Alternative 4 Yosemite's Merced River Draft Plan / EIS

Alternative 4 Overview

The guiding principles of Alternative 4 include restoration of portions of the floodplain and the riparian area within 150 feet of the river. This alternative focuses on providing only those commercial services and facilities that facilitate resource-based visitor experiences. It accommodates lower maximum visitor use levels than today, with large increases in overnight camping capacity and moderate decrease in the overnight lodging capacity.

Actions in Alternative 4 would:

- Restore 223 acres of meadow and riparian habitat.
- Significantly increase the campsite inventory in Yosemite Valley (+50%) and throughout the entire river corridor (+37%).
- Reduce the lodging inventory in Yosemite Valley (-20%) and and throughout the entire river corridor (-20%).
- Reduce day-use parking for Yosemite Valley (-12%).
- Reduce commercial services.
- Make targeted changes to the traffic circulation pattern in Yosemite Valley to accommodate ecological restoration goals and reduce traffic congestion.
- Accommodate approximately 17,000 visitors per day in East Yosemite Valley.
- Continue to manage overnight use capacity through Wilderness permits, and reservation systems for lodging and camping.
- Manage day-use capacity for East Yosemite Valley through parking permits and a reservation system required during peak season (May through September).



Alternative 4: Resource-based Visitor Experiences and Targeted Riverbank Restoration

PROTECT AND ENHANCE

Alternative 4 would protect and enhance river values through targeted ecological restoration focused on enhancing the habitat quality of the riparian zone and the hydrologic function of the river. It strives to balance the enhancement of these river values with minimal traffic circulation or infrastructure modifications.

RIVER VALUES

- Enhance hydrologic connectivity of meadows to the riparian floodplain through the removal of the segment of road that bisects Stoneman Meadow.
- Ecologically restore the area currently occupied by the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, the portion of Housekeeping Camp that is within the ordinary high water mark of the river, and all campsites and associated infrastructure within 150 feet of
- Enhance the free-flowing condition of the river by removing two historic bridges (Sugar Pine and Ahwahnee) within the bed and banks of the river that constrict flow during high-water events.



Sierra sweet bay

- Establish a valley oak recruitment area of 1 acre 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 designated camping in the vicinity.
- Enhance

the river.

recreational values in Segment 2 by improving visitor circulation and reducing crowding in Yosemite Valley at key attraction sites. Additionally permits would be



Water-guality measurements

issued for both commercial and private boating on the river to enhance dispersed recreation along the river corridor.

• Cultural and scenic values would be protected and enhanced as described under "Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6." Alternative 4 would also 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.



The Gorge

Alternative 4 would focus on providing resource-based visitor experiences, increasing camping opportunities, and reducing commercial services, including lodging. Visitation to Yosemite Valley would be slightly lower than under existing conditions because overnight use would increase while day use decreased.

CAMPING

- corridor (+37%).
- Rivers area.
- available in the corridor would be 773.

LODGING

- existing conditions -- from 1,160 to 927 units.
- Management actions related to lodging would focus on removing lodging units from within the observed ordinary high-water mark at Housekeeping Camp and in Wilderness.
- All permanent infrastructure at the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp would be removed, allowing the area to be converted to designated Wilderness.
- Curry Village lodging would be retained except for the units removed from the Boys Town area, which would be re-developed as a new campground.
- river corridor.

DAY-USE CAPACITY AND VISITOR ACCESS

- implemented during the peak-use season.
- El Portal.
- away from the river.
- added west of the lodge.
- site (200 parking spaces).
- approximately 4,800 spaces.
- regional transit additions along Highway 41.

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

USER CAPACITY, LAND USE, AND FACILITIES

• The campsite inventory in Yosemite Valley would be increased (+50%), and it would be increased throughout the entire river

• All campsites and associated infrastructure within 150 feet of the river in Wawona and Yosemite Valley would be removed.

• Campsite losses would be offset with new campgrounds adjacent to the Upper Pines Campground; east of Camp 4; west of Backpackers Campground; west of Yosemite Lodge; at Boys Town; at the Concessioner Stables; and in the Upper and Lower

• The number of campsites in Yosemite Valley would increase to 701—a net gain of 235 sites—and the number of campsites

• In-park lodging availability would be reduced (-20%) as compared to



• No new hard-sided lodging would be constructed in any part of the

• Day-use parking capacity in Yosemite Valley would be reduced (-12%) compared to current levels and would be managed and potentially restricted during peak-use season (May through September).

• A day-use parking permit system for East Yosemite Valley would be

• The most significant changes to parking and circulation would take place in the vicinity of Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area, Yosemite Lodge, and

• Day-use visitors would park at a re-designed Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area, with a total of 750 parking spaces, located at least 150 feet

• A new Yosemite Lodge Day-use Parking Area with 150 spaces would be

• Overflow parking during times of peak visitation would be provided in El Portal at the Abbieville

• Total parking for East Yosemite Valley (including day, overnight, and administrative) would be

• Regional transit services would remain unchanged on the Highway 140 and Highway 120 East corridors. Service on the Highway 120 West corridor would increase to two round-trip runs per day. Four round-trip runs per day would be added to the Highway 41 corridor.

