



NEPA and the Tuolumne River Plan



What is the National Environmental Policy Act?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is landmark environmental law requiring federal agencies to consider the potential impacts of proposed actions on the natural environment, historic landscape, and human environment. These potential impacts are documented through in-depth studies that inform the decision-making process. This approach requires managing agencies to consider environmental values alongside the technical and economic considerations. Doing so results in well-informed, and ultimately, improved federal decision making.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An environmental impact statement is a detailed study of present conditions along with a broad range of possible alternative management strategies and their prospective impacts. Public review of a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) is a key step to ensuring that the action being proposed is thoroughly assessed. The EIS process promotes informed decision making based on detailed scientific information and public involvement. The goal is to strike a balance between fulfilling needs and protecting

Why does the Tuolumne River Plan need an Environmental Impact Statement?

The Tuolumne River Plan will guide the National Park Service's management of the 54 miles of the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River within Yosemite National Park for the next 20 years. The river encompasses designated Wilderness as well as a more developed area in Tuolumne Meadows. The complexity of the plan and the potential for environmental impacts triggered the need for the detailed analysis found in an environmental impact statement.

Does the public have a role in the NEPA process?

The public is encouraged to participate in the NEPA process by commenting on the draft document and engaging with park staff. In this way, NEPA embodies the democratic ideal that people have a right to participate and contribute in the formation of laws and policies. At least two opportunities for public comment are included in an environmental impact statement process, one at the beginning to determine the scope of a plan, and another mid-way through the process, to allow opportunity for comment on the agency's draft document. During the formation of the Tuolumne River Plan, many more opportunities to contribute to the plan's development were provided, including open houses in Tuolumne Meadows, public meetings, and "planner for a day" workshops.

Why does there need to be a range of alternatives?

NEPA requires that federal agencies develop a range of alternatives to meet project and management goals. The advantage of having a wide range of alternatives is to provide a comparison of positive and negative outcomes from all reasonable actions that could be undertaken. Multiple alternatives allow for the public's views to be addressed and analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement. The EIS must include two or more relevant alternatives for comparative analysis. At least one alternative is the "No Action" alternative; this describes the existing conditions and serves as a baseline of comparison for the other alternatives. The Tuolumne River Plan includes the no-action alternative and four action alternatives.

Are the alternatives in an EIS listed in order of preference?

No, the alternatives are not numbered based on preference. There may be a preferred alternative that the park feels comparatively has more advantages; however, all alternatives provided must be both reasonable and feasible to implement.

How to stay involved

Learn more about this plan, including open house dates and other information on the Tuolumne River Plan website at www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/trp.htm. You can also follow this and other park plans on Facebook at www.facebook.com/YosemiteNPS.

Comment on this draft comprehensive management plan and environmental impact statement by visiting the Tuolumne River Plan Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/trp_deis. Electronic comment submittal through PEPC saves resources and allows for direct entry into the NPS comment analysis system. Alternatively, your comments can be emailed to yose_planning@nps.gov, faxed to 209/379-1294 or mailed to:

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