units
5. Parking: West of Yosemite Lodge re-developed to provide additional ~150 day use parking spaces
6. Camp 6: Restoration of floodplain and riparian area; relocation of parking northward, away from river and wetland areas for a total of ~550 day use parking spaces
7. Housekeeping Camp: Restoration of the riparian and floodplain ecosystem; conversion of area to day use and picnicking; removal of ~270 units within the 100 year floodplain
8. Former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds: Restoration of riparian zone; restoration of Ahwahnee Meadow including removal of Northside Drive
9. Paddling: Private paddling allowed by permit only on stretches of river within all segments; commercial boating prohibited
10. Curry Orchard Parking: Partial restoration of the parking area to facilitate Stoneman Meadow restoration; removes ~220 spaces to allow for a total of ~200 parking spaces
11. Stoneman Meadow Restoration: Removal of Southside Drive segment through Stoneman Meadow and realignment of road through Boys Town area
12. Curry Village: Reduction in lodging, including removal of ~40 units within the rockfall hazard zone, removal of ~20 tent cabins at Boys Town for road re-alignment. Retention of a total of ~ 440 units
13. Restoration of the riparian zone in campgrounds region by removing sites within 150 feet of the ordinary high water mark and restoring native plant communities
14. Camping new development: Addition of recreational vehicle campground loop with ~40 RV sites
15. Free-flowing condition of the river improved through the removal of Stoneman, Ahwahnee, and Sugar Pine Bridges
16. Stables Area: Restoration of the Concessioner Stables area and Merced Lake High Sierra Camp; eliminates commercial day rides; removes ~ 60 lodging units and all associated infrastructure





River Values	Visitor Use and Capacity	Land Use Management	Other Features	Wild & Scenic River Classification
Meadow & Riparian Restoration	Visitor Experience	Parking	Stream	Recreational Segment
Cultural Resource Protection	Boating	Circulation	100 ft. Contour	Wild Segment
Free Flow	User Capacity/Amounts of Use	Services	Calculated Rockfall Hazard Line	Scenic Segment
Water Quality	Management Tool	Camping	Inferred Rockfall Hazard Line	
	Picnicking	Lodging	Road Bridge	
		Housing	Foot Bridge	
		Operations	100 Year Floodplain	
			Meadow & Riparian Vegetation	
			Valley Oak Vegetation	
			Surfaced Area	
			Designated Wilderness	
			Merced River (Rafting Prohibited)	
			Merced River (Rafting Permitted)	
			Restoration	
			Parking Area	
			Existing Campground	
			Ranger Station	
			Picnic Area	
			Trailhead	
			Trail	
			Informal Trail	
			Boardwalk	
			Bike Path	

Targeted restoration within 150 feet of the river
 Accommodates slightly lower peak visitor-use levels as today
 Reduced commercial services with large increases over current camping opportunities

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT OVERVIEW

This alternative would restore 218 acres to natural conditions. To promote free-flow conditions, Sugar Pine and Ahwahnee Bridges would be removed, as would more than a mile of rip-rap. Camping opportunities would increase by about 230 sites, with new campground development of more than 100 sites at the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds, close to 100 sites in Upper Pines, and approximately 40 sites west of Yosemite Lodge. The Curry Village Stables would be converted to approximately 40 camping sites. In the High Sierra, the Merced Lake Backpackers' Camp would remain and be expanded. The Camp 6 parking lot would be moved north, protecting wetlands and reducing parking within 150 feet of the river. Lodging would be reduced by approximately 210 units. In terms of recreation, limited paddling would be allowed for commercial use on the stretch of river currently used for this purpose in the Valley. Private paddling would be allowed by permit on stretches within all segments of the river. This alternative would manage peak daily visitation within Yosemite Valley at approximately 17,000 people, a 17% decrease from current peak visitation levels.

RIVER VALUES

Natural and Cultural Resources ~ Free-flow ~ Water Quality ~ Scenery

- Ecological Restoration: 218 acres
- Restore 28 acres of wet meadow in Yosemite Valley
- Open 88 acres of previous meadow habitat in areas that have converted to conifer dominated forest
- Restore 102 acres of riparian and floodplain habitat in Yosemite
- Free-flow: Free-flowing condition improved by strategic re-routing of roads and removal of two bridges

VISITOR USE AND CAPACITY

Visitor Experience and Activities ~ Visitor Use Levels and Capacities ~ Visitor and User Capacity Management Tools

- Visitor Experience and Activities: Provides a range of river-related experiences. Some reductions in services and amenities and restrictions on use would apply. For example, commercial raft rentals would be allowed only on the stretch of river currently used for this purpose in the Valley. Paddling in privately-owned craft would be allowed by permit on stretches within all segments of the river.
- Visitor Use Levels and Capacities: Peak daily visitation for Yosemite Valley reduced slightly to ~17,000 visitors per day
- Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tool: Proactive on-site, day-use traffic and parking management program. Differential fee for parking program similar to methods used in other congested areas. During high demand, peak use periods in the summer, visitors would pay to park in East Valley parking areas, while long-term parking with a shuttle to the Valley would be provided for 200 vehicles in El Portal

