

Alternative 6

YOSEMITE'S MERCED RIVER DRAFT PLAN / EIS

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



ALTERNATIVE 6: DIVERSIFIED VISITOR EXPERIENCES AND SELECTIVE RIVERBANK RESTORATION

ALTERNATIVE 6 OVERVIEW

The guiding principles of Alternative 6 would include limited restoration within 100 feet of the river and in meadow and riparian areas, infrastructure improvements to accommodate growth in peak daily visitation in Yosemite Valley, and expansion of facilities and services to allow for diversified visitor experiences.

Actions in Alternative 6 would:

- Restore 170 acres of meadow and riparian habitat.
- Significantly increase the campsite inventory in Yosemite Valley (+59%) and throughout the entire river corridor (+46%).
- Significantly increase the lodging inventory in Yosemite Valley (+21%) and throughout the entire river corridor (+18%).
- Increase day-use parking for Yosemite Valley (+11%).
- Expand facilities and commercial services to accommodate growth in visitation.
- Reduce traffic congestion and improve traffic circulation through infrastructure improvements, such as roundabouts and underpasses.
- Accommodate approximately 21,800 visitors per day in East Yosemite Valley.
- Continue to manage overnight-use capacity through Wilderness quotas and reservation systems for lodging and camping.
- Manage day-use capacity for East Yosemite Valley through intentional traffic diversions and monitoring during peak season (May through September).

PROTECT AND ENHANCE

Alternative 6 would protect and enhance river values corridorwide through selective ecological restoration of riverbanks and riparian and meadow habitat. Some development within 100 feet of the river would be removed, and those areas would be ecologically restored.

RIVER VALUES

- Enhance hydrologic connectivity of meadows to the riparian floodplain through engineering and design treatments, such as installation of large box culverts and permeable subgrades to improve surface water flow.
- Ecologically restore Housekeeping Camp portions within the ordinary high-water mark of the river and all campsites and associated infrastructure within 100 feet of the river.
- Retain all historic bridges. The free-flowing condition of the river would be enhanced by increased channel complexity through installation of constructed log jams; strategic placement of large wood; riprap removal; and riverbank bioengineering. If subsequent monitoring of riparian condition reveals insufficient improvement over time, however, more aggressive management action could be initiated, including the possible removal of Sugar Pine Bridge.
- Establish a valley oak recruitment area of one acre in El Portal.
- Enhance recreational values by dispersing lower levels of commercial and private boating and by extending the allowable reaches for private boating along the river through Yosemite Valley. Shuttle availability would also be increased across all Yosemite Valley destinations.
- Cultural and scenic values would be protected and enhanced as described under "Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6." Alternative 6 would also rehabilitate Residence 1 (Superintendent's House) in its current location and restore informal trails and black oak woodlands near Cook's Meadow.



Stoneman Bridge



Residence 1



Housekeeping Camp

USER CAPACITY, LAND USE, AND FACILITIES

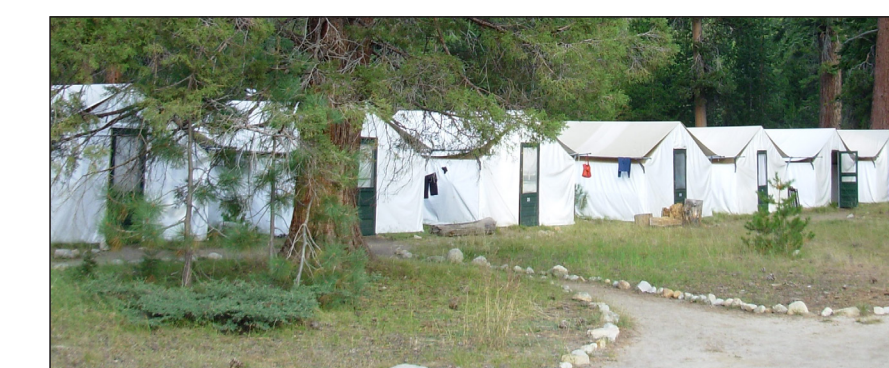
Alternative 6 would focus on providing diverse visitor experiences and allow for an increase in peak visitor-use levels. It would accommodate the largest number of campsites and provide for expanded facilities and services. Proper infrastructure design and site delineation in high-use areas would be incorporated to ensure long-term protection of river values.

CAMPING

- The campsite inventory in Yosemite Valley would increase (+59%), and it would increase throughout the entire river corridor (+46%).
- All campsites within 100 feet of the river in Wawona and Yosemite Valley would be removed.
- Campsite losses would be offset with new campsites adjacent to Upper Pines Campground; east of Camp 4; west of the Backpackers Campground; near Yosemite Lodge; in the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds area; and in the West Valley.
- The number of campsites in Yosemite Valley would increase to 739—a net gain of 273 sites—and the number of campsites available throughout the corridor would be 825.