• All shuttle services within Yosemite Valley would maintain the same base service. Additionally, East Yosemite Valley shuttles would be optimized to reduce shuttle intervals to five minutes, and the West Yosemite Valley shuttle would be expanded to serve Bridalveil Fall and West Valley destinations during summer. Park shuttles from Wawona to Yosemite Valley would be discontinued in favor of

• Private boating opportunities would be allowed in sections of Wilderness, Yosemite Valley, the Gorge, El Portal, and Wawona. Commercial boating would be available in Yosemite Valley.

Alternative 4: Camping Facilities					
Existing Locations	Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 4	Details		
Backpackers	25 sites	0 sites	25 walk-in sites removed, of within 150 feet of the rive will be relocated west of B		
Camp 4	35 sites	35 sites	No change to the National		
Lower Pines	76 sites	61 sites	15 sites within 150 feet of		
North Pines	86 sites	52 sites	34 sites within 150 feet of		
Upper Pines	240 sites	238 sites	2 sites removed for cultur		
Yellow Pine Administrative	4 sites	4 sites	No changes to these grou		
Wawona	99 sites	72 sites	27 sites removed within 15 or in culturally sensitive ar		
Total Existing Locations	565 sites	462 sites			
New Locations	Alt 1	Alt 4	Details		
West of Backpackers	0 sites	16 sites	16 walk-in sites relocated less sensitive area outside		
East of Camp 4	0 sites	35 sites	35 walk-in sites constructe		
Upper Pines	0 sites	87 sites	36-site RV loop and a walk with 49 sites and 2 group s		
Former Upper River	0 sites	32 sites	30 walk-in and 2 group si feet from river in the forr Upper River Campground		
Former Lower River	0 sites	40 sites	40 walk-in sites constructer river in the former footpr River Campground		
Yosemite Lodge	0 sites	20 sites	20 RV sites constructed we Lodge and adjacent to par		
Boys Town	0 sites	40 sites	40 drive-in sites constructe		
Concessioner Stables	0 sites	41 sites	Stables redeveloped as a c drive-in sites		
Total New Camping	0 sites	311 sites			
Total Camping in Corridor	565 sites	773 sites			

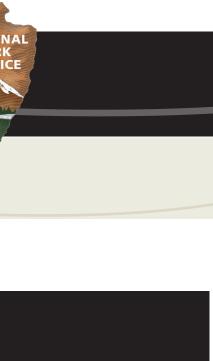
Alternative 4: Lodging Facilities					
Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 4	De			
22 units (60 beds)	0 units	Lodging facility removed to designated Wilderr			
Alt 1	Alt 4	De			
123 rooms	123 rooms	No change at the Nati			
266 tent cabins	100 tent cabins	Remove 166 units out water mark (bed and			
400 units	355 units (290 tents and 65 hard- sided units)	 * Retain 290 tents * Retain 47 hard-side * Retain 18 units at St * At Boys Town, South re-routed and re-decompground. 			
245 rooms	245 rooms	No changes at this loc			
Alt 1	Alt 4	De			
104 rooms	104 rooms	No change at the Nati			
	Alt 1 (No Action) 22 units (60 beds) Alt 1 123 rooms 266 tent cabins 400 units 245 rooms Alt 1	Alt 1 (No Action)Alt 422 units (60 beds)0 unitsAlt 1Alt 4123 rooms123 rooms266 tent cabins100 tent cabins400 units355 units (290 tents and 65 hard- sided units)245 rooms245 roomsAlt 1Alt 4			

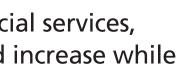
Total Lodging in Corridor 1,160 units * El Portal: Private accommodations exist but are not on NPS land; therefore, they are not listed here.

EMPLOYEE HOUSING

- Yosemite Village Area. Lost Arrow: Replace temporary housing with permanent housing for 50 beds. Retain Ahwahnee Row and Tecoya employee housing.
- Yosemite Lodge Area: Remove concessioner housing at Highland Court and the Thousands Cabins. Construct two new concessioner housing areas for 104 employees and construct 78 employee parking spaces.
- **El Portal Area.** Rancheria Flat: To replace temporary housing removed from Yosemite Valley, construct eight dormitories with 12 employees each for a total of 96 beds. Abbieville and Trailer Village Housing: Remove or relocate 36 existing private residences. Continue to provide housing land use for 40 employees and volunteers at this location.
- East of Yosemite Valley Area. **Concessioner Stables: Remove 25** employee beds.







of which 21 are er. 16 of these sites ackpackers Historic Register site the river removed the river removed l resource concern administrative site 50 feet of the river

rom Backpackers to 100-year floodplain d east of Camp 4 k-in campground sites constructed constructed 150 r footprint of th d 150 feet from nt of the Lower

est of Yosemite king area ampground with 4'

/ed and area converte

onal Historic Landmarl of the observed high anks of the river)

d cabin-with-bath units oneman House iside Drive would be eloped as a 40-site

dging facility

ional Historic Landmark