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

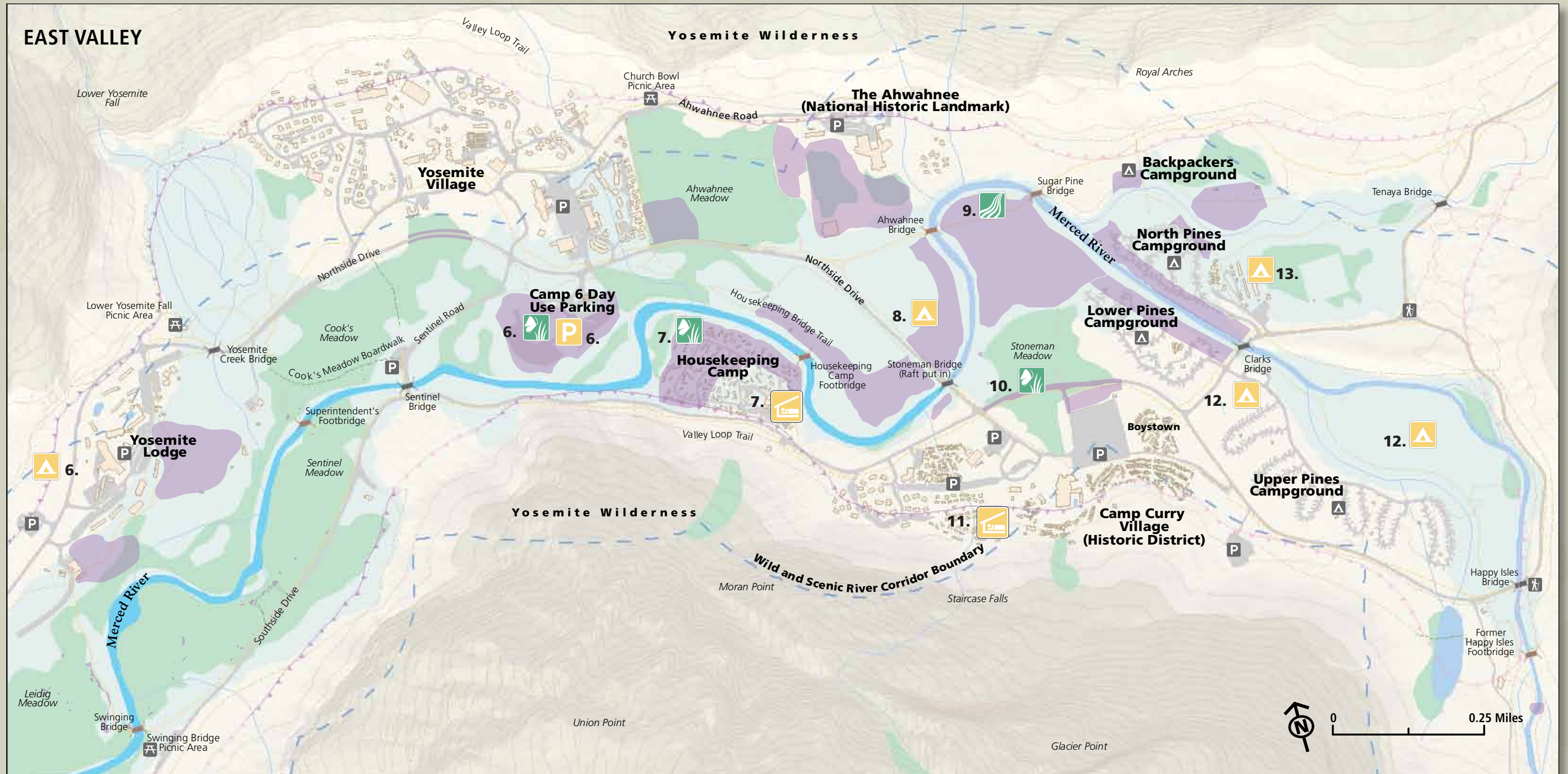
- Facilities ~ Parking ~ Circulation ~ Services ~ Transportation ~ Operations
- Lodging: Lodging reduced by ~210 units (17%) throughout the corridor
- Camping: Number of campsites increased by ~230 sites (41%) throughout the corridor
- Transportation: Bus and transit options available to visitors. Real-time information on traffic and congestion provided. Corridor-wide parking of ~7,700 spaces, with ~5300 in the Valley
- Park Operations: Housing for ~ 870 concession employees provided in Yosemite Valley with ~250 relocated to El Portal

SITE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. Restoration: Cultivate fill material to allow flooding cycles and natural processes to gradually reclaim the floodplain

2. Abbieville and Trailer Village: Facilitate removal of temporary housing in Yosemite Valley through development of high density housing to accommodate ~260 employees; develop El Portal Remote Visitor Parking Area to provide ~200 spaces of visitor parking serviced by regional transit
3. Concessioner General Office: Function relocated from Yosemite Valley to El Portal; office building constructed
4. Camping: Area west of Yosemite Lodge re-developed to create new campground with ~40 sites
5. Camping: Camp 4 expanded eastward to provide additional ~16 walk-in sites
6. Camp 6: Restoration of riparian area; relocation of parking northward, away from river for a total of ~750 day use parking spaces
7. Housekeeping Camp: Restoration of the riparian and floodplain ecosystem; removal of ~180 units out of the ordinary high water mark; retains a total of 84 units
8. Camping: New campground with ~110 drive-in sites developed at the former Upper and Lower Rivers Campground area with sites to be located outside of the 10-year floodplain
9. Free-flowing condition improved through the removal of Ahwahnee and Sugar Pine Bridges
10. Restoration of Stoneman Meadow including removal of Southside Drive segment through Stoneman Meadow and realignment of road through Boys Town area
11. Reduction in lodging at Curry Village, including removal of ~40 units within the rockfall hazard zone, removal of ~20 tent cabins at Boys Town for road re-alignment. Retains a total of ~ 440 units
12. Camping: Addition of recreational vehicle campground loop with ~40 RV sites and addition of walk-in campground with ~60 sites
13. Camping: Concessioner Stables area re-developed as new campground with ~40 drive-in sites; Merced Lake High Sierra Camp converted to temporary pack camp and all infrastructure removed





River Values

- Meadow & Riparian Restoration
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Free Flow
- Water Quality

Visitor Use and Capacity

- Visitor Experience
- Boating
- User Capacity/Amounts of Use
- Management Tool
- Picnicking

Land Use Management

- Parking
- Circulation
- Services
- Camping
- Lodging
- Housing
- Operations

- Parking Area
- Existing Campground
- Ranger Station
- Picnic Area
- Trailhead
- Trail
- Informal Trail
- Boardwalk
- Bike Path

- Stream
- 100 ft. Contour
- Calculated Rockfall Hazard Line
- Inferred Rockfall Hazard Line
- Road Bridge
- Foot Bridge
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Meadow & Riparian Vegetation
- Valley Oak Vegetation

- Surfaced Area
- Designated Wilderness
- Merced River (Rafting Prohibited)
- Merced River (Rafting Permitted)
- Restoration
- Wild & Scenic River Classification**
- Recreational Segment
- Wild Segment
- Scenic Segment



- Essential restoration within 100 feet of the river
- Accommodates current peak-use levels
- Reduced commercial services with moderate increases to current camping opportunities

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT OVERVIEW

This alternative would see a total of 201 acres restored to natural conditions. To promote free-flowing conditions, Sugar Pine and Ahwahnee Bridges would be removed. Lodging numbers would be slightly lower than today with minor reductions at Curry Village and Housekeeping Camp. Camping opportunities in Yosemite Valley increase with the addition of roughly 100 sites at Upper Pines Campground and 30 walk-in sites at the former Upper River Campground. The former Lower River Campground would be converted to a day use and picnicking area. The Camp 6 parking lot would be moved north, protecting wetlands and reducing parking within 150 feet of the river. In the High Sierra, the Merced Lake Backpackers' Camp would be retained. In terms of recreation, limited private paddling would be allowed by permit on river stretches within all segments. No commercial paddling would be allowed. This alternative would manage peak daily visitation within Yosemite Valley at approximately the same level as peak visitation at present (~20,500), with additional parking lots located in West Yosemite Valley and Abbieville to alleviate traffic congestion. The NPS shuttle system would expand as well to serve these new locations.

