



# YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

*“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”*

— John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 1869

## PLANNING UPDATE

Volume 28

March 2006

*“As you will see in the following pages, there is quite a line-up of planning efforts before us in 2006.”*

Dear Yosemite Friends,

This edition of the Planning Update is intended to share with you some of the important work taking place in Yosemite National Park.

As you will see in the following pages, there is quite a line-up of planning efforts before us in 2006. The “Work Plan for 2006” (pages 2-6) provides an overview for several projects, many of which will be covered in greater detail in future Planning Updates. In the coming months, park staff will be working on 9 environmental assessments and 5 environmental impact statements. Soon, we will be asking you to share with us your ideas and concerns related to those projects. Public involvement opportunities will occur throughout the year, and we will keep you informed.



In the meantime, as we prepare to move forward with these plans, we hope you will take a moment to let us hear from you (see page 7) about our methods of communication. After the completion of the Revised Merced River Plan last summer, staff members traveled throughout the park and to neighboring communities to ask the public and park staff, “How can we communicate better about park planning?” We would like to learn from you—what works and what doesn’t? How can we better serve you as a planning process takes shape? Your continued involvement not only contributes to better plans, but to a better Yosemite National Park.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Tollefson



Belted Kingfisher

## NEW DIVISION OF PLANNING

Every day, park managers, staff, and partners must make difficult decisions about competing demands in Yosemite. What types of visitor experience are appropriate? What is the best way to protect sensitive park resources? How should visitor use be managed to protect these resources?

The essence of planning in a national park is structured decision making. The National Park Service plans for one purpose—to ensure that the decisions it makes are as effective and efficient as possible in carrying out the NPS mission.

Last summer, the Division of Planning was created to further achieve the long-term planning goals for Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service is proud to announce that Linda Dahl will serve as chief of this new division. She can be reached by phone at 209/372-0352 or by email at [Linda\\_Dahl@nps.gov](mailto:Linda_Dahl@nps.gov).

Volume 28

March 2006



The Planning Update is an occasional publication of the National Park Service, Office of the Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389.

*Kristina Rylands wrote and edited this issue with contributions from Jen Nersesian and NPS Project Managers. Illustrations by Lawrence Ormsby.*

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

# A Work Plan for 2006

## Winter

### Yosemite Valley Loop Road Rehabilitation

In late February, an environmental assessment for the repair and rehabilitation of Yosemite Valley roads (namely Northside Drive, Southside Drive, Sentinel Drive, and the cross-over at El Capitan) was approved in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Construction is expected to begin in the fall.



### VERP Monitoring

In 2005, water quality monitoring took place not only on the Merced River, but the Tuolumne River. Samples will be used to monitor the effects of use on park resources. NPS Photo.

### Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) Program

Monitoring of visitor use impacts in the Merced River corridor is complete and an annual report for 2005 will be available at the end of March. It can be viewed online at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning/ucmp.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/ucmp.htm). Work has also gotten underway in the Tuolumne River corridor, specifically establishing baseline conditions for water quality and the extent of informal “social trails” in Tuolumne Meadows.

### Hetch Hetchy Communications System Upgrade

Essential phone and data communications systems in the Hetch Hetchy area of the park are obsolete and in need of updating. The project would improve microwave communication systems throughout Tuolumne County, including potentially adding one new site within Yosemite National Park. An environmental assessment will evaluate alternatives for this project. The public scoping period will be open through March 27, 2006.



## Spring

### Merced Wild and Scenic River Revised Comprehensive Management Plan

A summary version of the Revised Merced River Plan will be available to the public in hard copy and on CD. This single-volume presentation plan will present the selected action originally evaluated last summer in a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. To order a copy, return the coupon on the back panel of this newsletter.

