

Yosemite National Park

Merced Wild & Scenic River

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Alternative Five The Preferred Alternative



What is a “preferred alternative?”

A preferred alternative is the alternative the NPS believes would best fulfill its statutory mission and responsibilities, based on the NEPA analysis and a separate value analysis. The preferred alternative is identified at the time of the draft environmental impact statement, and selected upon adopted of the final environmental impact statement.

The Preferred Alternative for the Merced River Plan

The Merced River Plan’s Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5) responds to a range of public concerns by balancing the National Park Service’s mission to protect resources and provide access with public desires to reduce development and make visitor use more sustainable. The Preferred Alternative identifies a set of actions that would work together to protect river values while accommodating visitation similar to existing conditions and providing improved opportunities for day visitors.

Yosemite Valley in the Preferred Alternative

Under the Preferred Alternative, 203 acres of habitat would be restored. Significant restoration would take place in previously disturbed sites. Additional restoration actions would occur throughout the river corridor to ensure river values remain fully protected and enhanced.

The Preferred Alternative would address traffic congestion and circulation issues by improving infrastructure to better protect resources and accommodate visitor use levels. One underpass and a vehicle roundabout would be added to decrease traffic congestion in Yosemite Valley. The Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area (Camp 6) would be moved away from the river and Northside Drive rerouted to improve vehicle and pedestrian circulation. The parking area would be formalized, with the entrances clearly marked, parking spaces delineated, and bathrooms and picnic areas provided. Park shuttles would operate at five minute intervals, comfortably accommodating use levels and minimizing wait time.

A total of 174 new campsites would be added in Yosemite Valley. New campsites would be constructed at Upper Pines Campground, the former Upper Rivers Campground, Eagle Creek, west of Backpackers

Yosemite Valley in the Preferred Alternative (cont.)

Campground, and Camp 4. At Curry Village, the majority of tent cabins would remain while those located in the Boys Town area would be replaced with hard sided cabins.

Substandard and temporary employee housing would be replaced with permanent and improved housing at Yosemite Lodge and near Yosemite Village, at Lost Arrow behind the visitor center, and near Huff House in Curry Village.

Wawona

The Preferred Alternative would provide for similar kinds and amounts of use that currently occur in Wawona. The Wawona Hotel National Historic Landmark would remain at its current capacity of 104 rooms. The existing public restrooms next to the Wawona Store would be replaced with larger restrooms to accommodate current visitor-use levels. An increase in the number of picnic tables would accommodate more picnicking.

The Wawona campground would retain 84 campsites. Thirteen campsites would be removed from within 100 feet of the river and other culturally sensitive areas. The two stock camp sites would be relocated to protect cultural resources.

Wilderness

Under the Preferred Alternative, river-related systems would continue to be sustained through natural ecological processes, and recreational opportunities in Wilderness would be primitive and unconfined. Restoration actions to correct past effects from human and pack stock use would occur to ensure the river and its resources remain fully protected. The overnight quota for backpacker camping in wild segments would remain at present levels of 450 persons per night.

The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp would continue to offer the opportunity for visitors to connect with the river in a remote setting and would retain its historic character; however, the capacity would be reduced from 60 to 42 guests per night, which would bring Merced Lake High Sierra Camp's capacity in line with other High Sierra Camps such as Vogelsang. Composting toilets would replace flush toilets to reduce demand for water use and waste disposal.

Find Out More

If you're interested in learning more about the Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, you can download the entire document at www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp-deis.htm. For those that have the time, reading the entire document will convey the fullest understanding of the plan. For those interested in an overview of the Merced River Plan, park staff suggest you begin with:

- Summary Guide for the Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan/DEIS
 - These sections of Chapter 8: Alternatives:
 - o Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6
 - o Overview section of Alternatives 2-6 (includes map series for each alternative)
 - o Full narrative for Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)
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Tell Us What You Think

Comment on this draft environmental impact statement by visiting the Merced River Plan Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp_deis. Electronic comment submittal through PEPC saves resources and allows for direct entry to the NPS comment analysis system. Comments can also be submitted by email to yose_planning@nps.gov or by U.S. mail at the following address:

Superintendent
Yosemite National Park
Attn: Merced River Plan
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389
