

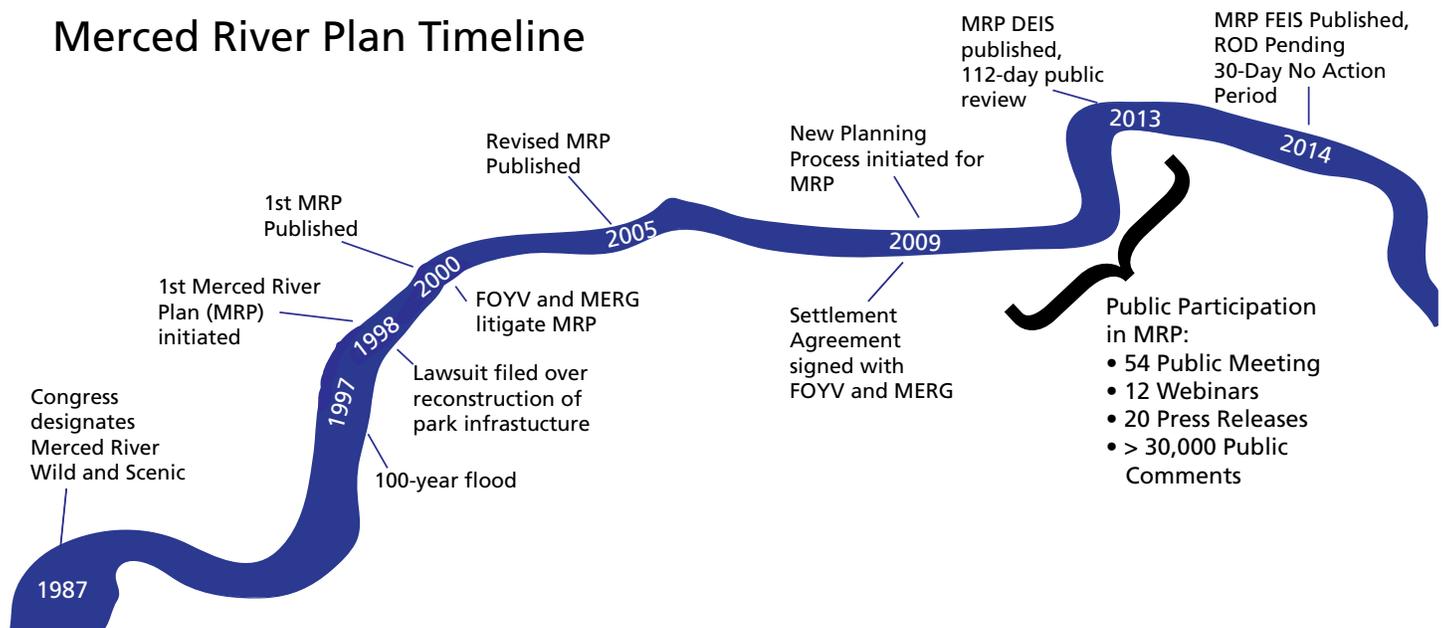
Yosemite National Park

Merced Wild & Scenic River

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Merced River Plan Timeline



The Merced River Plan (Plan) will improve the health and resiliency of the park and its ecosystems, while also enhancing the visitor experience through improved transportation and parking, recreational opportunities, and defined user capacity. The Plan accommodates visitation at a level similar to recent years, approximately 20,100 people per day (18,710 people at one time) in East Yosemite Valley. Visitors to Yosemite Valley will see marked improvements in vehicle circulation, parking availability, and traffic flow. Coupled with enhancements to meadows, improvements to river access, and extensive riverbank restoration, the visitor experience will be significantly improved.

Resource Protection

The Merced River Plan will protect water quality and enhance habitat for wildlife and plants by:

- Restoring 189 acres of meadow and riparian habitat, mostly within 100 feet of the river
- Removing 6,048 linear feet of riprap
- Relocating campsites within a 100 foot riparian buffer to more resilient areas
- Removing abandoned infrastructure within the bed and banks of the river and throughout the corridor
- Providing visitors river access via resilient sandy beaches and sandbars
- Restoring and protecting meadows, riverbanks, and riparian areas
- Planting native vegetation to stabilize riverbanks and improve scenic views along the river

Protection and enhancement of archeological sites and historic districts will provide future generations the opportunity to connect to their heritage. The plan will:

- Retain the historic Sugar Pine Bridge; future studies will add to the understanding of the bridge's hydrologic impacts and identify mitigation measures
- Protect archeological sites by guiding visitor use away from sensitive features
- Relocate or remove campsites impacting archeological sites
- Retain and preserve the Ahwahnee Hotel, Wawona Hotel, Wawona Covered Bridge, LeConte Memorial Lodge, Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, and other historically significant properties

Transportation

The Plan will make significant changes to the traffic circulation pattern to meet ecological restoration goals and reduce traffic congestion through infrastructure improvements. It will:

- Increase day-use parking for Yosemite Valley by 8%
- Locate new parking areas southwest of Yosemite Lodge and in El Portal to improve circulation and reduce congestion
- Reroute Northside Drive to the south of the Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area (within the footprint of current parking area) to improve traffic flow and visitor safety by reducing vehicle/pedestrian conflicts
- Provide visitors with additional transportation choices by proposing new regional transit service and additional shuttles in Yosemite Valley
- Incorporate best management practices at new and redesigned parking areas to protect water quality
- Accommodate 300 vehicles at the El Portal Remote Parking Area with access to Yosemite Valley by shuttle service
- Reconfigure the Yosemite Valley Day-use Parking Area to accommodate 750 vehicles and remove the footprint from the riparian buffer

Recreation

The Plan will preserve traditional recreational opportunities enjoyed by visitors and expand camping, boating, and picnicking by:

- Expanding camping opportunities by 37% in East Yosemite Valley, with new walk-in, drive-in, and group camping sites provided at several locations
- Moving Curry Village ice skating rink to its original 1929 location outside of the river corridor at the south end of the Curry Overnight Parking Area
- Moving bike and raft rental facilities to locations outside of the river corridor
- Maintain private boat access and open new reaches of the river where appropriate
- Improving and expanding picnicking and day-use opportunities at Yosemite Village, Church Bowl, and Happy Isles
- Maintain and expand horseback day-rides at the Wawona stables

User Capacity

Transportation and infrastructure improvements will protect resources and enhance the visitor experience and reduce crowding by:

- Maintaining visitor-use levels at levels similar to those seen in recent years—approximately 20,100 people per day over a 24-hour period (18,710 people at one time) in East Yosemite Valley
- Continuing to manage overnight user capacity through wilderness permits and reservation systems for lodging and camping.
- Managing user capacity for East Yosemite Valley by rerouting traffic at the El Capitan Traffic Diversion prior to visitation reaching established limits

Looking Forward

The Final Merced River Plan/EIS has been shaped by coordination and consultation with members of the public, traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups, agency partners and other stakeholders. This collaboration has produced a plan that will improve the visitor experience and better protect the Merced River's unique values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.