## Summer

---

### **Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan & Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan**

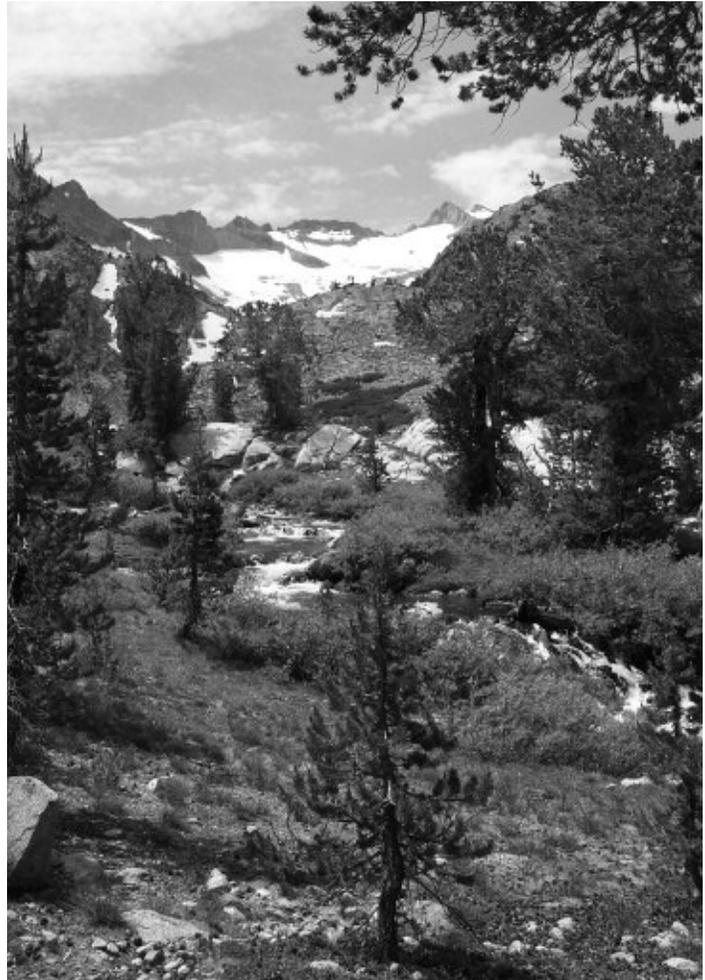
In 1984, the Tuolumne was designated by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River. This planning effort will create a comprehensive management plan for the 54 miles of river within Yosemite National Park. The document will also evaluate alternatives for a concept plan that will guide future land use in the Tuolumne Meadows area. Public scoping will take place this summer, and the draft environmental impact statement will be released for public review in summer 2007.

### **Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog Recovery**

Yosemite's population of mountain yellow-legged frogs has been declining at a rate of 10% per year for the last five years. This endangered species lives in high-elevation lakes and streams, spending much of the year under snow and ice. The decline began with the artificial stocking of trout in Sierra lakes. The fish voraciously consumed frogs and tadpoles. Today an organism—known as chytrid fungus—grows on the frog's skin, making it difficult for them to take in water through their pores. This summer, work is getting underway to prepare an environmental assessment that will evaluate alternatives for assisting in the recovery of this special-status species.

### **Glacier Point Road Rehabilitation**

The western 5 miles of the Glacier Point Road between Chinquapin and Badger Pass are in very poor condition and pose safety concerns during all seasons. An environmental assessment will evaluate alternatives for improving this section of the Glacier Point Road, including the Badger Pass parking lot, El Portal overlook, and the Chinquapin intersection. The document will be available for public comment this summer (view online or return coupon on back panel to order a copy).



#### **Lyell Fork, Tuolumne River**

The headwaters of the Tuolumne River originate in Yosemite National Park on Mt. Dana (Dana Fork) and Mt. Lyell (Lyell Fork), pictured above.  
Photo by Kristina Rylands

### **NPS OPEN HOUSES**

---

Learn more about park plans and projects by attending an Open House in Yosemite Valley at the Visitor Center Auditorium. Most events take place from 2:00-6:00 p.m. See the park's website for details:

[www.nps.gov/yose/planning/meetings.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/meetings.htm)

March 24	Friday
April 26	Wednesday
May 31	Wednesday
June 28	Wednesday

View project fact sheets online at  
[www.nps.gov/yose/planning/facts.html](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/facts.html)

# A Work Plan for 2006



## HODGDON MEADOW TRAILER REPLACEMENT

Yosemite National Park is considering the construction of a duplex in the Hodgdon Meadow housing area, and the National Park Service is seeking public input. This project would replace obsolete trailers that were previously removed because they did not meet NPS housing standards. The proposed duplex would provide new housing for two or more park employees. The new duplex would be energy-efficient, bear-proof, affordable to maintain, and would match the architectural style of the other Hodgdon Meadow buildings.

