

Alternative 2

YOSEMITE'S MERCED RIVER DRAFT PLAN / EIS

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



ALTERNATIVE 2: SELF-RELIANT VISITOR EXPERIENCES AND EXTENSIVE FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION

ALTERNATIVE 2 OVERVIEW

The guiding principles of Alternative 2 would include maximizing the restoration of the 100-year floodplain by removing infrastructure not essential to resource-related recreation, and creating a more self-reliant visitor experience, where fewer commercial services would be available. Visitor-use levels would be managed to allow for visitor experiences free of crowding or congestion.

Actions in Alternative 2 would:

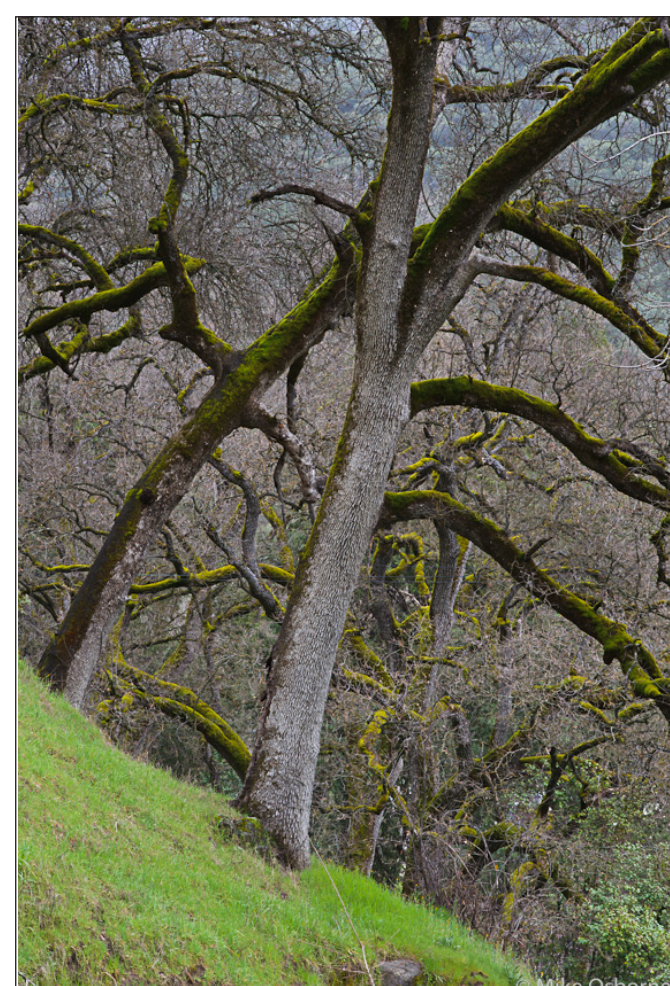
- Restore 347 acres of meadow and riparian habitat.
- Slightly reduce campsites in Yosemite Valley (-3%) and throughout the entire river corridor (-8%).
- Significantly reduce lodging in Yosemite Valley (-46%) and throughout the river corridor (-43%).
- Reduce day-use parking spaces in Yosemite Valley (-23%).
- Reduce commercial services.
- Make significant changes to traffic-circulation patterns in Yosemite Valley to accommodate ecological restoration goals and reduce traffic congestion.
- Accommodate approximately 13,900 visitors per day in East Yosemite Valley.
- Continue to manage overnight use through a wilderness permit system and a reservation system for lodging and camping.
- Manage day-use capacity for East Yosemite Valley through parking permit system required during peak season (May through September).

PROTECT AND ENHANCE

Alternative 2 would protect and enhance river values through major ecological restoration to enhance the connectivity of the river to its floodplain. This alternative would prioritize enhancement of ecological river values over the retention of existing infrastructure and circulation patterns.

RIVER VALUES

- Enhance hydrologic connectivity of meadows to the riparian floodplain through removal of road segments that bisect Ahwahnee and Stoneman meadows.
- Ecologically restore the areas currently occupied by the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp; campsites in the 100-year floodplain; Housekeeping Camp; the area of the removed Yosemite Lodge; the Wawona Golf Course; and the Concessioner Stables.
- Enhance the free-flowing condition of the river by removing three historic bridges (Sugar Pine, Ahwahnee, and Stoneman) within the bed and banks of the river that constrict flow during high-water events.
- Establish a large valley oak recruitment area of at least 2.25 acres in El Portal.
- Enhance recreational values in Segment 1 that focus on solitude and self-reliant recreation through the removal of the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp and by expanding dispersed camping in the vicinity.
- Enhance recreational values in Segment 2 by improving visitor circulation and reducing crowding in Yosemite Valley.
- Protect and enhance cultural and scenic values as described under Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6. Additionally, relocate and rehabilitate Residence 1 (Superintendent's House) to the NPS housing area, and restore informal trails and black oak woodland near Cook's Meadow.



Valley oak



USER CAPACITY, LAND USE, AND FACILITIES

Alternative 2 would focus on providing a self-reliant visitor experience, with a marked reduction in commercial services and facilities. As a result of the self-reliance focus as well as extensive floodplain restoration, the overall visitor-use levels would be lower than current use to allow for increased resource restoration and reduced crowding and congestion in popular areas of the river corridor.