RIVER VALUES

Natural and Cultural Resources ~ Free-flow ~ Water Quality ~ Scenery

- Ecological Restoration: 201 acres
 - Restore 25 acres of wet meadow in Yosemite Valley
 - Open 88 acres of previous meadow habitat in areas that have converted to conifer-dominated forests within Yosemite Valley
 - Restore 88 acres of riparian and floodplain habitat in Yosemite Valley
- Free-flow: Free-flowing condition improved by removal of two bridges

VISITOR USE AND CAPACITY

Visitor Experience and Activities ~ Visitor Use Levels and Capacities ~ Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tools

- Visitor Experience and Activities: Provides a range of resource-sensitive recreation opportunities that allow visitors to connect to the river. Selected visitor services and amenities removed. For example, commercial raft rentals would be eliminated, but paddling in privately-owned crafts would be allowed on all stretches of the river
- Visitor Use Levels and Capacity: Accommodates current maximum daily visitation. Total peak daily visitation to Yosemite Valley of ~20,500 people
- Management Tool: Day use access restrictions would likely occur on a minority of days each summer. Otherwise, proactive on-site, day-use traffic and parking management program implemented. Once East Valley parking fills to capacity, parking would be diverted to remote parking at a new West Valley area accommodating 250 vehicles and at Abbieville in El Portal at 200 spaces

LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT

Facilities ~ Parking ~ Circulation ~ Services ~ Transportation ~ Operations

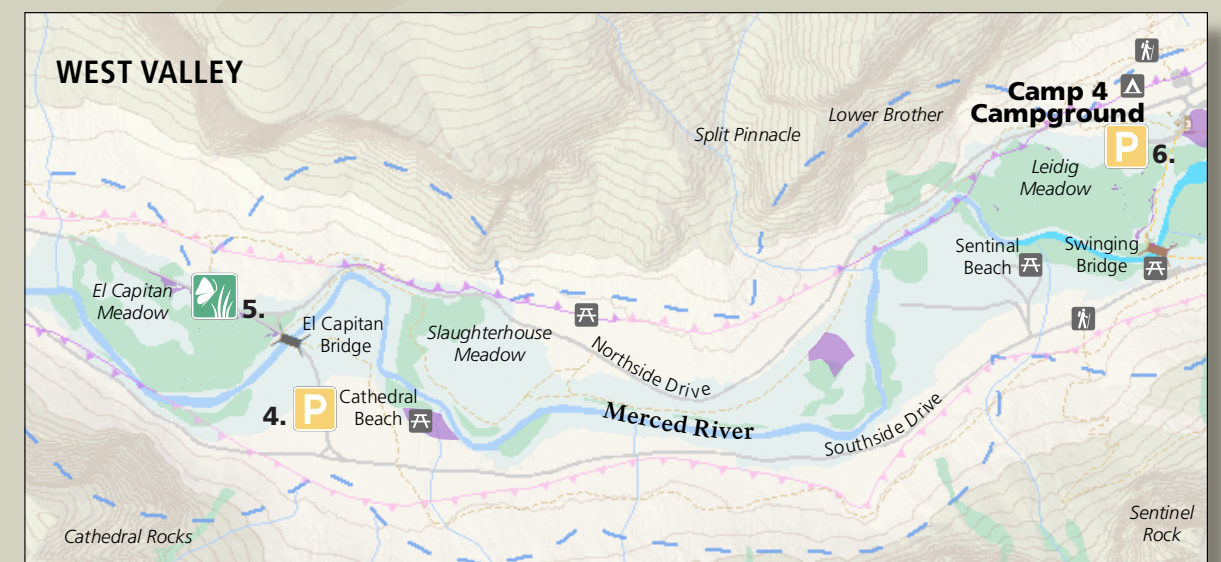
- Lodging: Lodging reduced by ~70 units (6%) throughout the corridor
- Camping: Camping increased by ~100 sites (17%) throughout the corridor
- Transportation: Public transit and bus options expanded. Overall parking capacity in corridor of ~8,400 spaces, ~5,900 in Yosemite Valley
- Park Operations: Housing for ~920 concession employees provided in Yosemite Valley with ~290 relocated to El Portal

