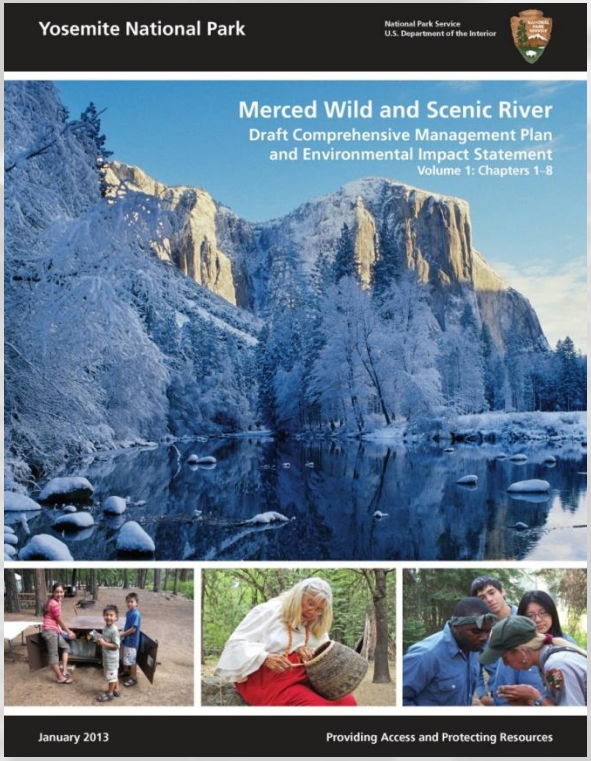
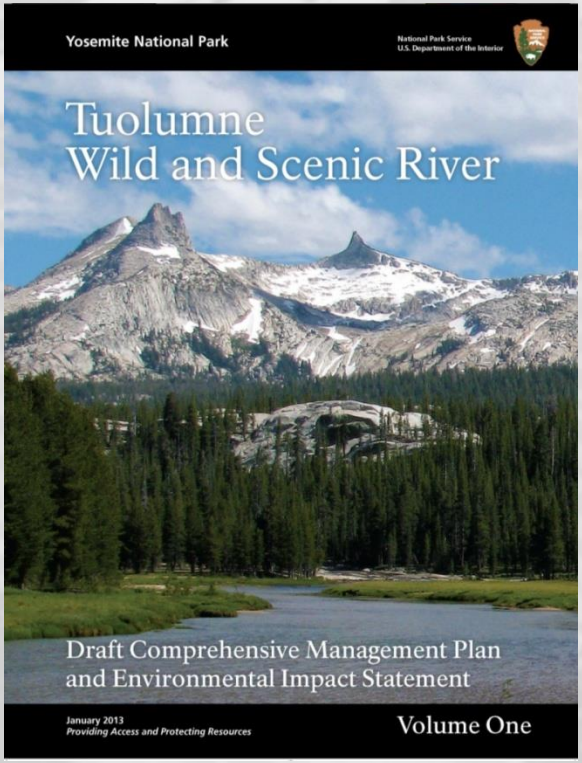
MERCED AND TUOLUMNE RIVERS

Draft Comprehensive River Management Plans and Environmental Impact Statements





El Portal Public Meeting
March 6, 2013

Toiyabe National Forest
Stanislaus National Forest
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK
Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River
Merced Wild and Scenic River
Sonora
Tuolumne
Groveland
Lake Don Pedro
Lake McClure
Swain Reservoir
Mariposa
Hetch Hetchy Reservoir
TUOLUMNE MEADOWS
Lee Vining
Mono Lake
Inyo National Forest
YOSEMITE VALLEY
El Portal
WAWONA
Fish Camp
Oakhurst
Sierra National Forest
Madera
North
108
49
120
132
140
41
395

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968

- Protects free-flowing condition
- Protects water quality
- Protects and enhances the river's *Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)*– the qualities that make the river worthy of special protection
- Requires management plans to be completed to provide long-term guidance

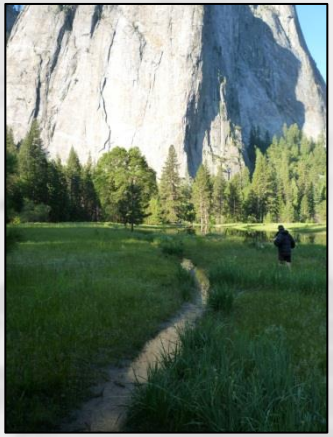
"Each [river] will be managed to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated, while providing for public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values."

WSRA Guidelines, 1982

Actions to Protect and Enhance River Values

Merced Baseline Condition Assessment

- Draft Baseline Conditions Report updated July 2012 – see Chapter 5
- Localized impacts to El Capitan Meadow
- Riparian areas between Clark's and Sentinel Bridges
- Hydrologic impacts of Sugarpine Bridge
- Informal trails through valley meadows
- Condition of National Historic Landmarks

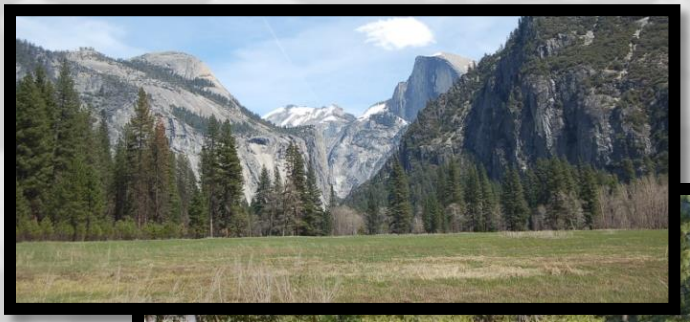


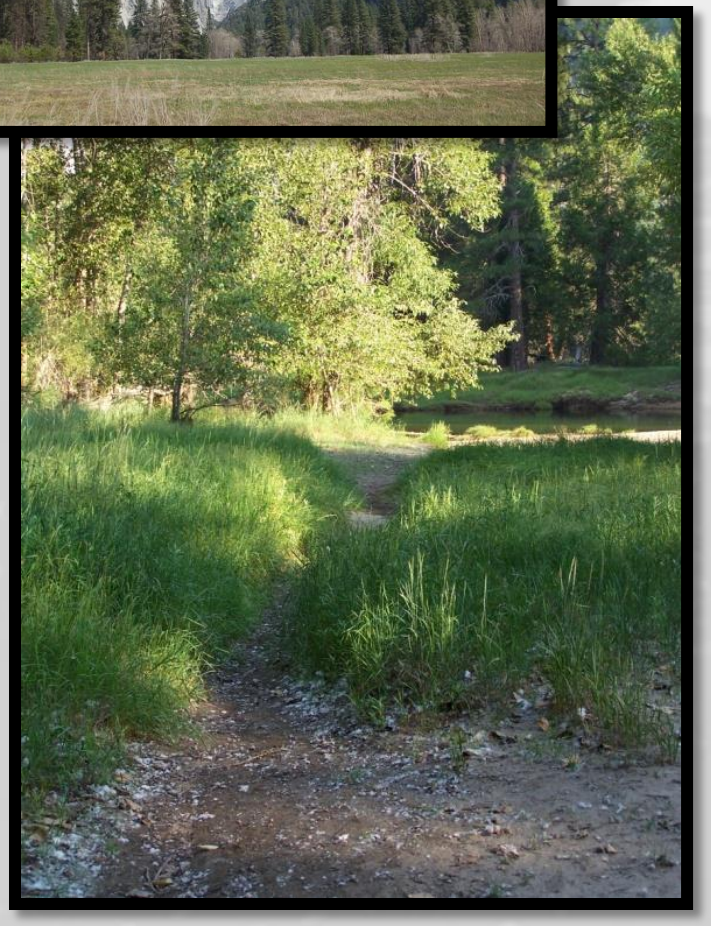
Flooded informal trail in El Capitan Meadow

