

# Common to Alternatives 2-6

## YOSEMITE'S MERCED RIVER DRAFT PLAN / EIS

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



### ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR ALTERNATIVES 2-6

#### ALTERNATIVES 2-6 OVERVIEW

Many of the actions described in the range of alternatives for the Merced River Plan are considered "Common to All" and would be implemented regardless of which alternative is selected.

They are considered appropriate management responses to protect river values or address significant issues or concerns in the river corridor.

These actions common to all do not constitute an independent alternative, but are an integral part of Alternatives 2-6.

Each alternative is made up of both the actions common to alternatives 2-6 as well as the actions that vary across the alternatives. These common actions are the heart of the Merced River Plan; they address how river values would be protected, regardless of how the visitor experience and related services and facilities might vary across the range of alternatives.

Actions that vary are reflective of varying degrees of ecological restoration, levels of user capacities and visitation, and of differing types of visitor experiences.

#### PROTECT AND ENHANCE RIVER VALUES

The total amount of restoration that is common to all action alternatives is 164 acres. Multiple actions would be taken across all alternatives to ecologically restore, protect and enhance hydrologic and ecological processes, free-flowing condition, water quality, cultural resources, and meadows and riparian habitat. Many actions to protect and enhance the river's geologic, hydrologic, and biological values are common to Alternatives 2-6.

##### FREE FLOW / GEOLOGIC AND HYDROLOGIC

- Place large wood into riverbanks and river channels, and construct log jams between Clark's and Sentinel bridges to enhance riparian habitat and channel complexity.
- Remove the Happy Isles bridge footings and outdated infrastructure at the Pohono gauging station.
- Remove at least 5, 700 linear feet of riprap and revetment.

##### WATER QUALITY

- Establish a riparian buffer to prevent erosion and trap sediment.
- Relocate RV dump stations away from river, and connect Wawona Campground to water-treatment system.
- Ensure parking area re-development is located away from the river and includes BMPs for water quality protection.
- Require minimum flows to protect water quality and aquatic habitat on the South Fork.

##### RIPARIAN / FLOODPLAIN HABITAT

- A 150-foot riparian buffer, measured from the ordinary high-water mark, would be protected and enhanced corridorwide. New development would be prohibited within this riparian buffer.
- Remove campsites and associated development from within 100 feet of the bed and banks of the river.
- Eroded riverbanks would be repaired through revegetation and restoration, and vulnerable riverbanks and riparian vegetation would be protected from trampling.
- Provide designated river access to picnic areas with paths that encourage visitors to walk in resilient areas. Direct river access to resilient sandy beaches and sandbars.
- Ecologically restore Greenemeyer sand pit in El Portal.
- Enhance valley oaks in Old El Portal by creating an oak recruitment area of at least 1 acre.
- Remove bulk petroleum industrial fueling facility from the floodplain in El Portal.
- Ecologically restore portions of the Wawona campground.

##### MEADOW RESTORATION

- Improve meadow hydrology by removing artificial fill, filling ditches, constructing culverts, and removing remnants of abandoned underground utilities to enhance water flows into meadows.
- Remove six miles of informal trails to reduce meadow fragmentation, and restore disturbed areas to natural conditions.
- Eliminate roadside parking that impacts sensitive meadow and riparian habitat; remove associated fill material; restore areas and protect meadows from informal trailing.

##### ETHNOGRAPHIC / ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Cultural resources, such as archeological sites, would be protected from irretrievable loss.
- Document the Yosemite Valley Traditional Cultural Property consisting of traditional-use areas, spiritual places, and historic villages.
- Remove conifers from meadows and black oak communities, and restore traditionally-used plant populations.



Devil's Elbow Before: Pre-restoration in 1993.



Devil's Elbow After: Possible with restoration -- in 1995.

- Remove informal trails, non-essential roads, and infrastructure that impact archeological sites.

- Remove graffiti, and install fencing around rock art and sensitive features to discourage inappropriate visitor use.

- Increase education efforts to minimize visitor-use impacts to archeological resources.

- Develop site management plans for archeological sites in locations with complex uses and impacts like Yosemite Village.

##### SCENIC VALUES

- Reduce visual intrusions as part of ecological restoration.