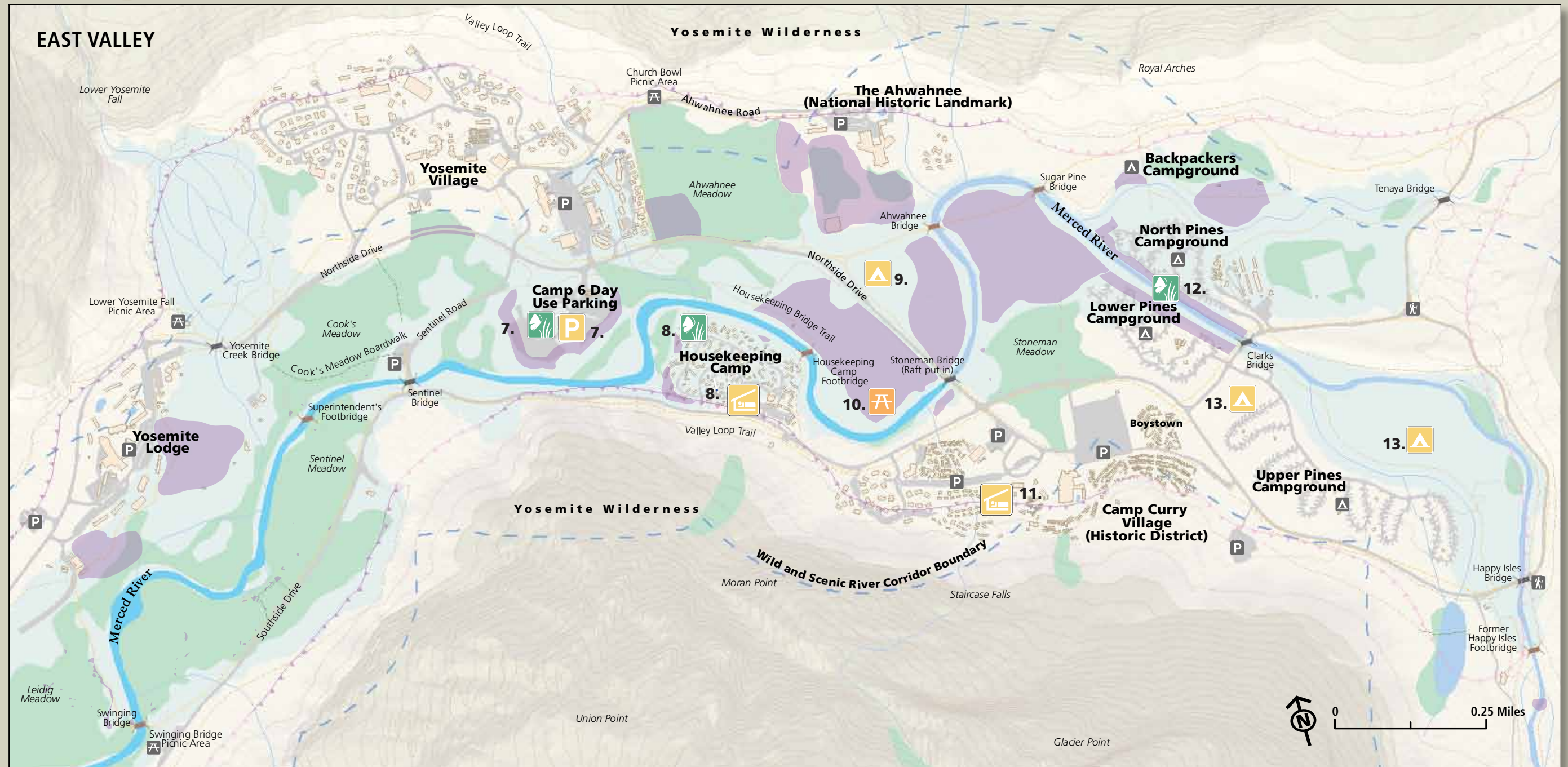
SITE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. Operations: Using best management practices, continue administrative functions of staging and biomass management
2. Abbieville and Trailer Village: Facilitate removal of temporary housing in Yosemite Valley through development of high density housing to accommodate

~260 employees; develop El Portal Remote Visitor Parking Area to provide ~200 spaces of visitor parking serviced by regional transit

3. El Portal Valley oaks enhancement: Prohibit parking under the dripline of valley oak trees; restore understory of trees to natural conditions
4. West Valley Day Use Overflow Parking Area developed to provide 250 overflow parking spaces out of the 100 year floodplain; Yosemite Valley shuttle service expanded to West Valley
5. El Capitan Meadow restoration: Use restoration fencing along northern perimeter of meadow and designate appropriate access points using boardwalks and viewing platforms. Restore informal trails in sensitive areas
6. Parking: Area west of Yosemite Lodge re-developed to provide ~150 day use parking spaces
7. Camp 6: Restoration of floodplain and riparian area; relocation of parking northward, away from river for a total of ~750 day use parking spaces
8. Housekeeping Camp: Restoration of the riparian and floodplain ecosystem; removal of ~30 units within the ordinary high water mark; retains a total of ~230 units
9. Camping: Area re-developed to create new campground with ~30 walk-in sites out of the 10-year floodplain at the former Upper Rivers Campground area
10. Picnicking: Tables and parking stalls provided to ensure appropriate public access to popular beach area
11. Curry Village: Reduction in lodging; removal of ~40 units within the rockfall hazard zone and ~40 tent cabins; retention of a total of ~420 units
12. Restoration of the riparian zone in vicinity of campgrounds by removing sites within 100 feet of the ordinary high water mark and restoring native plant communities
13. Camping: Addition of recreational vehicle campground loop with ~40 RV sites; addition of walk-in campground with ~60 sites





River Values

- Meadow & Riparian Restoration
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Free Flow
- Water Quality

Visitor Use and Capacity

- Visitor Experience
- Boating
- User Capacity/Amounts of Use
- Management Tool
- Picnicking

Land Use Management

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- Valley Oak Vegetation

- Surfaced Area
- Designated Wilderness
- Merced River (Rafting Prohibited)
- Merced River (Rafting Permitted)
- Restoration
- Wild & Scenic River Classification**
- Recreational Segment
- Wild Segment
- Scenic Segment

- Limited restoration within 100 feet of the river
- Allows for some increase in peak visitor-use levels
- Expanded facilities and services with the largest increase in camping opportunities

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT OVERVIEW

This alternative would restore a total of 168 acres of impacted meadows and riparian area to natural conditions and remove more than a mile of rip-rap. Facilities and services would accommodate increases in public-use levels. Total lodging availability would increase, most noticeably through a redesigned Yosemite Lodge that would add approximately 200 units. Camping opportunities would be the most offered under any alternative, with ~190 new sites at the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds, ~100 sites at Upper Pines, and ~40 sites east of Yosemite Lodge. In the High Sierra, the Merced Lake Backpackers' Camp would be retained. As part of the park's recreation opportunities, private paddling would be allowed on stretches of the river in all river segments. Commercial paddling would be allowed in the Valley segment only on an extended stretch of the river. Parking in West Yosemite Valley and El Portal would be greatly expanded, and the shuttle system would expand to serve these new locations. This alternative would manage peak daily visitation within Yosemite Valley at ~24,000 people, a 17% increase over current peak season visitation.