LODGING

- In-park lodging availability would be increased (+21%) as compared to existing conditions—from 1,160 units to 1,374 units.
- Management actions would focus on removing lodging from the ordinary high-water mark at Housekeeping Camp and on maintaining or increasing lodging capacities at other locations.
- Merced Lake High Sierra Camp would maintain existing capacity.
- Tent cabins in the Boys Town area of Curry Village would be replaced with 98 hard-sided units available on a year-round basis.
- Yosemite Lodge would be re-developed outside of the 100-year floodplain with three-story lodging structures providing 440 units.



Merced Lake High Sierra Camp

Alternative 6: Camping Facilities

Existing Locations	Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 6	Details
Backpackers	25 sites	10 sites	15 walk-in sites within 100 feet of river relocated to less sensitive area outside the 100-year floodplain
Camp 4	35 sites	35 sites	No change to the National Historic Register site
Lower Pines	76 sites	71 sites	5 sites within 150 feet of the river removed
North Pines	86 sites	72 sites	14 sites within 150 feet of the river removed
Upper Pines	240 sites	238 sites	2 sites removed for cultural resource concerns
Yellow Pine Administrative	4 sites	4 sites	No changes to these group administrative sites
Wawona	99 sites	86 sites	13 sites removed within 100 feet of the river or in culturally sensitive areas
Total Existing Locations	565 sites	516 sites	
New Locations	Alt 1	Alt 6	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
Upper Pines	0 sites	87 sites	36-site RV loop and a walk-in campground with 49 sites and 2 group sites constructed
Former Upper River	0 sites	32 sites	30 walk-in and 2 group sites constructed 150 feet from river in the former footprint of the Upper River Campground
Former Lower River	0 sites	40 sites	40 walk-in sites constructed 150 feet from river in the former footprint of the Lower River Campground
Yosemite Lodge	0 sites	20 sites	20 RV sites constructed west of Yosemite Lodge and adjacent to parking area
Eagle Creek	0 sites	79 sites	79 car and RV sites added east of El Capitan Picnic Area
Total New Camping	0 sites	309 sites	
Total Camping in Corridor	565 sites	825 sites	

Alternative 6: Lodging Facilities

Wilderness	Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 6	Details
Merced Lake High Sierra Camp	22 units (60 beds)	22 units (60 beds)	No change to this Wilderness lodging facility
Yosemite Valley	Alt 1	Alt 6	Details
Ahwahnee Hotel	123 rooms	123 rooms	No change at the National Historic Landmark
Housekeeping Camp	266 tent cabins	232 tent cabins	Remove 34 units out of the observed high-water mark (bed and banks of the river)
Curry Village	400 units	453 units (290 tents and 163 hard-sided units)	* Retain 290 tents * Retain 47 hard-sided cabin-with-bath units * Retain 18 units at Stoneman House * Construct 98 hard-sided units in Boys Town
Yosemite Lodge	245 rooms	440 rooms	Construct a new three-story lodging structure with 440 units located outside the 100-year floodplain
Wawona	Alt 1	Alt 6	Details
Wawona Hotel	104 rooms	104 rooms	No change at the National Historic Landmark
Total Lodging in Corridor	1,160 units	1,374 units	

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

DAY-USE CAPACITY AND VISITOR ACCESS

- Day-use parking capacity in Yosemite Valley would be expanded (+11%) to meet current peak-use demand and accommodate some future growth. If day-use parking demand continues to increase in the future, additional proactive management actions would be implemented.
- The most significant changes to parking and circulation would be in the vicinity of Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area, Yosemite Lodge, the West Valley, and in El Portal.
- The Yosemite Village Day-Use Parking Area would be re-designed with a total of 850 parking spaces, located at least 150 feet from the river.
- A new Yosemite Lodge Day-use Parking Area with 300 parking spaces would be constructed west of the lodge.
- Overflow parking during peak visitation would be provided in West Yosemite Valley (300 parking spaces) and in El Portal at Abbieville (200 parking spaces).
- Total parking for East Yosemite Valley (including day, overnight, and administrative) would be approximately 5,900 spaces.
- Regional transit options would be expanded and optimized on all current transit corridors. New services into Yosemite Valley would provide alternative transportation options to visitors (58 round-trip runs per day in total).
- The NPS shuttle system would be expanded to serve West Valley locations, including Bridalveil Fall. Shuttle frequency would be increased on all shuttle routes within Yosemite Valley.
- Private boating opportunities would be allowed in some sections of Wilderness, Yosemite Valley, El Portal, and Wawona. Commercial boating would be available in Yosemite Valley.



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, provide 44 beds through three new dormitories with 12 employees each, and eight dwelling units for additional employees. Abbieville and Trailer Village Housing: Develop high-density housing units for 258 employees to replace temporary housing removed from Yosemite Valley.
- **East of Yosemite Valley Area.** Concessioner Stables: Retain 25 employee beds.