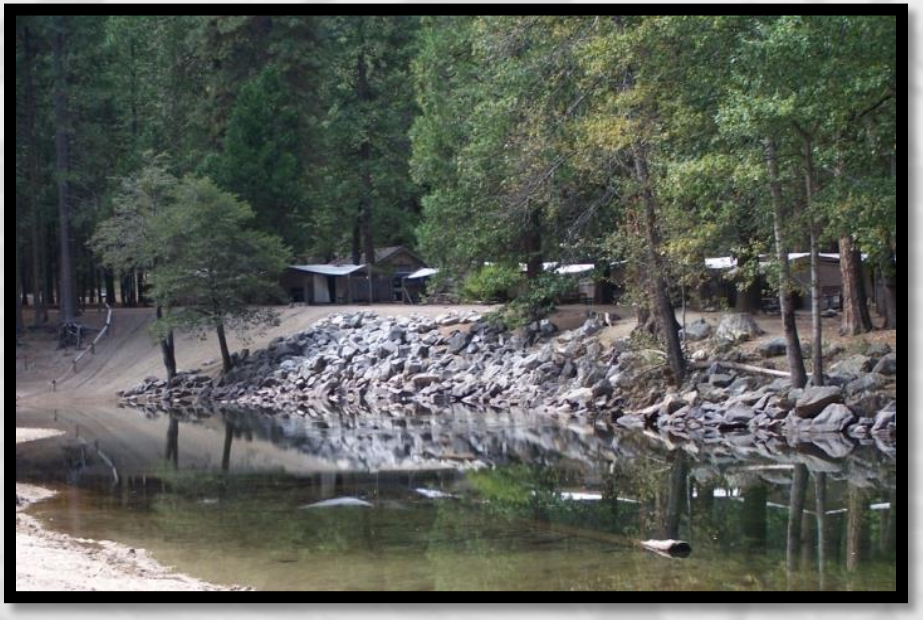
Localized riparian impacts

Hydrologic impacts of Sugar Pine Bridge

Restore Yosemite Valley Meadows

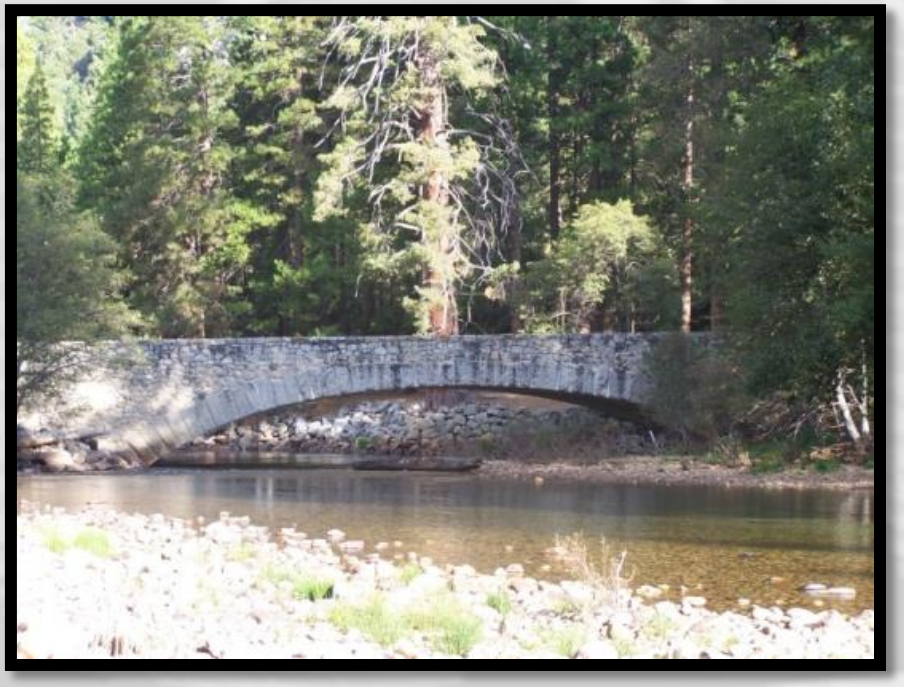






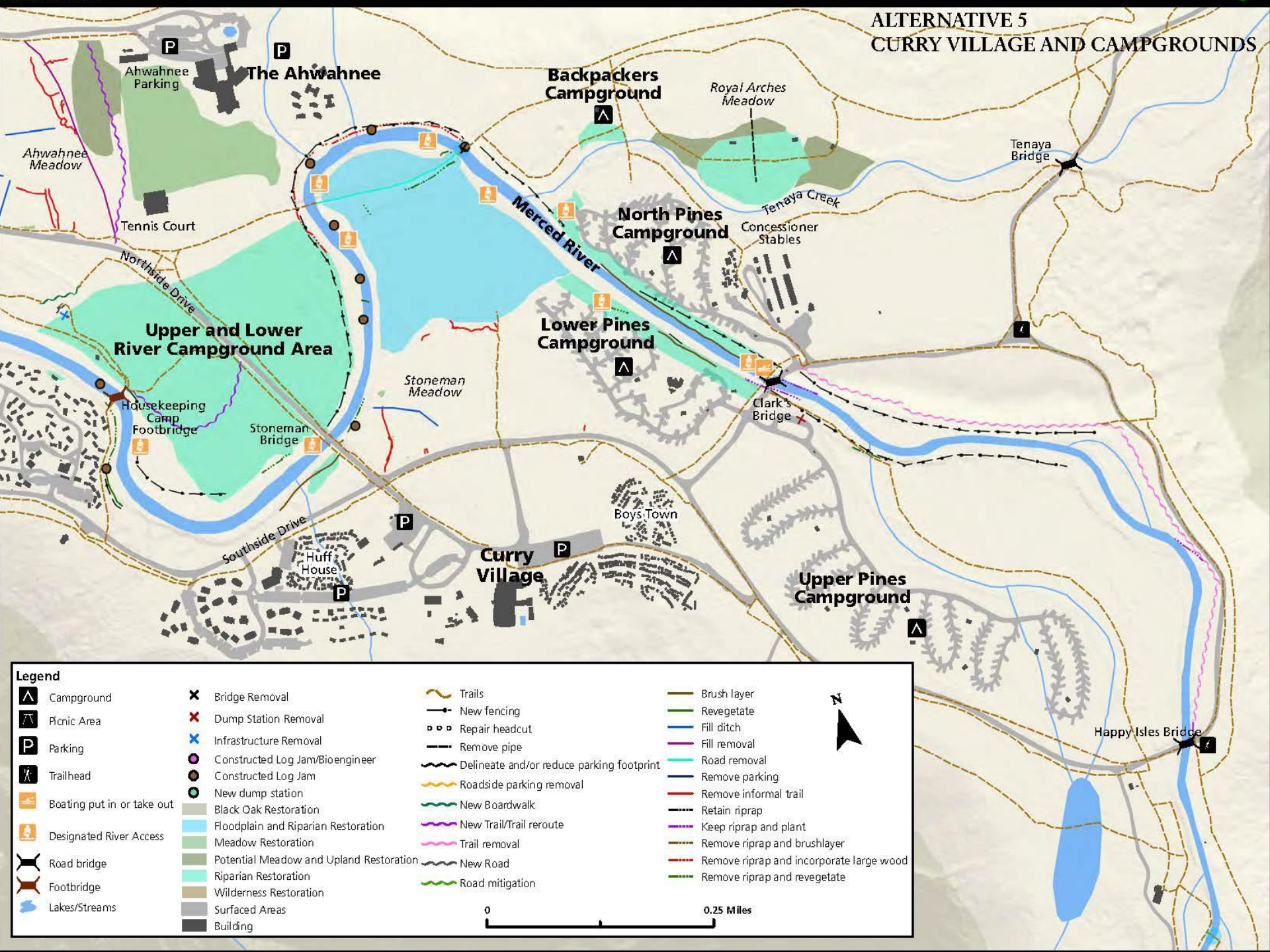
Remove Riverbank Riprap

Historic Preservation



Correct Impacts to Free-Flow

ALTERNATIVE 5
CURRY VILLAGE AND CAMPGROUNDS

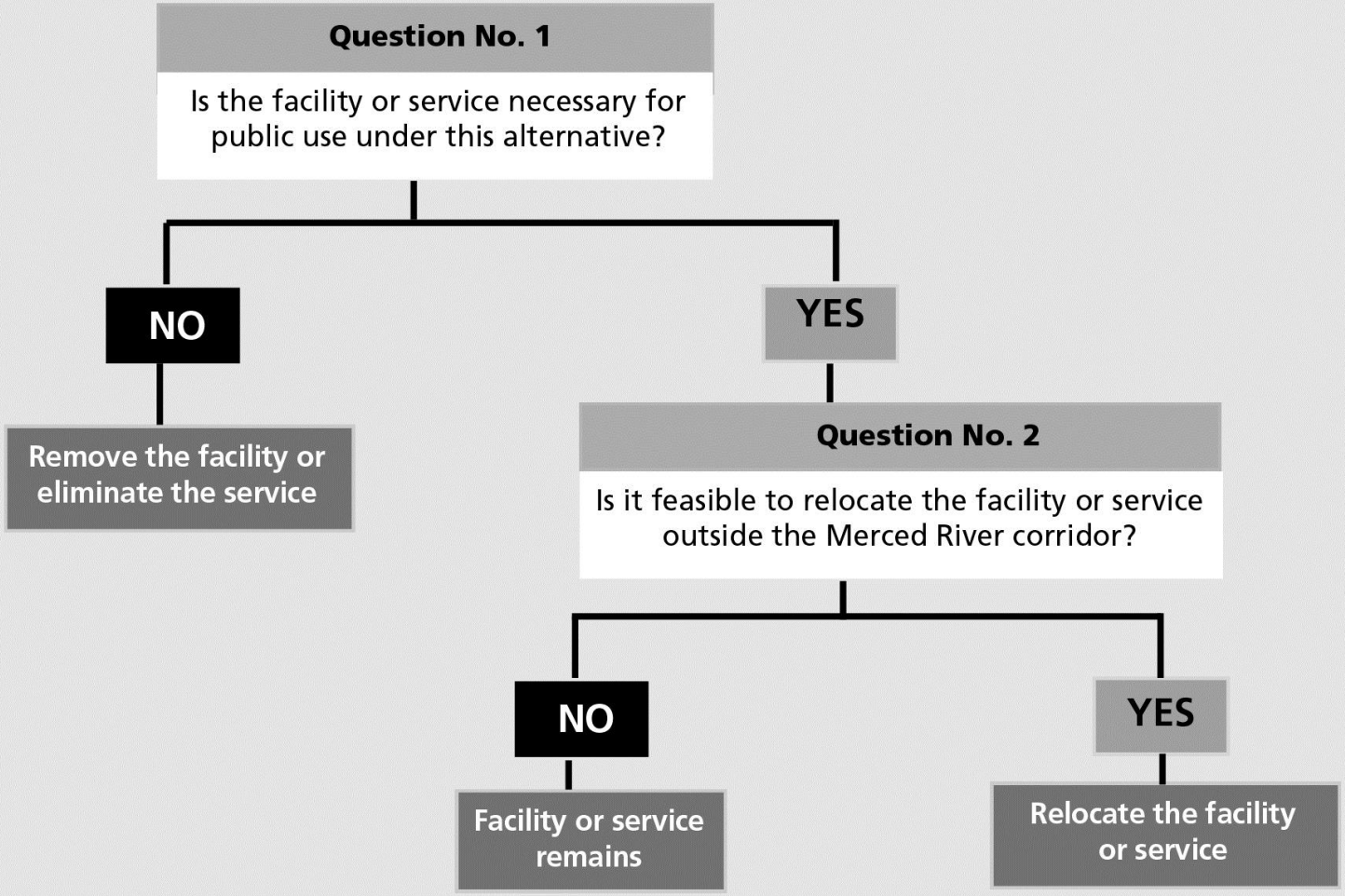


Merced River Plan Facilities Analysis

Facilities Removed – Under All Alternatives

- 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 Stand, and Post Office
- Yosemite Art Activity Center
- Happy Isles Snack Stand
- Curry Village Ice Rink, Bike Stand, and Raft Stand
- Commercial Horseback Day Rides in Yosemite Valley
- Odgers Bulk Petroleum Storage in El Portal
- Old Wastewater Treatment Plant in El Portal