River Values

Natural and Cultural Resources ~ Free-flow ~ Water Quality ~ Scenery

- Ecological Restoration: 168 acres
 - Restore 25 acres of wet meadow in Yosemite
 - Open 88 acres of previous meadow habitat in areas that have converted to conifer-dominated forests within Yosemite Valley
 - Restore 55 acres of riparian and floodplain habitat in Yosemite Valley
- Free-flow: Free-flowing condition improved through design and engineering of roads with no bridges removed

Visitor Use and Capacity

Visitor Experience and Activities ~ Visitor Use Levels and Capacities ~ Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tools

- Visitor Experience and Activities: Provide a wide range of recreation experiences including improved and expanded picnicking and paddling opportunities along the river
- Visitor Use Levels and Capacities: Accommodate current peak use and limited growth. Total peak daily visitation to the Valley ~24,400 people
- Visitor Use and Capacity Management Tools: Phased-in day use capacity management actions similar to the other alternatives leading to day-use reservations when demand exceeds supply in the future. Once East Valley parking fills to capacity, parking would be diverted to remote areas—with 500 spaces in a new West Valley Day Use Parking Area and 200 spaces in El Portal

Land Use Management

Facilities ~ Parking ~ Circulation ~ Services ~ Transportation ~ Operations

- Lodging: Lodging increased by ~200 units (17%) throughout the corridor
- Camping: Camping increased by ~370 sites (66%) throughout the corridor
- Transportation: Transit options expanded with Valley shuttle extended to West Valley. Total parking capacity in the corridor formalized and expanded to ~7,500 spaces
- Park Operations: Housing for ~920 concession employees provided in Yosemite Valley with ~430 relocated to El Portal

SITE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. Abbieville and Trailer Village: Facilitate removal of temporary housing in Yosemite Valley through development of high density housing to accommodate ~400 employees; develop El Portal Remote Visitor Parking Area to provide ~200 spaces of visitor parking serviced by regional transit
2. El Portal Valley oaks enhancement: Prohibit parking under the dripline of valley oak trees; restore understory of trees to natural conditions

3. Valley Day Use Parking Area developed to provide 500 overflow parking spaces out of the 100 year floodplain; Yosemite Valley shuttle service expanded to West Valley

4. El Capitan Meadow restoration: Designate meadow access using boardwalks and viewing platforms; restore all informal trails to meadow; selectively remove conifers that block views of El Capitan

5. Camping: New campground developed east of El Capitan Picnic Area with ~80 car and recreational vehicle sites

6. Redesign of Yosemite Lodge out of the 100-year floodplain; addition of 200 units to provide a total number of 440 lodging units; west of Yosemite Lodge area re-designed to provide additional ~150 parking spaces

7. Camping: Area re-developed to create new recreational vehicle campground with ~40 sites

8. Camp 6: Restoration of floodplain and riparian area; relocation of parking northward, away from river for a total of ~750 day use parking spaces

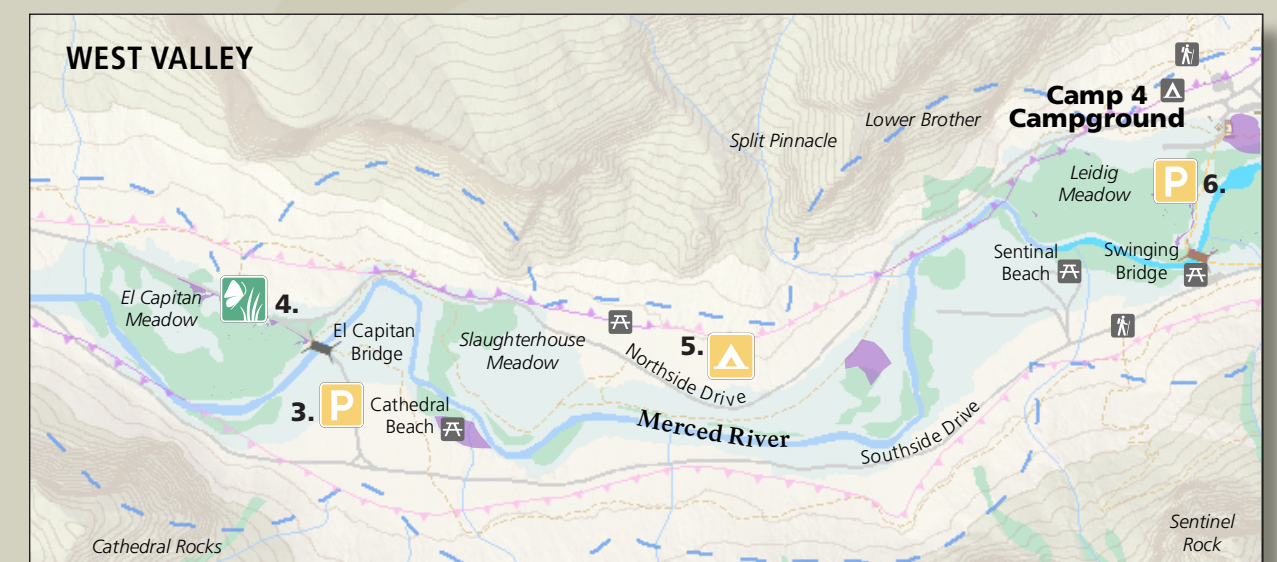
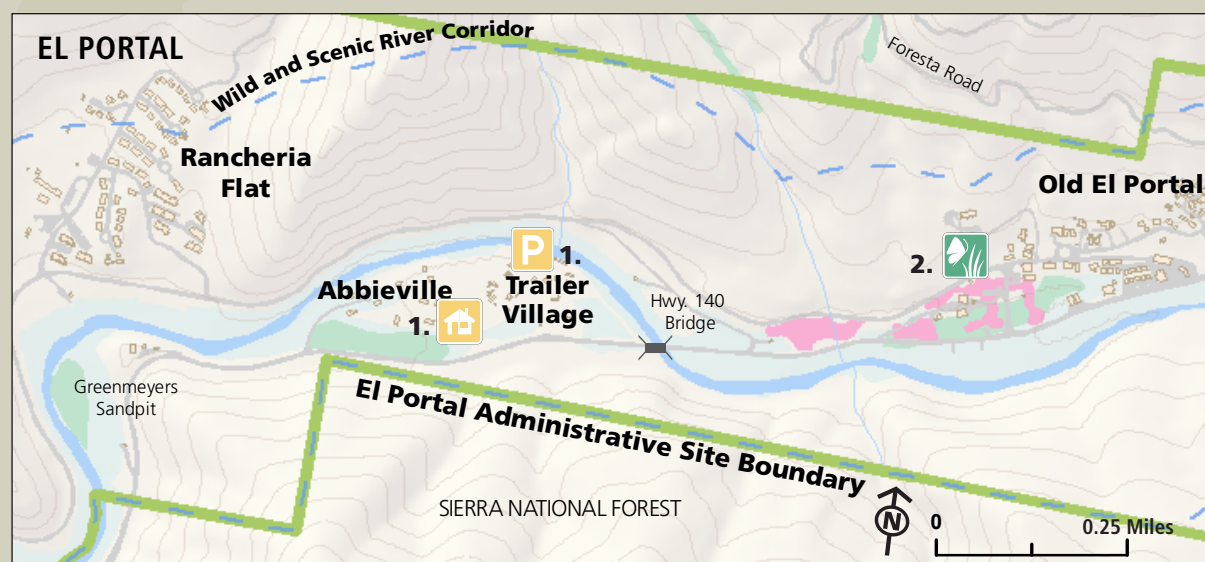
9. Housekeeping Camp: Restoration of the riparian zone; relocation of ~30 units out of the ordinary high water mark, but within the existing footprint; retains a total of 266 units