CAMPING

- The campsite inventory in Yosemite Valley would be reduced (-3%), and it would be reduced throughout the entire river corridor (-8%), as a result of natural and cultural resource enhancement.
- All campsites within the 100-year floodplain would be removed, including Yellow Pine Administrative Campground.
- Campsite losses would be offset by the addition of new walk-in camping at a re-developed Yosemite Lodge; east of Camp 4 Campground; and west of Backpackers Campground.
- The number of campsites in Yosemite Valley would be 450 sites -- a net loss of 16 sites -- and the number of campsites available throughout the corridor would be 521 sites.



LODGING

- In-park lodging availability would be reduced (-43%) as compared to existing conditions -- from 1,160 to 660 units.
- All Yosemite Lodge units and Wilderness lodging would be removed, many of which are within the 100-year floodplain. The lodging units at Housekeeping Camp would also be removed, all of which are within the 100-year floodplain.
- 78 new hard-sided lodging would be constructed in Curry Village to offset losses of year-round accommodations at Yosemite Lodge.

DAY-USE CAPACITY AND VISITOR ACCESS

- Day-use parking capacity in Yosemite Valley would be reduced (-23%) compared to current levels.
- Day-use capacity would be actively managed and potentially restricted during peak-use season (May through September).
- A day-use parking permit system would be implemented immediately for East Yosemite Valley during peak season.
- Significant changes to parking and traffic circulation would take place in the vicinity of the Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area, and Yosemite Lodge.
- Day-use visitors would park at a re-designed parking area at Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area, with a total of 550 parking spaces; this parking area would be outside the 10-year floodplain.
- At the redesigned Yosemite Lodge complex, a day-use parking area north of core visitor services would be constructed (250 spaces), as well as overnight parking west of Yosemite Lodge to serve new campgrounds (150 spaces).
- Total parking for East Yosemite Valley (including day, overnight, and administrative) would be approximately 4,000 spaces.
- Regional transit services would remain unchanged on Highway 140, Highway 120 West and Highway 120 East corridors; one round-trip run per day would be added to Highway 41 corridor.
- Shuttle services within Yosemite Valley would remain the same, and the East Valley shuttle would be optimized to decrease shuttle intervals to five minutes.
- Private boating would be allowed in sections of Wilderness, Yosemite Valley, the Gorge, El Portal, and Wawona.



Alternative 2: Camping Facilities

Existing Locations	Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 2	Details
Backpackers	25 sites	0 sites	25 walk-in sites removed from the 100-year floodplain, some of which will be relocated west of Backpackers
Camp 4	35 sites	35 sites	No change to the National Historic Register site
Lower Pines	76 sites	44 sites	32 sites removed from the 100-year floodplain
North Pines	86 sites	0 sites	86 sites removed from the 100-year floodplain
Upper Pines	240 sites	216 sites	22 sites removed from the 10-year floodplain and 2 sites for cultural resource concerns
Yellow Pine Administrative	4 sites	0 sites	4 group administrative sites removed from the 100-year floodplain
Wawona	99 sites	67 sites	32 sites removed from the 100-year floodplain or in culturally sensitive areas
Total Existing Locations	565 sites	362 sites	
New Locations	Alt 1	Alt 2	Details
West of Backpackers	0 sites	16 sites	16 walk-in sites relocated from Backpackers to less sensitive area outside 100-year floodplain
East of Camp 4	0 sites	35 sites	35 walk-in sites constructed east of Camp 4
Yosemite Lodge walk-in	0 sites	104 sites	100 walk-in sites and 4 group sites constructed
Abbieville / Trailer Court	0 sites	4 sites	4 group administrative sites built in El Portal to replace Yellow Pine administrative sites
Total New Camping	0 sites	159 sites	
Total Camping in Corridor	565 sites	521 sites	

Alternative 2: Lodging Facilities

Wilderness	Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 2	Details
Merced Lake High Sierra Camp	60 beds (22 units)	0 beds	Remove all permanent infrastructure and expand dispersed camping into re-purposed MLHSC area
Yosemite Valley	Alt 1	Alt 2	Details
Ahwahnee Hotel	123 rooms	123 rooms	No change at the National Historic Landmark
Housekeeping Camp	266 tent cabins	0 tent cabins	Remove all units from 100-year floodplain
Curry Village	400 units	433 units (290 tents and 143 hard-sided units)	* Retain 290 tents * Retain 47 hard-sided cabin-with-bath units * Retain 18 units at Stoneman House * Construct 78 hard-sided units in Boys Town
Yosemite Lodge	245 rooms	0 rooms	Remove entire lodging complex, including those units in the 100-year floodplain
Wawona	Alt 1	Alt 2	Details
Wawona Hotel	104 rooms	104 rooms	No change at the National Historic Landmark
Total Lodging in Corridor	1,160 units	660 units	

* El Portal: Private accommodations exist but are not on NPS land; therefore, they are not listed here.

EMPLOYEE HOUSING

- **Yosemite Village Area.** Lost Arrow: Remove temporary employee housing. Re-establish an administrative parking lot to accommodate 50 spaces. Indian Creek: Remove employee housing in the 100-year floodplain between Village Store and Ahwahnee Meadow to ecologically restore the riparian landscape.
- **Yosemite Lodge Area.** Remove concessioner housing at Highland Court and the Thousands Cabins. No new housing would be constructed in its place.
- **El Portal Area.** Rancheria Flat: Construct nine units to replace temporary housing removed from Yosemite Valley. Abbieville and Trailer Village Housing: Develop high-density housing units for 405 employees to replace temporary housing removed in Yosemite Valley.
- **East of Yosemite Valley Area.** Concessioner Stables: Remove 25 employee beds.