WSRA Requirements for Facilities Analysis

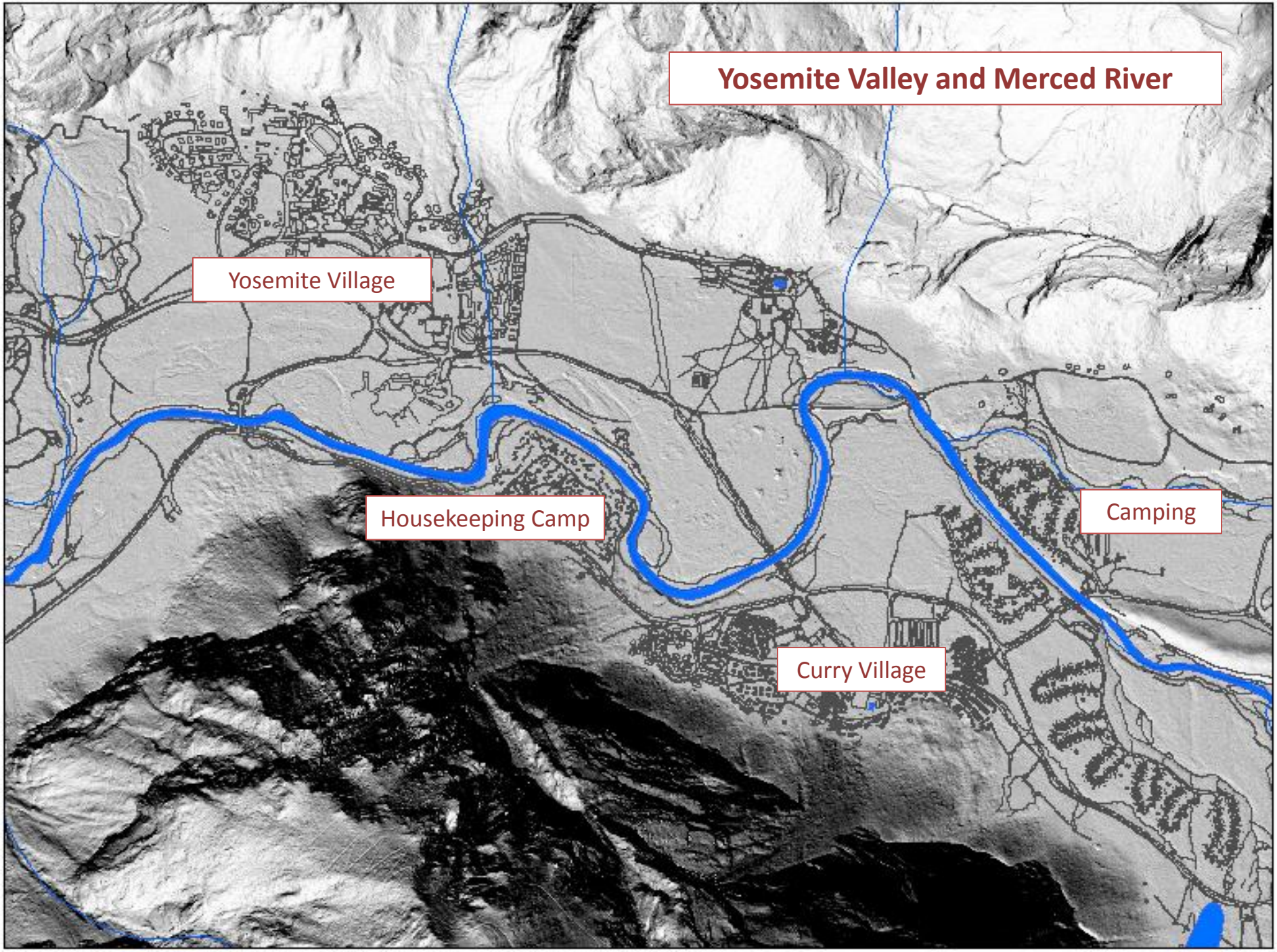


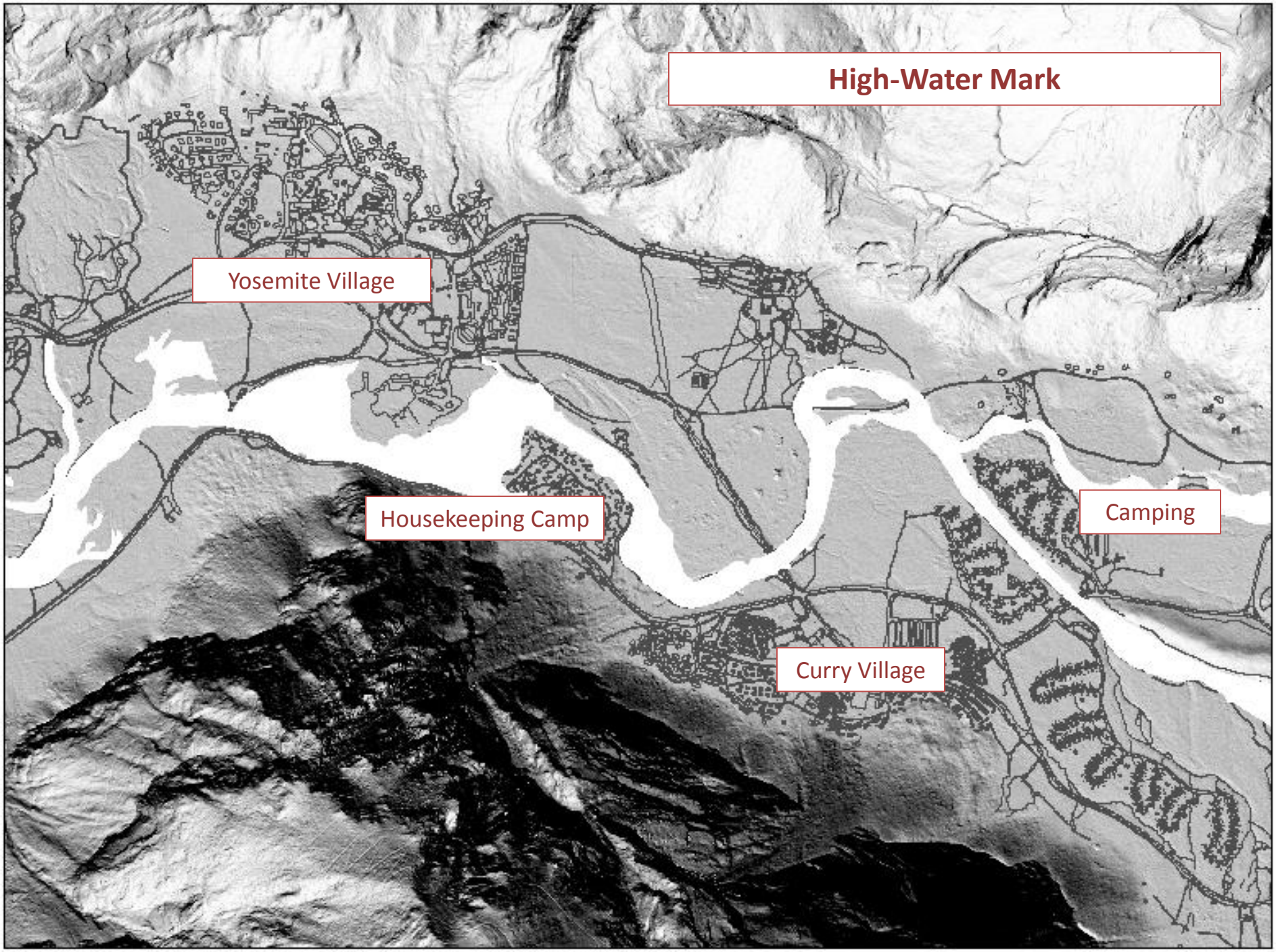
Merced River Plan Facilities Analysis

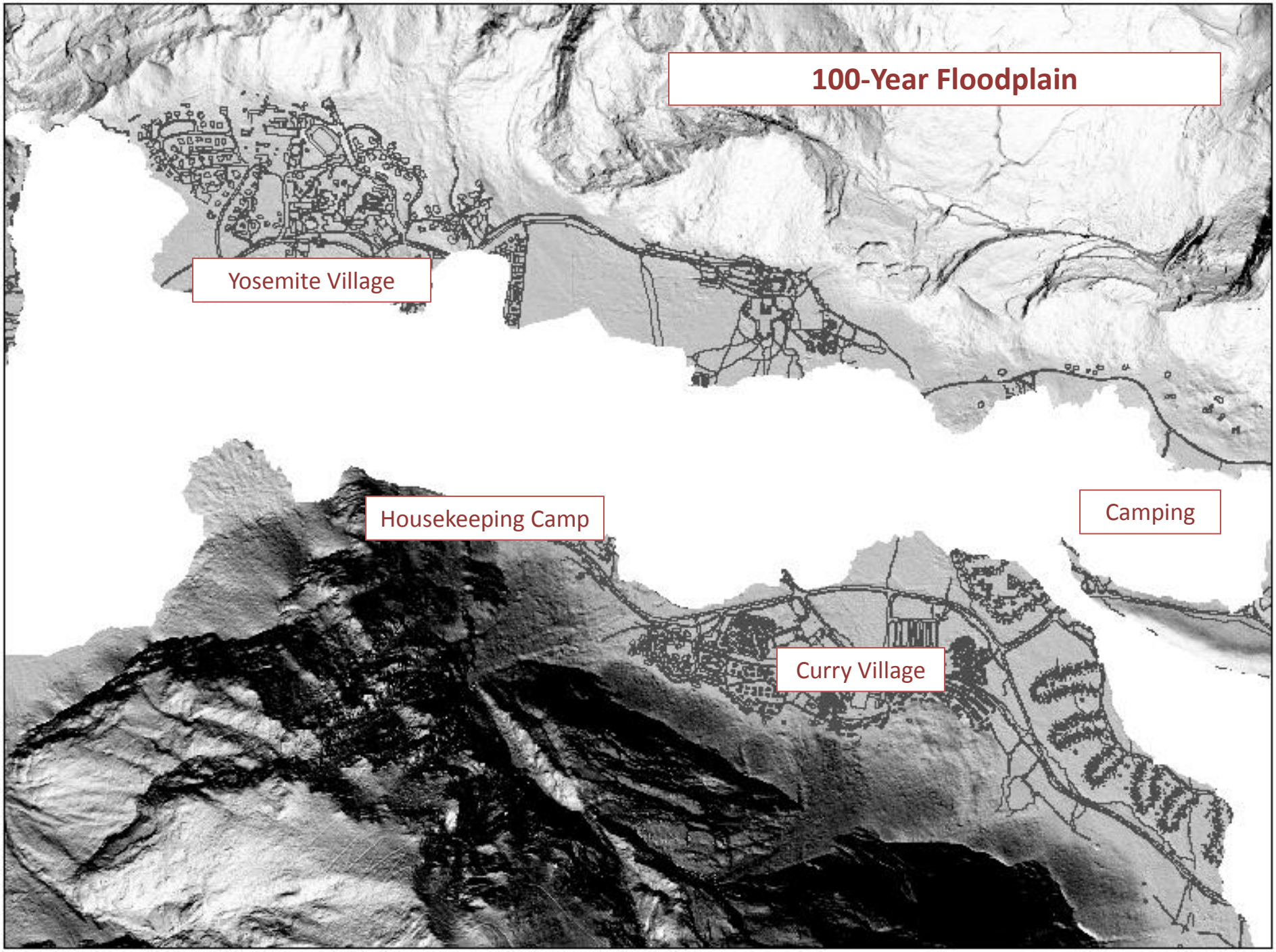
[5] **"To illustrate the level of degradation already experienced in the Merced and maintained under the regime of interim limits proposed by NPS, we need look no further than the dozens of facilities and services operating within the river corridor, including but not limited to, the many …**