Public scoping for this project will occur from March 15, 2006 through April 14, 2006. Scoping is an opportunity early in a planning process for the public, organizations, and other agencies to suggest issues to be considered by the National Park Service in preparing the proposed environmental assessment. This document is proposed to be issued for public review in fall 2006.

Written scoping comments should be postmarked no later than April 14, 2006 and mailed to:

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park  
Attn: Hodgdon Meadow Trailer  
Replacement Project  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389  
Fax: 209/379-1294  
Email: [yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:yose_planning@nps.gov)

*Summer (continued)*

### Yosemite Village Interim Parking and Transit Center

In keeping with the actions outlined in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, an interim project is needed to improve the visitor experience and park operations at the Yosemite Village main day visitor parking area. The proposed project would improve the parking area, traffic circulation, tour bus loading and unloading, shuttle stop, and visitor facilities. The existing day visitor parking area is poorly laid out, resulting in reduced parking efficiency, traffic congestion, and pedestrian and vehicle safety hazards. For a fact sheet and project area maps, visit the park's website at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning/projects/](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/projects/). The National Park Service is preparing an environmental assessment that will evaluate proposed improvements and the public review period is anticipated for this summer.



Yosemite Museum, in Yosemite Village. NPS Photo

### Yosemite Village Concept Plan

This planning effort will create a concept plan for arranging facilities, pedestrian-ways, and natural areas in Yosemite Village. Designs evaluated in the environmental assessment will incorporate many of the actions for visitor services outlined in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Public scoping is anticipated to take place this summer.

## GUIDE TO PUBLIC SCOPING

The primary goal of scoping is to seek the public's help in identifying the scope of a given planning effort. During the scoping period, the public is asked to provide concerns and comments that will determine the range of issues addressed in a plan's alternatives. When the scoping period opens, the park provides a description of the proposal, including a statement of the purpose of and need for the project and a list of project goals. The public is then asked to respond with comments, concerns, and suggestions relating to these goals.

The most useful types of scoping comments consider the following:

- How do you use the park and how might the project affect that use?
- What are some possible approaches and ideas for how the NPS can accomplish the project goals?
- What are the range of environmental, recreational, and socioeconomic issues that should be considered?
- What other potential projects might affect or be affected by this project?
- What kinds of information need to be considered (such as related research) and why?

Comments must be submitted in writing at any point during the official scoping period, either by mail, fax, or email. Comments are also accepted at public meetings and/or NPS Open Houses held during the scoping period. At the end of scoping, these comments may be used by the planning team to help inform the plan's alternatives.

## Fall

### Invasive Plant Management Plan EA

This document will evaluate alternatives for a comprehensive program of prevention, control, monitoring, and continued research of non-native plant species in Yosemite. If left unchecked, invasive plants can severely impact native plants and animals. The public review period for the environmental assessment will take place in late fall or early winter.

### Yosemite Valley Visitor Center Exhibit Hall Redesign

With funding from park entrance fees and financial support from The Yosemite Fund, the Valley Visitor Center exhibit hall will be renovated with all new exhibits. The hall will close for remodeling in late fall, with a grand opening scheduled for spring 2007.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CAMPUS

The Yosemite Institute environmental education campus at Crane Flat has served as an educational facility since 1971. The facilities are comprised of older buildings and structures that have been assembled over time and were not originally designed for educational purposes and are not sufficient for current needs. To address these issues, the park and Yosemite Institute began preparation of a draft environmental impact statement in 2002. Public scoping was completed in November 2002.

The park received comments from the public (during scoping) and park staff (during internal review) that expressed concerns about possible impacts to sensitive resources in the area. The park also received suggestions that a wider range of alternatives should be considered. In response to these issues and concerns, park staff have continued to collect and analyze resource data for the Crane Flat area (i.e., vegetation, wildlife, hydrologic, and cultural resource data), and have expanded the range of alternatives to include additional sites.



More information will be available shortly; read the latest fact sheet (available online at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning/projects/facts.html](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/projects/facts.html)) or attend a public Open House for the latest updates.

## MORE TO COME

---

### West Valley Trails

Studies are getting underway to consider the rehabilitation of the trail system—referred to as the Valley Loop Trail—in the west portion of Yosemite Valley.

### Happy Isles Bridge to Wilderness

As called for in the Yosemite Valley Plan, a footbridge from Happy Isles to the John Muir Trailhead is being considered. This bridge would replace the flood-damaged footbridge removed from the river in 2001. The new bridge would span the river near the Nature Center at Happy Isles and connect to the trailhead of the 211-mile John Muir Trail.

### Yosemite Valley Visitor Use and Floodplain Restoration

The land of the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds, along with a portion of Lower Pines Campground, once looked very different from the areas we see today. Over the years, imported fill material was brought in to compact the soil and “dry out” the wetlands in order to create suitable campsites. As a result, conifers have encroached on what used to be lush meadows and wetlands. These former campgrounds are part of the Merced River ecosystem. The river and its banks are increasingly recognized as critical habitat for many plant and animal species. Seasonal flooding of the river is an important natural process that contributes nutrients to wetlands, recharges groundwater, and improves water quality. Restoration efforts will return these important features to the east end of Yosemite Valley. An environmental assessment will be completed for this project. Public scoping took place in 2003 and the document will be available for review in spring 2007.

## A Work Plan for 2006

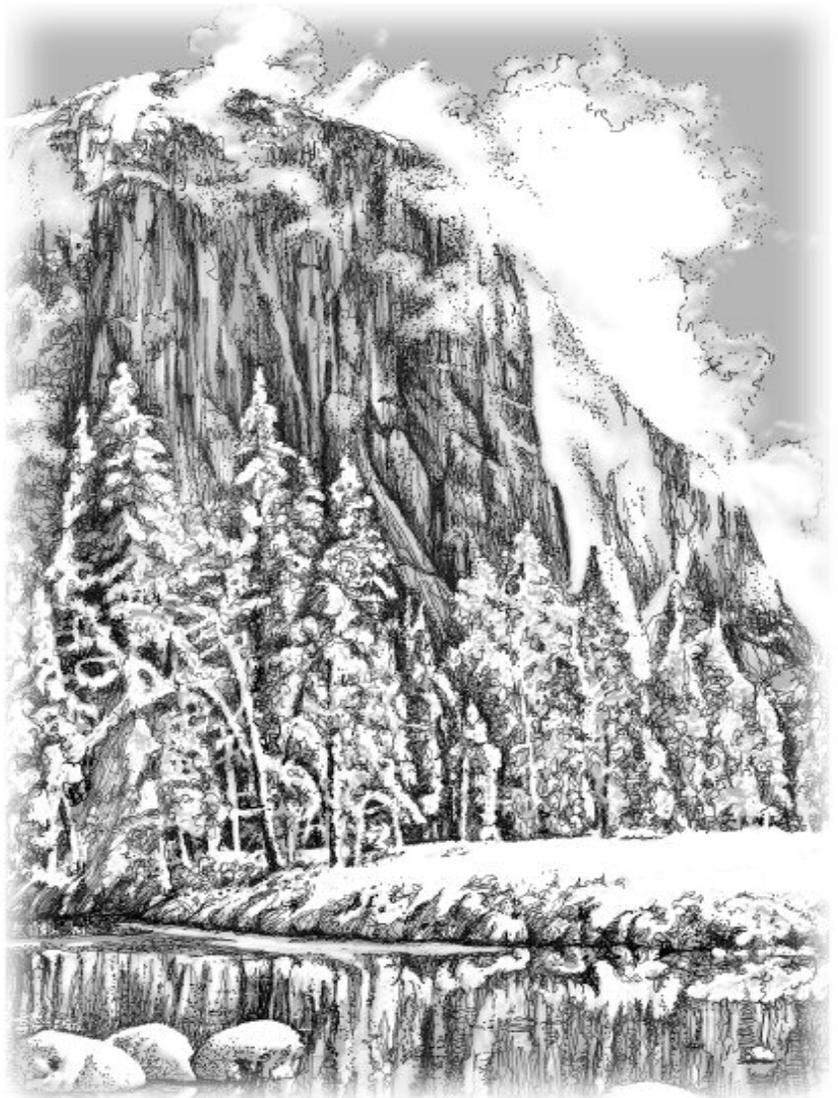
---

*Fall (continued)*

---

### El Portal Concept Plan

This planning effort will create a concept plan and environmental impact statement for land use planning and placement of facilities in the El Portal Administrative Site (located outside the park's western boundary along Highway 140). Designs will incorporate many of the actions called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, including removing some administrative facilities from the Valley and creation of employee housing. Public scoping for this project is anticipated to begin this fall.



### LITIGATION CONTINUES

The NPS entered into its sixth year of litigation as plaintiffs filed a supplemental legal challenge to the Revised Merced River Plan. A hearing before the U.S. District Court in Fresno will take place in early May.



**To help us better serve you, please take a few minutes to fill out and return this question & answer sheet on our communications process, or email your responses to [yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:yose_planning@nps.gov) (our address and fax number can be found on the “Stay Involved” coupon on the back panel).**

# We’re Listening

Communications at Yosemite—how we share information, how we listen, and how we integrate a multitude of voices and interests into decisions—is an ever-evolving process. We would like to assess how well our communication goals are being achieved. What works? What lessons can we apply to make the next planning process even stronger?

We’ve already heard a number of ways in which members of the public would like to see our communication broadened.

- You have asked us to plainly and concisely “state your business.”
- You would like to know what other people are saying during comment periods to have more actual dialogue to help understand these sometimes complex issues.
- We’ve heard that park staff seems to disappear into a planning “black hole” only to reemerge several months later with a completed plan.
- Many of you are confused by the NPS planning process in general, and how plans in Yosemite relate to one another.
- And perhaps most importantly, you want to know what happens to your comments and ideas after they’re submitted.

1) We often communicate with the public through news releases, newsletters (such as this one), emailed bulletins, and through our website. What are the ways in which you keep up with what's going on in Yosemite? Are these tools adequate for your needs?

---

---

---

---

2) How have you participated in a planning process at Yosemite (e.g., by attending a workshop, public meeting, or Open House; submitting a comment letter; or by some other means)? How did you feel about your role in the process? If you have never participated, why not?

---

---

---

---

3) Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve our communications process, either in regards to what types of information we make available, how and when we distribute that information, or in the opportunities we offer for participation.

---

---

---

---

Sign up for the Yosemite  
Electronic Newsletter

[www.nps.gov/yose/home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/home.htm)



**Merced River, Wilderness** NPS Photo

## Stay Involved!

If you would like to receive a copy of planning documents, please check the boxes below that apply.

**2005 Merced Wild & Scenic River**

**Comprehensive Management Plan**

CD

Hard Copy

*Available this spring*

**Glacier Point Road Rehabilitation EA**

CD

Hard Copy

*Available for review this summer*

**Email your request to:** [Yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_planning@nps.gov)

**Fill out and mail coupon to:** Yosemite Planning  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

**FAX this coupon to:** 209/379-1294

**Phone in your request to:** 209/379-1365

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP



SUPERINTENDENT  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK  
P.O. BOX 577  
YOSEMITE, CA 95389

FIRST CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
U. S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR  
PERMIT NO. G-83

► **Help Us Economize!** *If you receive duplicate copies of Planning Updates, or if your name, address, and/or zip code are wrong, please make corrections to the address label and send them to the Mail Room at the above address.*

*Thanks for your help!*