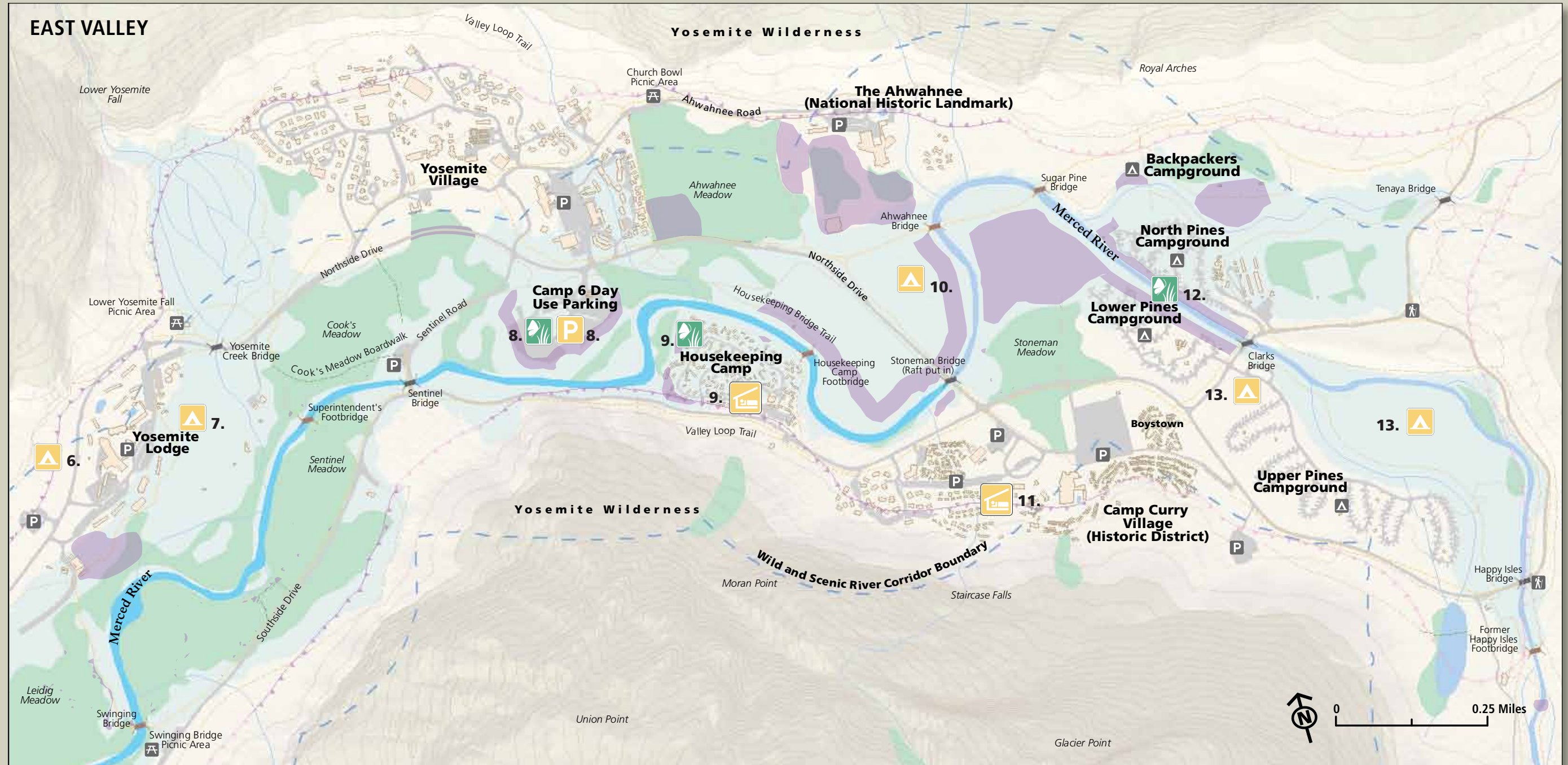
10. Camping: Area re-developed to create new campground with ~190 sites out of the dynamic 10-year floodplain at the former Upper and Lower Rivers Campground area

11. Curry Village: Reduction in lodging; removal of ~40 units within the rockfall hazard zone; retention of a total of ~460 units

12. Restoration of the riparian zone in vicinity of campgrounds by removing sites within 100' of the ordinary high water mark and restoring native plant communities

13. Camping: Addition of recreational vehicle campground loop with ~40 RV sites and addition of walk-in campground with ~60 sites





River Values

- Meadow & Riparian Restoration
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Free Flow
- Water Quality

Visitor Use and Capacity

- Visitor Experience
- Boating
- User Capacity/Amounts of Use
- Management Tool
- Picnicking

Land Use Management

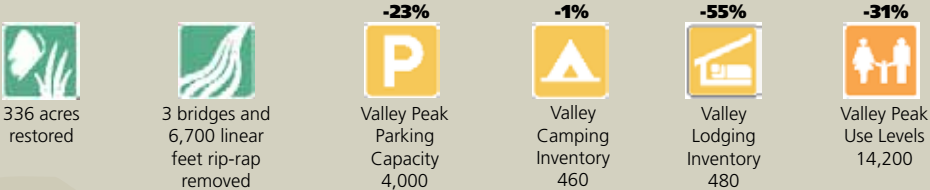
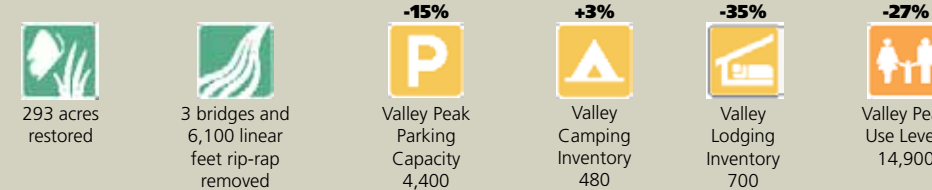
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- Foot Bridge
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Meadow & Riparian Vegetation
- Valley Oak Vegetation



