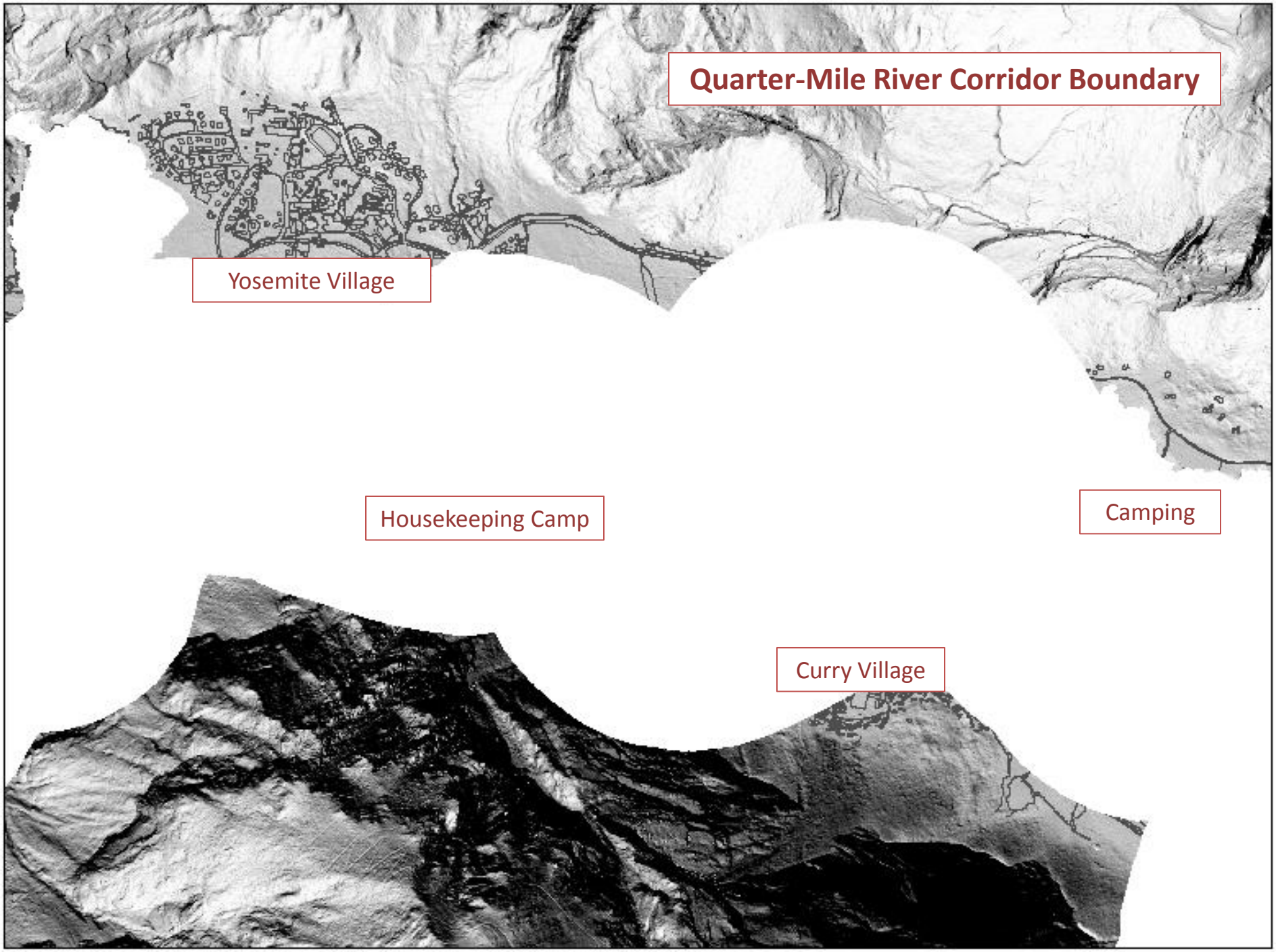
-- (Friends of Yosemite v. Kempthorne, 9th Circ., 2008)

… swimming pools, tennis courts, mountain sports shops, restaurants, cafeterias, bars, snack stands, and other food and beverage services, gift shops, general merchandise stores, an ice-skating rink, an amphitheater, a specialty gift shop, a camp store, an art activity center, rental facilities for bicycles and rafts, skis and other equipment, a golf course and a dining hall accommodating 70 people."

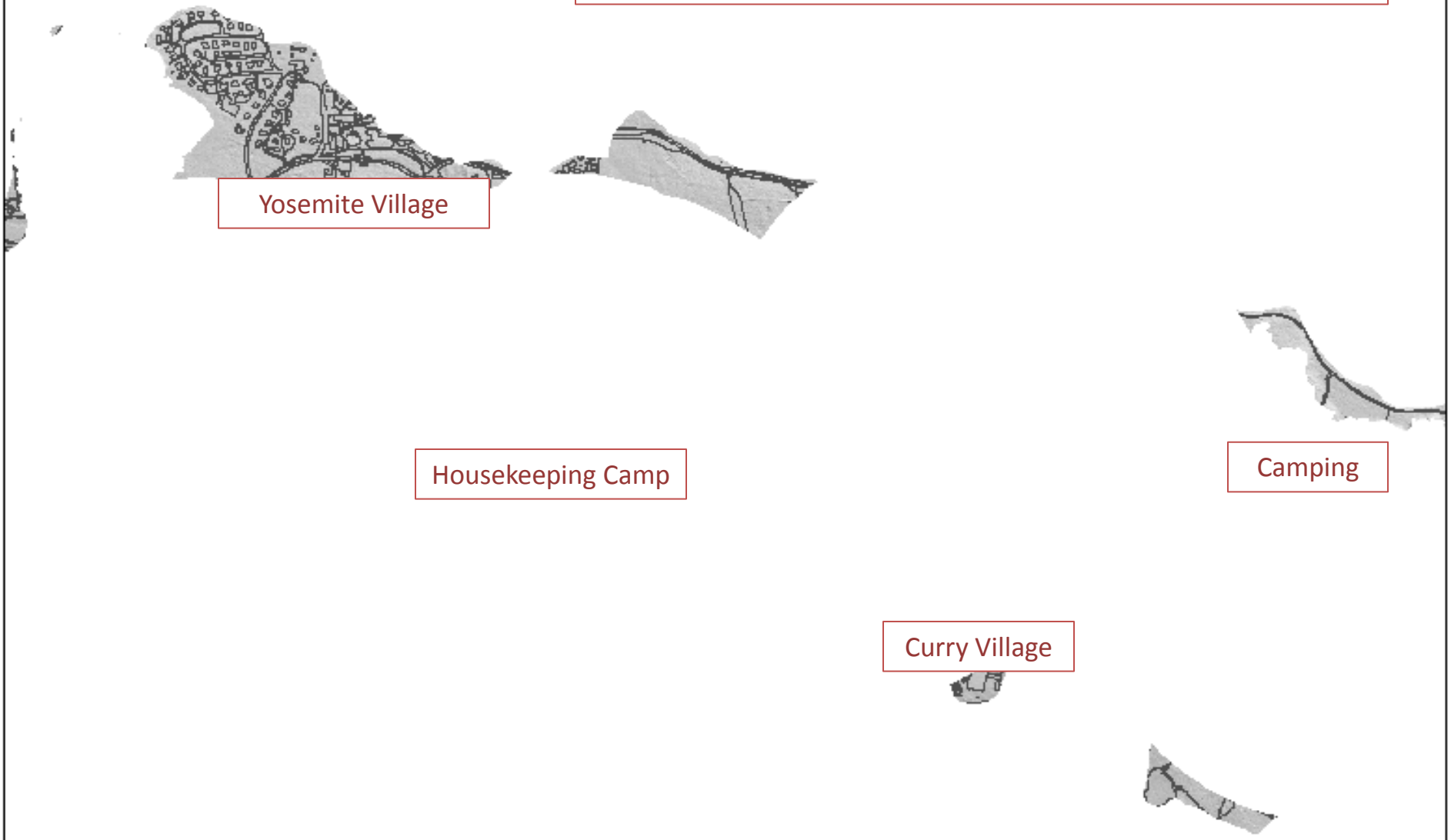

Yosemite Valley and Merced River
Yosemite Village
Housekeeping Camp
Camping
Curry Village


High-Water Mark
Yosemite Village
Housekeeping Camp
Camping
Curry Village


100-Year Floodplain
Yosemite Village
Housekeeping Camp
Camping
Curry Village


Quarter-Mile River Corridor Boundary
Yosemite Village
Housekeeping Camp
Camping
Curry Village

Quarter-Mile Boundary and Edge of Talus



Draft Preferred Alternative

- Ensures that the experiences enjoyed by generations of families are sustained over time.
- Provides visitors the choice of accessing Yosemite Valley by private vehicle or transit.
- Reduces traffic congestion and crowding with organized and efficient day-use parking.
- Creates a sense of arrival by redesigning the primary day-use parking area and removing industrial and administrative functions.
- Improves circulation, reduces congestion and provides for a more relaxed visitor experience.

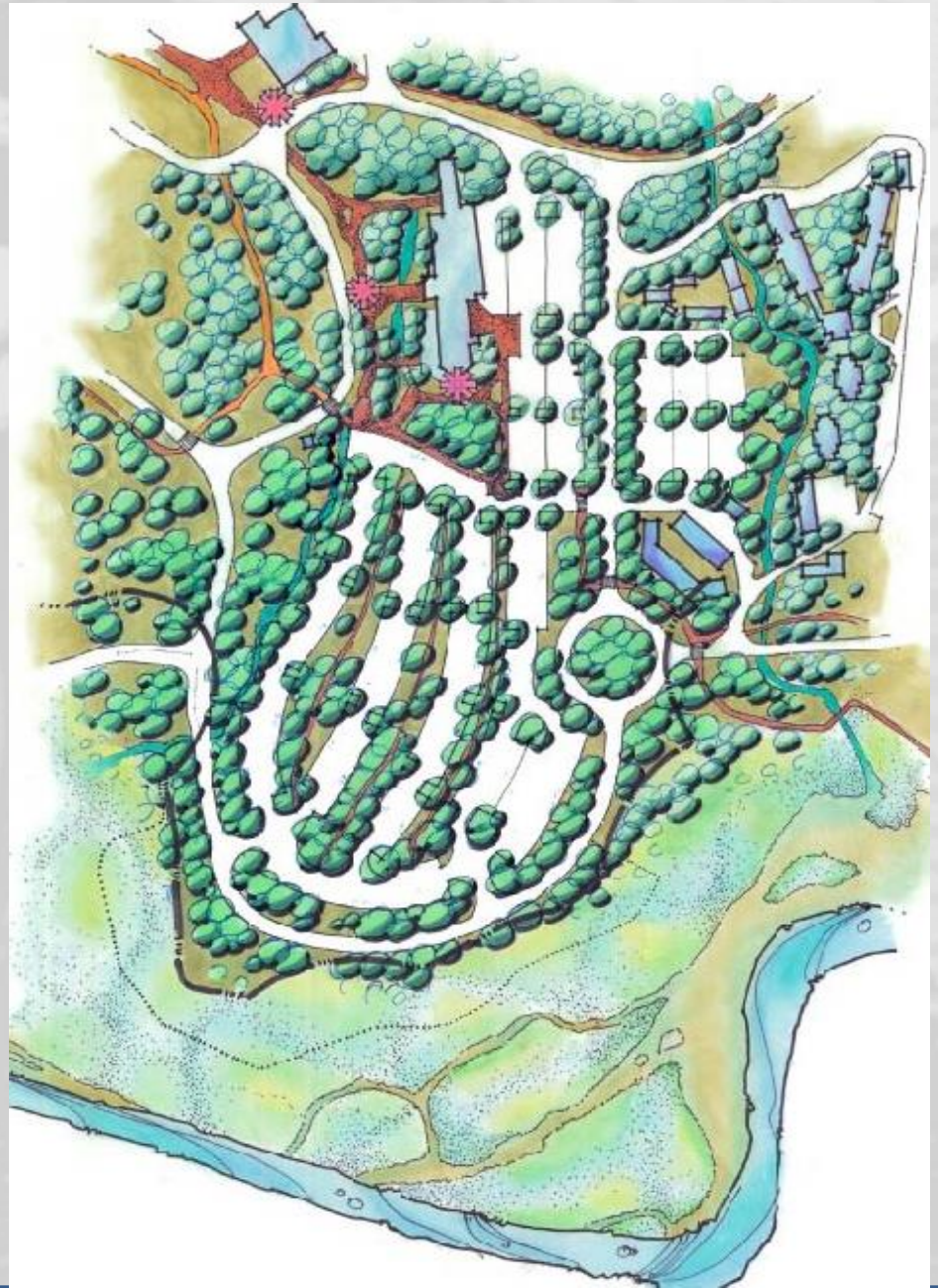
Providing Access

Yosemite Village Day-Use Parking Area (Camp 6)

Current Condition

Yosemite Village Day-Use Parking Area

Parking Pulled Back from River



Yosemite Village
Day-Use Parking Area

Draft
Preferred Alternative

Yosemite Lodge and Camp 4

Draft Preferred Alternative

PROVIDING ACCESS AND PROTECTING RESOURCES

Improving Visitor Experience

- Reduce Congestion and Crowding
- Expand low-cost camping by 37% in Yosemite Valley
- Replace Curry Village tent cabins with hard-sided units
- Provide a "Sense of Arrival" to Yosemite Village area

Upper and Lower River

Camping Units

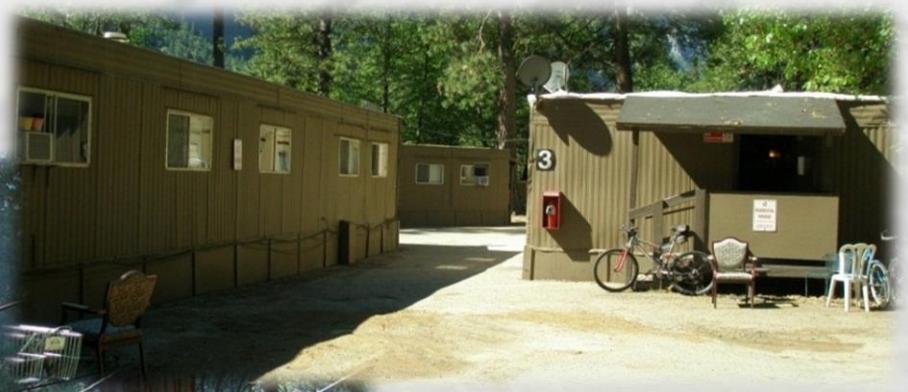
	Alt 1	Alt 5	Details
Yosemite Valley	**(No Action)**		
Backpackers	25	10+16	16 walk-in sites outside of the 100 year floodplain
Camp 4	35	35 + 35	No change to this National Historic Register site, 35 walk-in sites constructed east of Camp 4
Lower Pines	76	71	5 sites within 100 feet of the river removed
North Pines	86	72	14 sites within 100 feet of the river removed
Upper Pines	240	238 + 87	36-site RV, 49 walk-in, 2 group sites
Yellow Pine Admin Site	4	4	Group administrative sites
Former Upper River	0	30	30 walk-in sites
Eagle Creek	0	42	40 auto sites and 2 group sites
Wawona			
Wawona Campground	99	86	Sites removed within 100 feet of river or culturally sensitive areas
Total Camping in Corridor	**565**	**726**	

Lodging Units

	Alt 1 (No Action)	Alt 5	Details
Merced Lake High Sierra Camp	22 (60 beds)	11 (42 beds)	Remove 18 beds
The Ahwahnee	123		No change to National Historic Landmark
Housekeeping Camp	266	232	Remove 34 units from bed and banks
Curry Village	400	453	290 tents and163 hard-sided units
Yosemite Lodge	245	245	No changes
Total Valley Lodging	1,034	1,053	
Wawona Hotel	104		No Change to this National Historic Landmark
Total Lodging in Corridor	1,160	1,168	

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

Replace Substandard Housing



Replace temporary, substandard housing with code compliant residences

User Capacity/Visitation

East Yosemite Valley Peak-Day:

Current User Capacity (People-at-one-time):	13,594 PAOT
Current free-flow visitation:	14,800 **people**
Effective 2011 Capacity	14,836 PAOT
2011 Observed Visitation	20,900 **people**
Alternative 5 User Capacity:	16,683 PAOT
Alternative 5 managed peak-day visitation:	**19,900 people**

Range of Alternatives – Peak-Day Visitation	**13,200 – 21,800 people**

Merced River Plan's Range of Alternatives

Actions	No Action	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
Acres Restored	0	347	302	223	**203**	170
Peak East Valley Visitation	**20,900**	**13,900**	**13,200**	**17,000**	**19,900**	**21,800**
Day Visitors	14,800	9,400	8,500	10,500	**12,800**	13,700
Overnight Visitors	6,100	4,500	4,700	6,500	**7,100**	8,100
Yosemite Valley Lodging Units	1,034	556	621	823	**1,053**	1,248
Yosemite Valley Campsites	466	450	477	701	**640**	739
Parking Spaces for East Valley	5,200	4,000	4,300	4,905	**5,600**	6,099
Total Project Cost ($M)		**$263**	**$187**	**$223**	**$235**	**$418**

Merced River Plan
Criteria for Project Prioritization

Priority Projects seek to accomplish four major goals:

1. **Correct identified impacts to river resources to ensure continued protection**
2. **Alleviate crowding and congestion and provide for easy access to key park facilities and shuttles**
3. **Enhance camping opportunities and winter lodging**
4. **Replace temporary non-code compliant employee housing**

Conceptual Implementation/Phasing

Phase 1

- River Meadow Restoration (Various Projects)
- Improve Sense of Arrival in East Valley (Garage and GO Removal, Replacement Parking at North End, Camp 6 Retrofit, Roundabout, Intersection Redesign)
- Create Code-Compliant Winter Lodging at Curry

  (Replace tent cabins in Boystown)
- Create Vehicle Staging Area in West Valley
- CAMP 4 Campground Site Expansion
- Provide Underpass for Safe Pedestrian Access to YOSE Falls

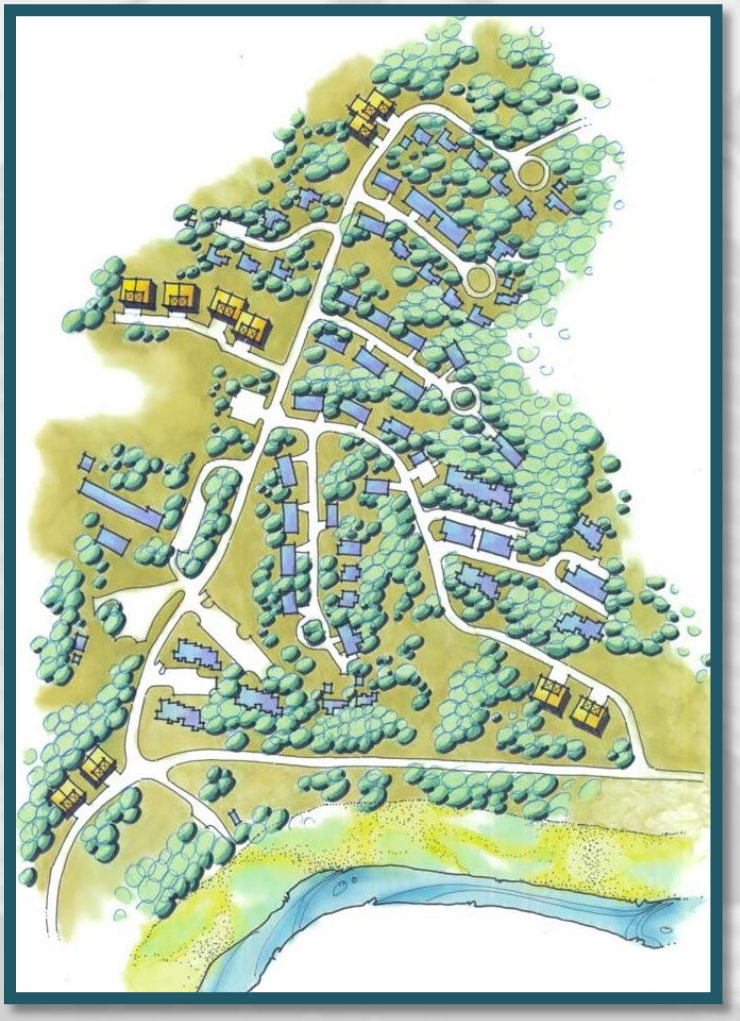
Phase 2

- Replace Camping - Upper Pines Loop
- Replace Camping - Upper/Lower Rivers, Eagle Creek
- Replace Temp Concession Housing (Huff House)
- Replace Temp Concession Housing (Yosemite Lodge)
- Create Out-of-Valley Parking at El Portal
- Replace Temp Concession Housing (Lost Arrow)
- Relocate Wawona Maintenance Facility
- Replace Valley Housing with El Portal/Rancheria In-fill

DRAFT FOIA EXEMPT - For Internal Review and Deliberation Only

Old El Portal/Rancheria

Old El Portal



Rancheria

Abbieville

Merced River Draft Plan: What's Next

- **Public Meetings**
  - March 7: Mariposa
  - March 14: Oakhurst
  - March 15: Wawona
  - March 20: Groveland
  - March 21: San Francisco
  - March 26: Los Angeles
- **Comment Analysis** – April and May 2013
- **Final Plan/Record of Decision:** July 2013

Merced Public Review & Comment Periods

Merced River Plan

- 100-day review period
- Comment period closes April 18

Comment

Online:
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp_deis

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Merced River Plan
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Email: yose_planning@nps.gov

Fax: 209 / 379-1294