



YI Environmental Education Campus

Project background

Yosemite Institute (YI), a Yosemite National Park non-profit partner, operates an environmental education campus at Crane Flat under a cooperative agreement with the park. This campus serves both the park and Yosemite Institute by fulfilling their shared mission to promote visitor understanding, stewardship, and appreciation of diverse park environments.



Existing Environmental Education Campus at Crane Flat

The campus at Crane Flat has been an educational facility since 1971. Each year the program serves approximately 13,000 ethnically and socio-economically diverse students between the ages of 7 and 18, providing educational adventures and inspiring personal connections to the natural world. The Crane Flat campus is comprised of older buildings and structures that have been assembled over time and were not originally designed for educational purposes.

A plan to create a better, more efficient, accessible, and environmentally-friendly campus was initiated in 2002. Public scoping was completed in November 2002, and comments indicated that more detailed studies were needed to address concerns regarding sensitive resources in the area. The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was put on hold while further data was collected, and the range of alternatives was expanded. In 2006, Henness Ridge (near Chinquapin) was chosen as an additional alternative site for environmental analysis in the EIS.

What is the purpose of this project?

The goals of this project are to:

- Provide an environmental education campus and program that best serves the combined missions of Yosemite National Park and Yosemite Institute
- Provide a safe and universally accessible campus that meets modern health and safety standards, provides an educational environment that reduces reliance upon commercial lodging (frees up funds for additional scholarships to underserved children).
- Establish an ecologically-sensitive campus appropriate to a National Park, that meets or exceeds national LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards for sustainable design
- Provide an immersive educational experience with opportunities for research and study of the natural world, that complements California state educational standards
- Promote the development of future stewards of the environment and our National Parks

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS): Alternatives Development and Architectural Design Concepts

The project team enlisted a new team of design architects who are nationally recognized for their sustainable “green” designs to develop campus site design concepts. Staff and subject-matter experts (including biologists, fire managers, facilities management, and cultural resource experts) convened last fall to review preliminary design concepts. These schematic designs are intended to meet or exceed national LEED standards for sustainability, and will be consistent with park architectural design standards. Design concepts are being tailored to each site, so that they work with the local topography, avoid sensitive resources, and meet educational and safety goals and standards.

The project team is also working closely with environmental consultants on developing and analyzing these alternative concepts within the DEIS. Alternatives include 1) a No-Action Alternative; 2) Redevelop at the existing site at Crane Flat; or 3) Develop a new campus at Henness Ridge (near Chinquapin), with restoration of Crane Flat to natural conditions.

What are the next steps?

Draft alternatives and schematic designs are available for review and input at our monthly public open houses, and on the NPS Planning webpage. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is scheduled for publication this Spring (2009). A formal public review period will commence with announcement in the Federal Register, (to be combined with a press release indicating availability of the DEIS). Public comments on the DEIS will be analyzed for incorporation into a Final EIS, anticipated for publication in Fall 2009.

Public Participation

Public participation is essential for the success of this and all other park projects.

Here are some ways to stay involved in the Environmental Education Campus Project:

- **Attend a National Park Service public open house** in Yosemite Valley to meet with project specialists and take a look at the latest available information. Visit the park’s website at (listed below) for upcoming dates
- **Attend public site tours of the existing Crane Flat campus and the proposed Henness Ridge site during the public comment period** (May, June 2009) Sign up to attend, on-line or at the open house, specific times and dates to be announced
- **Submit your comments during the formal public comment period** for the YI Environmental Education Campus Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- **Add your name to the park’s planning mailing list** (to address/fax/email below) and receive the *Planning Update* newsletter as well as other planning-related notices. You can also submit your email address to receive Yosemite’s periodic electronic newsletter.
- Additionally, you can submit comments with your thoughts about this topic or any other project in the park by any of the following means:

Mail: Superintendent
Attn: YI Environmental Education Campus
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389
Phone: 209/379-1365; **Fax:** 209/379-1294
E-mail: Yose_Planning@nps.gov

- **Visit online:** www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/eecampus.htm to view draft center design concepts or www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/planning.htm to find out about more about plans and projects in Yosemite National Park . To learn more about Yosemite Institute programs, visit www.yni.org/yi