- Surfaced Area
- Designated Wilderness
- Merced River (Rafting Prohibited)
- Merced River (Rafting Permitted)
- Restoration
- Wild & Scenic River Classification**
- Recreational Segment
- Wild Segment
- Scenic Segment

MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLAN PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS SUMMARY COMPARISON TABLE

Existing Conditions		Alternative Concept 1		Alternative Concept 2	
Concept Title		Self-reliant Experience within the 100-year floodplain		Dispersed Visitor Experiences and Extensive Riverbank Restoration	
River Values		Major restoration within the 100-year floodplain		Significant restoration within 150 feet of the river	
Visitor Use and Capacity Management		Accommodates lowest visitor use levels		Accommodates lower visitor use levels than today	
Land Use Management		Significant reduction in facilities and services		Marked reduction in visitor facilities and services	
Concept Graphic					
Alternative Drivers					
River Values (in Yosemite Valley)					
Ecological Restoration Acreage Totals		336 acres		293 acres	
Wet Meadows Restored		87 acres		76 acres	
Previous Meadow Habitat Re-established		88 acres		88 acres	
Riparian and Floodplain Restored		161 acres		129 acres	
Major Site Restoration Locations		Wawona golf course, Former Rivers campgrounds, Lower Pines, Group Camp, Camp 6, Greenmeyer Sandpit, Curry Village Stables, Housekeeping Camp, Curry Orchard Parking, Ahwahnee Row and Tecoya housing, Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, Curry Village (partial)		Wawona golf course, Former Rivers, Lower Pines, Group Camp, Camp 6, Greenmeyer Sandpit, Housekeeping Camp, Curry Orchard Parking, Curry Village Stables, Merced Lake High Sierra Camp	
Visitor Use and Capacity Management					
Peak Overnight Visitor Use Throughout River Corridor	7,900 people	5,100 people		6,100 people	
Peak Overnight Visitor Use -- Yosemite Valley Only	5,900 people	3,900 people		4,700 people	
Peak Day Visitor Use -- Yosemite Valley Only	14,600 people	10,200 people		10,200 people	
Peak Total Visitor Use -- Valley (Day and Overnight)	20,500 people	14,200 people		14,900 people	
Day-Use Capacity Management Strategy		Day-use permits and reservation system required during peak summer season. Permits would be checked at park entrance stations.		Day-use permits and reservation system required during peak summer season. Permits checked on-site at parking locations.	
Land Use Management					
Lodging Totals (Throughout River Corridor)	1,200 units	590 units		810 units	
Total Lodging in Yosemite Valley	1,100 units	480 units: Lodging units reduced at Curry Village and removed completely at Yosemite Lodge and Housekeeping Camp.		700 units: Lodging units reduced at Curry Village and Yosemite Lodge and removed completely at Housekeeping Camp.	
Camping Totals (Throughout River Corridor)	570 sites	520 sites		540 sites	
Total Camping in Yosemite Valley	470 sites	460 sites: Removal of North Pines Campground and a reduction at Upper Pines, Lower Pines, and Backpackers Camp. Yosemite Lodge re-purposed as camping.		480 sites: Reduction at North Pines, Lower Pines, and Backpackers Camp. Expansion of ~40 sites at Upper Pines.	
Wawona Campground	100 sites	60 sites		60 sites	
Parking (Throughout River Corridor)	7,800 vehicles	6,500 vehicles		6,700 vehicles	
Total Parking in Yosemite Valley	5,500 vehicles	4,000 vehicles: Reduction in parking at Camp 6 and Curry Orchard and a 400-space increase at Yosemite Lodge		4,400 vehicles: Reduction in parking at Camp 6 and Curry Orchard and a 150-space increase at Yosemite Lodge	
Administrative Uses and Operations					
Concessioner General Office		Function is relocated out of the River Corridor		Function is relocated out of Yosemite Valley to El Portal	
Concession Employee Housing	1,200 beds	600 employee beds in Valley; 260 relocated to El Portal		900 employee beds in Valley; 60 relocated to El Portal	

ATTENTION: Some figures above have been rounded where appropriate.

MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLAN PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS SUMMARY COMPARISON TABLE

