# Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

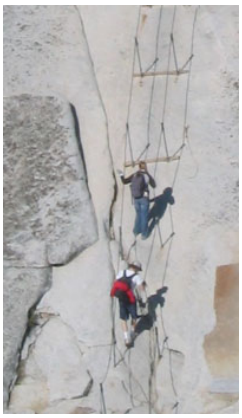
# Half Dome Cables Trail Study

## What is the Half Dome Cables Trail?

**Half Dome**, one of Yosemite's most familiar sights, rises more than 4,737 ft above the valley floor. In 1865, this granite dome was considered "perfectly inaccessible," but thousands of hikers now reach the top each year by following a strenuous trail from the valley floor. The final 400-foot ascent, up the peak's steep east face, follows a pair of metal cables raised on posts that lead to the summit. This cable route was constructed in 1919 by the Sierra Club. Following the Half Dome Cables Trail is a unique experience and it has become one of the most popular hikes in Yosemite National Park.

## What studies are taking place on the Half Dome Cable Trail this summer?

This summer's studies on the Half Dome Cables Trail will combine computer-based simulation modeling and survey research to understand impacts to the natural environment and social conditions on the trail and help define a baseline for current visitor experience conditions. These studies will occur in July and August, 2008 with an anticipated final product in winter 2009.



The primary objective of the **computer modeling** will be to understand the connection between the number of people using the trail and the amount of time spent on the cables. Delay times will be collected on the trail as well as time spent at the summit. With this data, the computer model will be able to predict crowding based on people per viewscape and people at one time on the trail. This will provide important baseline data for projections of use of the cables based on the amount of people arriving at the Happy Isles Trailhead.

**Survey research** will be used to gauge visitor exposure to information, awareness of safety issues, perceptions of crowding, perceptions of risk, and other factors that influence a safe and enjoyable visit. This information will be complimented with other standard survey research questions such as visitor demographics.

## How will these studies help park managers?

Science-based visitor use modeling and social science research will allow park management to better understand preferred visitor experiences, use levels and safety on the cables as well as on the trail networks leading to the cables. Baseline data is useful in planning for the future of the park, monitoring use over time, and informing park staff about visitor use trends and attitudes. The computer simulation model will allow management to observe a full spectrum of conditions by running hypothetical simulations to understand how use levels may affect social and natural conditions in this region of the park.

## How can I help?

**Complete a survey.** If you hike on the Half Dome Cable Trail in July or August, you may be approached to complete a short survey. The information obtained by this survey will provide valuable information to park staff about your wilderness experience and the experience that the Half Dome Cable Trail provides. The survey will be administered after the hike.

**Take a time-stamped card.** You may also be approached on your ascent with a time-stamped card at the base. You will hand this card off further up Half Dome to researchers who will note the time in which they received the card and hand it back to you. This will provide valuable data about how long it takes to reach the summit given your group type and current use conditions.

**Plan ahead and come prepared.** This 18-mile strenuous hike typically takes 10-12 hours roundtrip from the Happy Isles Trailhead. If you choose to hike the Half Dome Cable Trail, make sure you plan are prepared. For information about this trail, visit www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/halfdome.htm

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## 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 park:

- **Attend a National Park Service public open house** to talk with project specialists and obtain more information on this topic. Visit the park's planning website (listed below) for upcoming dates.

- **Add your name to the park's planning mailing list** and receive the *Planning Update* newsletter as well as other planning-related notices. You can also submit your email address to receive the park'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
  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/planning.htm *to find out about plans and projects or* www.nps.gov/yose/naturescience/index.htm *to find out about science & nature in Yosemite National Park.*