- Ensure new development is protective of scenic resources.

- Implement management treatment—including removal of vegetation—to protect views from vista points in corridor.

##### HISTORIC RESOURCES

- Follow historic structures report recommendations to return structures at the Ahwahnee, Residence 1, and Wawona Hotel to "good" condition.
- Develop LeConte Memorial Lodge historic structures report.
- Continue routine preservation maintenance / rehabilitation.

##### RECREATIONAL VALUES

- Private boating (rafts, kayaks, paddle boards, inner tubes, and inflatable mattresses) would continue to be allowed in segments where the activity currently exists. Some new river stretches in Wilderness would be opened for boating.
- An interpretive nature walk through the Lower River area emphasizing river-related processes would be developed.
- Opportunities for picnicking would be improved at the Cathedral, Sentinel, and Swinging Bridge picnic areas.
- Improve the sense of arrival for park visitors as they approach the Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area.
- Reduce congestion and improve visitor experience at Bridalveil Fall by re-designing trails, boardwalks, the viewing platform at the base of the fall, and by improving accessibility and restroom facilities.

#### USER CAPACITY, LAND USE, AND FACILITIES

##### OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

New walk-in campgrounds would be provided under Alternatives 2-6. Some alternatives remove and replace campsites depending on the goals for restoration and visitor experience. Amount of overnight lodging varies across the alternatives, but capacities for the National Historic Landmark hotels are common to Alternatives 2-6.



Wawona Hotel

- New walk-in campgrounds would be provided west of Backpackers Campground (16 sites) and east of Camp 4 (35 sites).
- Lodging at The Ahwahnee and the Wawona Hotel would remain at current levels under all alternatives (123 units at The Ahwahnee and 104 units at Wawona Hotel).
- Housekeeping Camp lodging within ordinary high-water mark would be removed.

##### FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The kind and amounts of facilities and services vary substantially across alternatives, providing a range of visitor experiences, but an overall reduction in commercial services is proposed in Alternatives 2-6. Facilities and services that did not meet the criteria of a rigorous analysis (discussed in Chapter 7) are proposed to be removed in Alternatives 2-6. These include:



Commercial horseback day rides in Yosemite Valley

- Curry Village and Yosemite Lodge temporary employee housing
- The Ahwahnee Swimming Pool and Tennis Court
- Yosemite Village Concessioner Garage and Concessioner General Office
- Yosemite Lodge Swimming Pool, Snack Stand, Bike Rental Stand, and Post Office
- Yosemite Art Activity Center
- Happy Isles Snack Stand
- Curry Village Ice Rink, Bike Rental Stand, and Raft Rental Stand
- Commercial Horseback Day Rides in Yosemite Valley
- Odger's Bulk Petroleum Storage in El Portal

##### TRANSPORTATION

Multiple actions would be implemented related to parking, traffic management, and public transit across all alternatives such as expanding public transit options while ensuring continued visitor access by personal vehicle.



Yosemite National Park hybrid shuttle bus

- The Yosemite Village Day-Use Parking Area (Camp 6) will be relocated at least 150 feet from the river, though the configuration and capacity varies by alternative.
- Additional day-use parking is constructed west of the Yosemite Lodge, though the capacity varies by alternative.
- Traffic congestion caused by pedestrian crossings interfering with vehicle traffic is mitigated in all alternatives, though the type of infrastructure changes required to achieve this goal varies depending on the alternative's level of visitation.
- Under Alternatives 2-6, an East Yosemite Valley day-use parking permit system could be instituted if conditions reach a point where day-use demand frequently exceeds available day parking, and formal traffic diversions are needed for 14 or more days during the peak season for two consecutive years.

##### EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Under Alternatives 2-6, temporary, substandard, and aging employee housing is removed. Any replacement housing proposed will be code compliant.

- Employee housing would be removed at Boys Town, Huff House, Lost Arrow, and Yosemite Lodge.
- Replacement housing would be constructed at Huff House (16 buildings for 164 beds) and in Old El Portal (infill duplexes to accommodate up to 12 employees). Some level of infill housing is proposed at Rancheria Flat, but the number varies depending on the alternative.

#### Components that Equate to an Individual Alternative