Alternative Concept 3	Alternative Concept 4	Alternative Concept 5
Resource-based Experiences and Targeted Riverbank Restoration	Enhanced Visitor Experiences and Essential Riverbank Restoration	Diversified Visitor Experiences and Selective Riverbank Restoration
Targeted restoration within 150 feet of the river	Essential restoration within 100 feet of the river	Limited restoration within 100 feet of the river
Accommodates slightly lower visitor use levels than today	Accommodates current peak use levels of today	Allows for some increase to in peak visitor use levels
Reduced commercial services with large increases in camping	Reduced commercial services with moderate increase in camping	Expanded facilities and services with largest increase in camping
 218 acres restored  2 bridges and 6,100 linear feet rip-rap removed  +0% Valley Peak Parking Capacity 5,300  +57% Valley Camping Inventory 730  -17% Valley Lodging Inventory 890  -17% Valley Peak Use Levels 17,000	 201 acres restored  2 bridges and 6,100 linear feet rip-rap removed  +12% Valley Peak Parking Capacity 5,800  +25% Valley Camping Inventory 580  -5% Valley Lodging Inventory 1,000  0% Valley Peak Use Levels 20,500	 168 acres restored  6,000 linear feet rip-rap removed  +20% Valley Peak Parking Capacity 6,20000  +85% Valley Camping Inventory 860  +20% Valley Lodging Inventory 1,500  +17% Valley Peak Use Levels 24,000
218 acres	201 acres	168 acres
28 acres	25 acres	25 acres
88 acres	88 acres	88 acres
102 acres	88 acres	55 acres
Former Lower Pines Campground, Group Camp, partial former Rivers Campground, Camp 6, Greenmeyer Sandpit, partial Housekeeping Camp	Former Lower Pines Campground, Group Camp, partial former Rivers Campground, Greenmeyer Sandpit	Former Lower Pines Campground, Group Camp, Greenmeyer Sandpit
7,900 people	8,000 people	10,200 people
6,400 people	6,400 people	8,500 people
10,600 people	14,100 people	15,500 people
17,000 people	20,500 people	24,000 people
Real-time traffic information system and traffic diversion during peak use periods, includes differential fee for parking and congestion pricing scheme.	Real-time traffic information system and traffic diversions during peak use periods, includes transportation fee at entrance stations. Overflow parking at West Valley and El Portal.	Phase in increasingly progressive management actions (parking and transportation fees, traffic diversions and other measures) as future demand begins to exceed parking supply.
990 units	1,100 units	1,400 units
890 units: Lodging units reduced at Curry Village and significantly reduced at Housekeeping Camp	1,000 units: Lodging units retained at current capacity with minor reductions at Curry Village and Housekeeping Camp	1,300 units: Lodging units reduced at Curry Village and increased by approximately 200 units at the 245-unit Yosemite Lodge
790 sites	660 sites	940 sites
730 sites: Reduction at North Pines, Lower Pines, and Backpackers Camp. Expansion of ~100 sites at Upper Pines, ~110 new camping sites at Upper and Lower River campgrounds, and ~40 sites west of Yosemite Lodge. Conversion of Curry Village Stables to ~40 camping sites.	580 sites: Reduction at North Pines, Lower Pines, and Backpackers Camp. Expansion of ~100 sites at Upper Pines and ~30 walk-in sites at former Upper River Campground.	860 sites: Reduction at North Pines, Lower Pines, and Backpackers Camp. Expansion of ~100 sites at Upper Pines. New development of ~190 sites at former Upper and Lower Rivers campgrounds and ~40 site east of Yosemite Lodge.
65 sites	80 sites	80 sites
7,700 vehicles	8,400 vehicles	9,200 vehicles
5,300 vehicles: Reduction in parking at Camp 6 and Curry Orchard. Establish 200 space remote parking at El Portal.	5,900 vehicles: Reduction in parking at Camp 6. Add 150 spaces west of Yosemite Lodge. Establish 200 space remote parking at El Portal and 250 spaces in new West Valley Day Use Parking.	6,500 vehicles: Reduction in parking at Camp 6. Add 150 spaces west of Yosemite Lodge. Establish 200 space remote parking at El Portal and 500 spaces in new West Valley Day Use Parking.
Function is relocated out of Yosemite Valley to El Portal	Function is relocated out of Yosemite Valley to El Portal	Function is relocated out of Yosemite Valley to El Portal
870 employee beds in Valley; 250 relocated to El Portal	900 employee beds in Valley; 290 relocated to El Portal	920 employee beds; 430 employees relocated to El Portal

ATTENTION: Some figures above have been rounded where appropriate.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Input we receive during internal and external workshops, site visits, and the administrative and public review of these preliminary alternative concepts will be examined, synthesized, and used to refine the alternatives that will be analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

HOW TO STAY INVOLVED

There are numerous ways to stay informed about the plan via the Internet, park electronic newsletter, open houses and Facebook. The park has a website devoted to the Merced River Plan located at www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp.htm. At that website, you can sign up for our electronic newsletter. The newsletter provides information and announcements on all park planning and open houses. The Facebook is page located at <http://www.facebook.com/YosemiteNPS>, so please friend us.

We also periodically send out hard-copy outreach materials to a subset of stakeholders who request this type of correspondence.

Thank You!

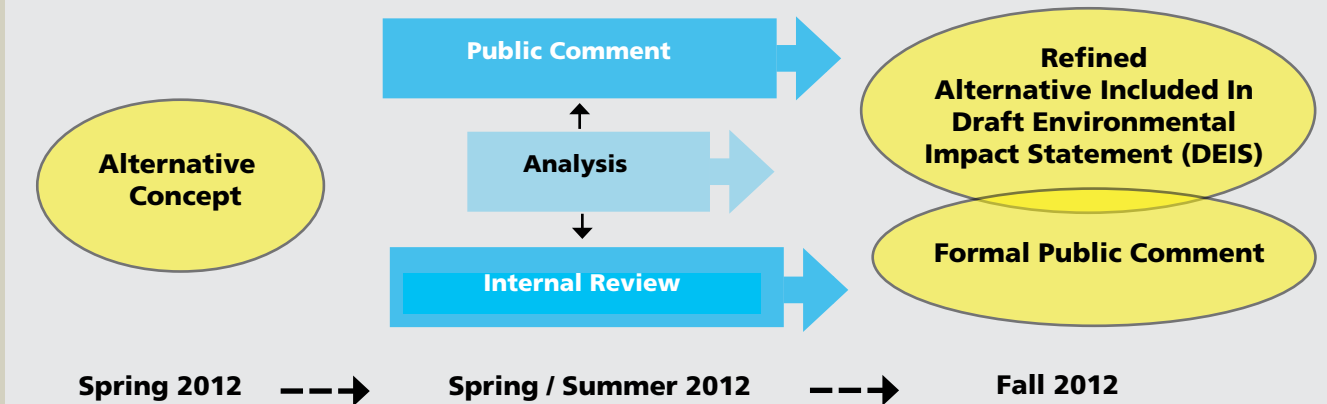
The Merced River Interdisciplinary Planning Team and Yosemite National Park Superintendent, Don Neubacher, would like to express our appreciation for your continued engagement in helping to shape the future of the Merced Wild and Scenic River.



Future: Draft Environmental Impact Statement Timeline

Spring/Summer 2012	The Planning Team will refine and fully develop the range of alternatives based on administrative and public review of the preliminary alternative concepts. We will be working with our environmental compliance contractor to facilitate the environmental analysis of these refined alternatives.
Fall 2012	The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is slated to be released in late fall of 2012. Following release of the DEIS, the NPS will initiate a 90-day public comment period. During that time, we will hold additional public and socioeconomic workshops.
Summer 2013	The Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be released in the summer of 2013.

Concept to Alternative: What's Ahead This Year



Yosemite National Park

MERCED RIVER PLAN... *PROVIDING ACCESS AND PROTECTING RESOURCES*

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA