

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation

Finding of No Significant Impact
Errata Sheets
Public Comments and Responses
December 2007



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United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Yosemite National Park
P. O. Box 577
Yosemite, California 95389

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H3823 (YOSE-PM)

DEC 12 2007

Dear Friends of Yosemite National Park:

We are pleased to provide you with a copy of the *Finding of No Significant Impact for the Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation* project. This document records the decision of the National Park Service to rehabilitate the Tunnel View Overlook, as described under Alternative 2 in the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment* (EA). This packet also contains *Errata Sheets* and the *Summary of Public Comments and Responses* for the EA.

The National Park Service has determined that implementation of the Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation project will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

We thank you for your comments regarding the project. Public participation is a key element in the environmental review process at Yosemite National Park. Your participation helps to ensure that the National Park Service fully understands and considers your values and concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Tollefson
Superintendent

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TUNNEL VIEW OVERLOOK REHABILITATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

DECEMBER 2007

PURPOSE AND NEED

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the decision of the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt a plan to rehabilitate the Tunnel View Overlook in Yosemite National Park, California. The Wawona Tunnel View, located adjacent to Wawona Road at the east portal of the Wawona Tunnel, is one of the most popular scenic overlooks in Yosemite National Park. The overlook, constructed in 1932, affords expansive views of Yosemite Valley, El Capitan, Half Dome, Sentinel Rock, and Bridalveil Fall that have captured the awe of visitors for 75 years. Very little change has occurred to Tunnel View Overlook's physical features (including rockwork, circulation patterns, and configuration) since it was built in 1932. Tour buses, tram tours, and single-family vehicles bring an estimated 3,000-5,000 people to the site per day during the height of the visitation season.

The purpose of the Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation is to remedy vehicle and pedestrian safety issues, correct drainage deficiencies, provide clear circulation patterns for pedestrians and vehicles, enhance and maintain viewing opportunities, provide accessibility to viewing areas for visitors with disabilities, and correct safety problems associated with the existing Inspiration Point trailhead, while preserving the naturalistic, rustic character and integrity of this historic site.

The project is needed to address long-standing safety concerns. Since the Wawona Tunnel was completed in 1932, the NPS has responded to vehicle-to-vehicle accidents, single-vehicle accidents, and vehicle-to-pedestrian fatalities and near-misses. Drivers traveling east through the tunnel often speed, are blinded by light as they exit the tunnel, encounter ice-patches at the east portal, and are faced with crowds of pedestrians and slow moving vehicles moving in and out of the roadway from the Tunnel View Overlook parking areas. Combined, these conditions create a sustained and serious safety problem. Drainage issues also contribute to the hazardous conditions. Additionally, this project is needed to improve traffic circulation and reduce traffic congestion, reduce visitor crowding, make the site accessible to visitors with disabilities, and to restore the historic vista which has been obscured by trees growing up in the granite fill material adjacent to the primary viewing platform.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED

The NPS analyzed four alternatives in the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment* (EA). These were Alternative 1: No Action Alternative; Alternative 2: Dedicated Viewing Areas Including Valley Overlook and Canyon Overlook and Retention of Oversized Vehicle Parking in Center of North Parking Lot; Alternative 3: Dedicated Yosemite Valley Overlook and Separation of Oversized Vehicle from Automobile Parking in the North Lot; and Alternative 4: Preservation of the Greatest Amount of Historic Character-Defining Features and

Materials. Based on this analysis, the NPS has identified Alternative 2 as the Agency's Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative and has selected this alternative for implementation.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

No modifications are included in the Selected Alternative as a result of comments received on the EA. The Selected Alternative will include a "Yosemite Valley Overlook" a 3,450 square foot viewing area dedicated to visitors and pedestrians on the east side of the existing north parking area. A low, protective stone wall will be placed along the west edge of the overlook to provide a safety barrier between the vehicles in the parking area and pedestrians on the viewing terrace. The guard wall materials and architectural character will be compatible with the historic stonework on site. The existing stone wall along the edge of the sidewalk will be repaired. The new curbing along Wawona Road adjacent to the new viewing platform in the North Lot will be at least 6-inches tall to meet crash-safety standards set by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Granite curbing along the sidewalks and medians in the parking areas will be reset to the historic height as necessary. A new stone guard wall will be built in the median that separates the North Lot from the road. Automobiles traveling east on Wawona Road will be directed into the South Lot, while oversized vehicles traveling east will be directed into the North Lot.

Traffic will enter the North Lot using the western driveway adjacent to the tunnel. To allow for safe vehicle passage and egress, this driveway will be moved approximately 20 feet west, and the opening will be widened to 45 feet. Outgoing traffic will exit using the eastern driveway adjacent to the viewing platform. This driveway will be reconfigured to be nearly perpendicular to the Wawona Road. The South Lot's curb, adjacent to the west driveway will be cut slightly, widening the entrance to the parking lot.

In addition to the actions discussed above, Alternative 2 will also create a 1,450 square foot "Canyon Overlook" viewing area placed in the northwest corner of the north parking area. The Selected Alternative will result in the net loss of three parking spaces. The North Parking Lot will have a total of 34 parking spaces; five more than are currently available. Four oversized vehicle parking spaces will be located in the center of the parking area and two parking spaces that meet ADA/ABA guidelines would be located adjacent to the road nearest the viewing platform. The remaining 28 spaces will be provided for single-family vehicles. Parking spaces along the road will be angled at 60-degrees. Eight spaces would be removed from the South Lot to accommodate a new viewing platform.

ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative would continue the existing operation and maintenance of the Tunnel View Overlook. The Tunnel View Overlook would not be improved, except for continuation of emergency repairs and routine and periodic maintenance activities. Because no rehabilitation, restoration or safety improvements would take place, this alternative would not address the flow of vehicle traffic and pedestrians to improve public wellbeing; inadequate drainage would continue to cause icing of Wawona Road and the parking areas, and would continue to erode the parking area's asphalt surface; hikers using the Inspiration Point trailhead would continue to experience pedestrian-vehicle conflicts; accessibility issues would continue to be unresolved; and the narrow sidewalk which also serves as a viewing platform would continue to impact visitor experience and cause additional vehicle and pedestrian conflicts. Traffic circulation would continue to be chaotic and traffic flow would continue to be one-way in the South Lot and two-way in the North Lot. There would continue to be 29 parking spaces in the North Lot (four oversized and 25 single-family vehicle) and 35 single-family vehicle

parking spaces in the South Lot. The No Action Alternative would continue to result in routine maintenance actions, including snow removal, paved road asphalt patching, crack sealing, culvert cleaning and repair, roadside vegetation management, hazard tree abatement, and signage replacement as needed. However, much of the routine maintenance at Tunnel View has been deferred due to funding constraints. This has resulted in deterioration of many of the site features (i.e., deteriorated pavement, damaged stonework, clogged drainage features, and eroded trailhead). Under the No Action Alternative maintenance of these features could continue to be deferred. The No Action Alternative provides a baseline from which to compare the Action Alternatives, to evaluate the magnitude of proposed changes, and to measure the environmental effects of those changes.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 differs from Alternative 2 in how the North Parking Lot is configured and does not include the “Canyon Overlook.” Additionally, Alternative 3 would result in the net loss of nine parking spaces. Twenty-eight parking spaces would be provided in the North Parking Lot; one less than is currently available. Five oversized vehicle parking spaces would be designated in the northern portion of the North Lot and would include an at-grade center island separating the oversized vehicle parking from single-family vehicle parking. Two parking spaces that meet ADA/ABA guidelines would be located adjacent to the road nearest the viewing platform. The remaining 21 spots would be provided for single-family vehicles. Parking spaces along the western edge of the parking area would be angled at 90-degrees and spaces in the remainder of the lot would be angled at 60-degrees. Eight spaces would be removed from the South Lot to accommodate a new viewing platform.

ALTERNATIVE 4

Alternative 4 would also create a “Yosemite Valley Overlook.” However, this viewing terrace would only be 2,300 square feet. This alternative would not create a “Canyon Overlook” viewing area. As with Alternatives 2 and 3, a low, protective stone wall would be placed along the west edge of Yosemite Valley Overlook to provide a barrier between the vehicles in the parking area and pedestrians on the viewing terrace and the granite curbing along the sidewalks and medians in the parking areas would be reset as needed to the historic height. However, no new stone walls would be added to the curbing between the road and the parking area.

The historic two-way traffic circulation pattern in the North Lot would be retained. The western driveway would be moved approximately 50 feet west and the opening would be widened to 30 feet. The eastern driveway would be widened to 22 feet wide to allow vehicles to enter and exit simultaneously. Alternative 4 would result in the net loss of six parking spaces. Thirty-one parking spaces would be available in the North Parking Lot; two more than are currently provided. Four oversized vehicle parking spaces would be located in the center of the parking area. One parking spaces that meet ADA/ABA guidelines would be located in the northeast corner and one would be located in the northwest corner of the parking lot. The remaining 25 spaces would be provided for single-family vehicles. These spaces would be angled at 60-degrees. Eight spaces would be removed from the South Lot to accommodate a new viewing platform.

ACTIONS CONSIDERED BUT DISMISSED

The NPS also considered four actions that were dismissed from further consideration. These actions were considered and dismissed for one of the following reasons:

- The action did not satisfy the project's purpose and need.
- Less environmentally damaging options are available.
- The action presents unacceptable engineering risks or constraints with an associated increase in cost.

The following section describes the actions that were dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE PARKING AREAS AND SHUTTLE SERVICE

The development of alternative parking areas and implementation of a shuttle service was considered but dismissed from further consideration. This action would not meet the project objectives as outlined above nor would it resolve the need for the project. Parking spaces are not a limiting factor at Tunnel View. Improving traffic circulation within the parking lots and providing appropriate sized and safe viewing areas, vista clearing, and safer crossing for pedestrians would alleviate traffic congestion and crowding at Tunnel View Overlook.

BUS STAGING AT ROSTRUM PARKING AREA AND RECONFIGURATION OF PARKING/DRIVING LANES

The use of Rostrum parking area (located west of Wawona Tunnel along the Wawona Road) as a bus staging area was considered but dismissed from further consideration. This action would not meet the project objectives as outlined above nor would it resolve the needs for the project. This action would require the development and coordination of extensive communications between Tunnel View Overlook and Rostrum parking area to facilitate movement of buses in and out of Tunnel View. The action would also require a reconfiguration of the parking and driving lanes at the Rostrum parking area, given that buses cannot presently turn around and reverse direction of travel at the site. Buses would be required to stage where the current eastbound traffic lane is.

LOWER TERRACE VIEWING PLATFORM

The construction of a 900 square foot lower viewing terrace below the main North Lot viewing terrace was considered but dismissed from further consideration. Using "Values Analysis" and "Choosing by Advantages" techniques, park management and staff determined that the Action Alternatives sufficiently addressed the purpose and need of the project, and that the addition of a lower terrace would not provide substantial benefits to meeting the project goals. Construction of this feature would be very costly, approximately 3/4 of a million dollars, and would provide little improvement to visitor experience for the monies spent. The addition of a lower terrace would also increase dwell time and thus adversely impact the function of the overlook by placing a greater demand on available parking.

RESTROOMS

Installation of restrooms at Tunnel View Overlook was considered but dismissed from further consideration. Currently, there are no water or sewer lines at Tunnel View. Therefore, alternative technologies (e.g., vault, composting or combustion toilets) would need to be used at this site. These technologies would not be feasible due to the lack of adequate space and the high volume of visitors—potential high volume of use at Tunnel View Overlook. Additionally, there are restrooms available at Bridalveil Fall parking area approximately 2 ½ miles east of Tunnel View Overlook, and at Chinquapin approximately ten miles southwest of Tunnel View. Additional signage along the Wawona Road corridor alerting visitors to the locations of restrooms is currently under consideration by park management.

RAISED SIDEWALK TO SEPARATE BUS PARKING FROM REGULAR PARKING UNDER ALTERNATIVE 3

Construction of a raised sidewalk/median to separate bus parking from regular parking was considered under Alternative 3 but dismissed from further consideration. Snow plows keep the overlook cleared in the winter, and use the parking lot as a snow plow turn around. Due to the size and configuration of the parking lot, construction of a raised sidewalk would make maneuvering snow plows within the parking lot difficult.

DECISION RATIONALE

Action is warranted at this time because of the need to improve safety for visitors and park staff, increase accessibility, reduce visitor crowding and traffic congestion, and to restore the historic vista at Tunnel View Overlook. Tunnel View Overlook was identified as a high accident site in the 1985 *Traffic Engineering Safety Improvement Study for Yosemite Valley*, and the follow-up 1995 *Traffic Safety Program Review, Yosemite National Park, California*. Providing a viewing area that will separate pedestrians from vehicles and providing clearly defined pedestrian walkways will improve visitor and employee safety. Additional measures to improve safety will include reducing traffic speeds and providing intuitive traffic circulation patterns within the project area. These measures will also reduce traffic congestion. Restoring the historic vista and allowing visitors to view Yosemite Valley from areas now blocked by vegetation will reduce visitor crowding and potential vehicle-pedestrian conflicts, thereby improving visitor experience. This action is also warranted at this time because of the need to address drainage issues that contribute to icy road conditions within the project area. Rehabilitation of the site will also address the need to improve accessibility.

Through the EA, NPS determined that the Selected Alternative will result in the greatest improvement in safety and the greatest reduction in visitor crowding and traffic congestion. Therefore, the Selected Alternative will have the greatest beneficial impact to visitor experience, park operations, and transportation. As with Alternatives 3 and 4, the Selected Alternative will have a resolvable adverse effect on the Wawona Tunnel historic site. No other natural, social, or cultural resources impacts were found to differ between the Action Alternatives analyzed in the EA.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The Environmentally Preferred Alternative is determined by applying criteria identified in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) to each alternative. In accordance with NEPA, the Environmentally Preferred Alternative will best: (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The NPS has considered all alternatives in this analysis in accordance with NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1505.2) and has determined that the Selected Alternative: Dedicated Viewing Areas Including Valley Overlook and Canyon Overlook; and Retention of Oversized Vehicle Parking in Center of North Parking Area, is the Environmentally

Preferred Alternative. After review of potential impacts, and developing mitigation measures, the Selected Alternative achieves the greatest balance between (1) assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (2) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; and (3) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.

Alternative 3: “Dedicated Yosemite Valley Overlook and Separation of Oversized Vehicle Parking from Automobile Parking” would provide similar reduction in risks to public health and safety. However, this alternative would result in greater impacts to the historic character defining features of the Wawona Tunnel Historic Site, would provide fewer parking spaces, and would not provide a “Canyon Overlook” viewing area. Thus, Alternative 3 would not offer the same level of protection for natural and cultural resources, nor would it provide similar aesthetically pleasing surroundings compared to the Selected Alternative.

Alternative 4: “Preservation of the Greatest Amount of Historic Character- Defining Features and Materials” would provide greater preservation of the historic character defining features of the Wawona Tunnel Historic Site. However, this alternative would not result in as a great of an improvement in safety compared to the Selected Alternative. Additionally, this alternative would have less of a beneficial impact on visitor experience, transportation, and park operations. Consequently, Alternative 4 would not offer the same level of assurance for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings, nor would this alternative attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences compared to the Selected Alternative.

The No Action Alternative would not provide a high level of protection for natural and cultural resources but would perpetuate risks to public health and safety.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)

The NPS made the determination of effect for the Selected Alternative following guidance outlined in the 1998 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service *Endangered Species Act Consultation Handbook: Procedures for Conducting Section 7 Consultations and Conference*. NPS determined that the Selected Alternative will have “no effect” on any federally listed, candidate or proposed species or their designated or proposed critical habitat.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT (NHPA)

The NPS made the determination of effect of the Selected Alternative on historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA in accordance with *the 1999 Park Programmatic Agreement Among the National Park Service at Yosemite, the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Planning, Design, Construction, Operations and Maintenance, Yosemite National Park, California* (1999 PA). For the purpose of NEPA and NPS policy, an impact to a historic property that is eligible or listed under the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would be considered significant if an adverse affect could not be resolved in agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), American Indian tribal governments, or other consulting and interested parties and the public. The 1999 PA included

the proposed use standard mitigation measures to resolve adverse effects. No objections from the SHPO or the public were received.

NPS has determined that implementation of the Selected Alternative will have “no effect” on archeological or traditional cultural properties. The combined actions of the Selected Alternative will directly and permanently alter several of the characteristics of the historic site that qualify the property for inclusion in the NRHP. These features include: granite curbing/medians, area of parking lots, circulation pattern, and width of driveways. Many of these actions alter these features in a manner that diminish the integrity of the property’s *design*. In accordance with the stipulated standard mitigation measures (1999 PA), the adverse effect of the Selected Alternative on the Wawona Tunnel historic site would be resolved.

WHY THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The Selected Alternative will minimize visual, cultural, social, and natural resource impacts to the Tunnel View Overlook, while improving health and safety and access for park employees and visitors. Beneficial impacts will include: local, long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on soils, water quality and hydrology; local, long-term, moderate, beneficial impacts on visitor experience, park operations, and transportation; and local, long-term, major, beneficial impacts on scenic resources. The Selected Alternative will have no effect on special status species. Adverse impacts will include local, long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on vegetation and wildlife. The Selected Alternative would implement standard mitigations measures to resolve adverse effects on historic properties.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Implementation of the Selected Alternative will have no effect on archeological or traditional cultural properties. Adverse effects on historic sites, structures, and landscapes would be resolved by implementing standard mitigation measures detailed in the EA.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Significant cumulative impacts were not identified for any impact topic. Also, no highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, or elements of precedence have been identified. Implementing the Selected Alternative will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental laws.

MITIGATION

The following mitigation measures have been, or will be, incorporated into the project to avoid or reduce impacts to park resources.

Mitigation Measure	Impact Topic	Responsibility	Critical Milestones
Prior to entry into the park, steam-clean heavy equipment to prevent importation of non-native plant species, tighten hydraulic fittings, ensure hydraulic hoses are in good condition and replace if damaged, and repair all petroleum leaks.	Construction Mitigation Measures (Best Management Practices)	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities

Inspect the project to ensure that impacts stay within the parameters of the project area and do not escalate beyond the scope of the environmental assessment, as well as to ensure that the project conforms with all applicable permits or project conditions. Store all construction equipment within the delineated work limits. Confine work areas within creek channels to the smallest area necessary.	Construction Mitigation Measures (Best Management Practices)	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Implement compliance monitoring to ensure that the project remains within the parameters of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance documents.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Provide a project orientation for all construction workers to increase their understanding and sensitivity to the challenges of the special environment in which they will be working.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
If deemed necessary, demolition/construction work on weekends or federal government holidays may be authorized, with prior written approval of the Superintendent.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager;	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Remove all tools, equipment, barricades, signs, surplus materials, and rubbish from the project work limits upon project completion. Repair any asphalt surfaces that are damaged due to work on the project to original condition. Remove all debris from the project site, including all visible concrete, timber, and metal pieces.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Upon completion of project activities
The Construction Contractor shall prepare a Health and Safety Plan to address all aspects of Contractor health and safety issues compliant with OSHA standards and other relevant regulations. The Plan shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.		Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) shall be prepared by the Construction Contractor and implemented for construction activities to control surface run-off, reduce erosion, and prevent sedimentation from entering water bodies during construction. The SWPPP shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.		Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
A construction work schedule shall be prepared by the Construction Contractor for the project that minimizes effects on wildlife in adjacent habitats, peaks in visitation, and noise levels near residential housing and visitor lodging areas. The work schedule shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.		Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Supervisory construction personnel shall attend an Environmental Protection briefing provided by the park prior to working on site. This briefing is designed to familiarize workers with statutory and contractual environmental requirements and the recognition of and protection measures for archeological sites, sensitive habitats, water resources, and wildlife habitats.		Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
The park shall develop a Communications Strategy Plan to alert necessary park and Concessioner employees, residents and visitors to pertinent elements of the construction work schedule.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Store equipment and materials away from all waterways.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Provide proper and timely maintenance for vehicles and equipment used during construction to reduce the potential for mechanical breakdowns.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Use silt fencing at drainages to prevent construction materials from escaping work areas.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities

Ensure that all earth moving equipment and hand tools enter the park free of mud or seed-bearing material to prevent the introduction of non-native plants. The NPS will inspect all equipment prior to use on the project. Map and treat noxious weeds within the project area prior to construction. Certify all seeds and straw material as weed-free. Ensure that imported top-soil is weed-free. The NPS will approve sources of imported fill material that will be used within the top 12 inches of the finished grade. Monitor and treat invasive plants for three years post-construction.	Vegetation	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Botanist; Contractor	Prior to, concurrent with and following project activities
Install temporary fencing (silt fencing or construction fencing) around the entire project area to protect natural surroundings (including sensitive plants, trees, and root zones) from damage. Avoid fastening ropes, cables, or fences to trees.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Botanist; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Use native seed mix or seed-free mulch to minimize surface erosion and the introduction of		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
If special-status plant species are identified within the construction disturbance zone, in particular within restoration and revegetation areas, avoid special-status plant populations to the extent feasible during construction activities.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Botanist; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
If it is not feasible for construction activities to avoid special-status plant species, species conservation measures will be developed in coordination with Yosemite National Park natural resources staff. Measures may include salvage of special-status plants for use in revegetating disturbed areas and transplantation of special-status plants wherever possible using methods and monitoring identified in the revegetation plan, monitoring to ensure successful revegetation, protection of plantings, and replacement of unsuccessful plant materials if practicable.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Botanist; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Conduct surveys of the project area to determine the type and number of vulnerable species that may be affected by construction activities; schedule construction activities with seasonal consideration of wildlife lifecycles to minimize impacts during sensitive periods (i.e., after bird nesting seasons, when bats are neither hibernating nor have young, etc).	Wildlife	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Prior to project activities
Limit the effects of light and noise on adjacent habitat through controls on construction equipment and through site design of facilities.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Provide adequate education and enforcement to limit visitor and construction worker activities that are destructive to wildlife and habitats.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Concurrent with and following project activities
Prior to tree management activities, qualified biologists will screen the area for bat roosts, nesting birds, and other features that are important wildlife habitat.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
A qualified bat biologist will conduct surveys prior to construction to evaluate whether trees or other habitat that will be affected by the proposed action provide hibernacula or nursery colony roosting habitat for bat species.	Special-Status Species of Bats	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Prior to project activities
Tree removal will occur primarily during the period when neither maternity nor hibernation colonies are likely (generally April through May and August through October). If tree removal is slated to occur between November and March or between June and July, a qualified bat biologist will survey trees to be removed and other potential habitat for breeding or hibernating bats prior to any tree removal activities.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Concurrent with project activities

If bats are detected during reproduction or hibernation periods, tree removal and disturbance of other potential habitat will be delayed until the bats can be excluded from the area in a manner that does not adversely affect their survival or that of their young. If surveys conducted immediately prior to construction do not reveal any bat species present within the project area, then the action will begin within three days to prevent the destruction of any bats that could move into the area after the survey. The NPS will apply for and comply with all federal and state permits required for construction-related activities.	Special-Status Species of Bats	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Concurrent with project activities
		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park Biologist	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
The Park will adhere to the <i>Park Programmatic Agreement Among the National Park Service at Yosemite, the California State Historical Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Planning, Design, Construction, Operations, and Maintenance, Yosemite National Park, California</i> (1999 PA) to avoid and resolve adverse effects. Mitigation measures include avoiding impacts and designing new development to be compatible with surrounding historic resources. Standard mitigation measures, as defined in the 1999 PA, include photo documentation, salvage, and reevaluation of National Register status (updating National Register Nomination form). Precede removal of trees and vegetation with site-specific reconnaissance to protect and maintain the view corridors and avoid potential impacts to historic landscape resources.	Federal and State Permit Requirements	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to project activities
		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park History, Architecture and Landscape Branch	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Design all new construction within historic districts and landscapes or adjacent to historic sites to be compatible in terms of architectural elements, scale, massing, materials, and orientation. Undertake all treatments within historic landscapes in keeping with the Secretary of The Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.	Historic Properties	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park History, Architecture and Landscape Branch	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Park History, Architecture and Landscape Branch	Prior to project activities
Cover and/or seal truck beds and stockpiles to minimize blowing dust or loss of debris. Limit truck and related construction equipment speeds in active construction areas to a maximum of 15 miles per hour and strictly adhering to park regulations and posted speed limits in other areas while inside park boundaries. Maintain adequate dust suppression equipment and using clean water to control excess airborne particulates at staging areas, active construction zones, and unpaved roads leading to/from active construction areas.	Dust Abatement Measures	Contractor	Concurrent to project activities
		Contractor	Concurrent to project activities
		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities

Develop an emergency notification plan that complies with park, federal, and state requirements and allows contractors to properly notify park, federal, and/or state personnel in the event of an emergency during construction activities. This plan will address notification requirements related to fire, personnel, and/or visitor injury, releases of spilled material, evacuation processes, etc. The emergency notification plan will be submitted to the park for review/approval prior to commencement of construction activities.	Emergency Notification Measures	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to project activities
Notify utilities prior to construction activities. Identify locations of existing utilities prior to removal activity to prevent damage to utilities. The Underground Services Alert and NPS maintenance staff will be informed 72 hours prior to any ground disturbance. Construction-related activities will not proceed until the process of locating existing utilities is completed (water, wastewater, electric, communications, and telephone lines). An emergency response plan will be required of the contractor.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager. Park Utilities	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Use approved siltation and sediment control devices in construction areas to reduce erosion and surface scouring.	Erosion Control Measures	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Use approved siltation and sediment control devices appropriate to the situation in grading areas to capture eroding soil before discharge to riparian channels.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Conserve and salvage topsoil for reuse. Materials will be reused to the maximum extent possible.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
An Oil and Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan shall be prepared by the Construction Contractor for the project to address hazardous materials storage, spill prevention and response. The Plan shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.	Hazardous Materials Measures	Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Store and use all hazardous materials in compliance with federal regulations. All applicable Materials Safety Data Sheets will be kept on site for inspection.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Hazardous or flammable chemicals shall be prohibited from storage in the staging area, except for those substances identified in the Oil and Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan. Hazardous waste materials shall be immediately removed from project site in approved containers.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Comply with all applicable regulations and policies during the removal and remediation of asbestos, lead paint, and polychlorinated biphenyls.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Ensure that all construction equipment has functional exhaust/muffler systems.	Noise Abatement Measures	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Submit a construction work plan/schedule that minimizes construction-related noise in noise-sensitive areas to the park for review/approval prior to commencement of construction activities.		Contractor	Prior to project activities
Use hydraulically or electrically powered construction equipment, when feasible.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Locate stationary noise sources as far from sensitive receptors as possible.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Limit the idling of motors except as necessary (e.g., concrete mixing trucks).		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities

Fence construction staging areas and construction activity areas to visually screen construction activity and materials.	Scenic Resources Protection Measures	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Consolidate construction equipment and materials to the staging areas at the end of each work day to limit the visual intrusion of construction equipment during non-work hours.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Develop and implement a comprehensive spill prevention/response plan that complies with federal and state regulations and addresses all aspects of spill prevention, notification, emergency spill response strategies for spills occurring on land and water, reporting requirements, monitoring requirements, personnel responsibilities, response equipment type and location, and drills and training requirements. The spill prevention/response plan will be submitted to the park for review/approval prior to commencement of construction activities.	Spill Prevention/Response Measures	Contractor	Prior to project activities
To minimize the possibility of hazardous materials seeping into soil or water, check equipment frequently to identify and repair any leaks. Standard measures include hazardous materials storage and handling procedures; spill containment, cleanup, and reporting procedures; and limitation of refueling and other hazardous activities to upland/non-sensitive sites. Provide an adequate hydrocarbon spill containment system (e.g., absorption materials, etc.) on site, in case of unexpected spills in the project area. Ensure equipment is equipped with a hazardous spill containment kit. Ensure that personnel trained in the use of hazardous spill containment kits are on site at all times during construction activities.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater pollution prevention plan for construction activities that complies with federal and state regulations and addresses all aspects of stormwater pollution prevention. The plan will be submitted to the park for approval prior to construction activities. The plan will include measures such as: Take measures to control erosion, sedimentation, and compaction, and thereby reduce water pollution and adverse water quality effects. Use silt fences, sedimentation basins, etc. in construction areas to reduce erosion, surface scouring, and discharge to water bodies. To the extent possible, schedule the use of mechanical equipment during periods of low precipitation to reduce risk of accidental hydrocarbon leaks or spills. When mechanical equipment is necessary outside of low precipitation periods, use NPS-approved methods to protect soil and water from contaminants. Dispose of volatile wastes and oils in approved containers for removal from construction sites to avoid contamination of soils, and drainages. Inspect equipment for hydraulic and oil leaks prior to use on construction sites, and implement inspection schedules to prevent contamination of soil and water. Keep absorbent pads, booms, and other materials on site during projects that use heavy equipment to contain oil, hydraulic fluid, solvents, and hazardous material spills.	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Measures	Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Develop and implement a comprehensive traffic control and visitor protection plan for park review/approval that: Complies with necessary U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways, Part VI-Traffic Control for	Traffic Control and Visitor Protection Measures	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Visitor Protection & Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities

Construction and Maintenance Operations, and California Department of Transportation Standard Specifications, Section 12 Provides procedures for preparing and submitting specific street closure, traffic control, and detour plans for each specific area of project construction not less than three weeks before commencement of construction activities in each area Provides procedures for managing staging areas to restrict public access and maintain site safety Ensures that visitors are safely and efficiently routed around construction areas in the Valley ~ Outlines measures to largely offset the potential for public exposure to noxious materials or contaminants that may be present during construction in the project area (i.e., by providing established and maintained walkways and bridges across the site, covering walking paths with clean soil and asphalt, and providing barrier fencing along trails)	Traffic Control and Visitor Protection Measures		
Provide protective fencing enclosures around construction areas, including utility trenches, to protect public health and safety.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Install appropriate traffic signs.	Transportation Measures	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Concurrent with and following project activities
Locate construction worker parking outside of Yosemite Valley, with the exception of key supervisory personnel (approximately four to seven individuals).		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Verify utility locations by contacting the Underground Services Alert prior to the start of construction.	Utility Measures	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to project activities
Promptly reconnect utility services that are interrupted because of construction activities and provide advance notification to all residents, concessioners, and others if utility service will be disrupted.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with and following project activities
Develop and implement a visitor outreach and communication plan that addresses means for effectively communicating Tunnel View construction and other visitor facility closure, relocation, and detour schedules to the public.	Visitor Experience Measures	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
To the extent possible, schedule/phase construction activities to allow for continued visitor access to the overlook.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
To the extent possible, schedule necessary 24-hour construction activities in the immediate vicinity of campgrounds and lodging units such that they occur during periods when those areas are closed or not in use.	Night Sky Measures	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Direct and shield night lighting associated with construction equipment to minimize light scatter effects.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Provide lights in developed areas for safety where pedestrians cross busy intersections.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Concurrent with and following project activities
Develop and implement a comprehensive waste management plan that complies with federal and state regulations and addresses all aspects related to the transportation, storage, and handling of construction-related hazardous and nonhazardous liquid and solid wastes and submit the plan to the park for review/approval prior to the commencement of construction activities.	Waste Management Measures	Contractor	Prior to project activities

Require construction personnel to adhere to park regulations concerning food storage and refuse management.	Waste Management Measures	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Properly secure trash during the workday and remove all trash from site at the end of each workday.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Concurrent with and following project activities

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

PUBLIC SCOPING

Public Scoping was held from June 4 to July 9, 2007. The Public scoping process was conducted through the following means: 1) a press release describing the intent to begin the public involvement through comments on the proposed project was issued on May 18, 2007. The press release was published in the *Mariposa Gazette* and the *Sierra Star*; 2) the June 21, 2007 Yosemite National Park Electronic Newsletter, emailed to a list of approximately 7150 people, included an announcement of the public scoping period. [Note: The July 16, 2007 NPS newsletter directed interested public to a public website for viewing the public scoping comments]; 3) the May 2007 Planning Update included information about the project and an invitation to the monthly Yosemite Open House; 4) the scoping period was announced on the park's Daily Report; and 5) the scoping period was announced via the park's website. Invitations to Open Houses held on June 26, 2007 in Oakhurst and June 27, 2007 in Yosemite Valley were included in the above announcements. The Open Houses included exhibits about existing site conditions, environmental considerations, cultural resource concerns, transportation issues and construction and design procedures. A presentation about the project was made by park staff. Staff were also available to answer questions, provide additional information, and accept written public comments.

During the public scoping process ten comment letters were received from individuals and organizations via email, at public open houses, and through the U.S. mail. Comments and issues provided by NPS staff, other consulting agencies, and in public scoping informed the alternatives development process and the analysis of potential project effects. Substantive issues raised during public scoping include:

- Concern regarding impact of trees obscuring the historic view and the need for a long-term vista maintenance plan;
- Need to address carrying capacity;
- Need for larger sidewalk to accommodate pedestrians and photographers;
- Need to consider design alternatives that minimize the amount of development;
- Need to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety;
- Need to provide clear direction to pedestrians for crossing Wawona Road;
- Need for restrooms;
- Need to inform visitors about the location of nearby restrooms;
- Need to improve traffic flow, reconfigure parking, and improve drainage;
- Consideration of alternative parking locations and implementation of shuttle service; and

- Consideration for using the Rostrum parking area located west of Wawona Tunnel on the Wawona Road as a transit staging area to alleviate congestion at the Tunnel View Overlook.

These issues were addressed by NPS in the EA. Two internal alternatives development workshops were held following the public comment period with park staff and outside consultants. The first workshop, held on July 17, 2007, was used to develop the three Action Alternatives. The second workshop held on August 6, 2007, used Value Analysis (VA) and Choosing by Advantages (CBA) techniques to select the “Preferred Alternative.” The Alternative development process has been shared with members of the public at Yosemite National Park’s monthly open houses.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation EA* was available for a 30-day public review period from October 3 to November 2, 2007. Advance notice for the project was provided in *Yosemite National Park Planning Updates* beginning in June 2007, and included contact mail-back request for the EA and the park’s website address where the document was available for downloading. A press release announcing the public review period was issued by the park on September 21, 2007. The press release was covered by the *Mariposa Gazette* on September 27, 2007 and by the *Modesto Bee* on September 27, 2007. The San Jose Mercury News also carried a story about the project on September 28, 2007, and included the park’s webpage link for additional information. However, the review dates were not published in this article. Electronic notification of the review dates were published in the *Yosemite National Park E-Newsletter* which is sent to approximately 7,150 individuals, and in the *Yosemite National Park Daily Report* beginning on September 24, 2007. The NPS held regular open houses during 2007 to answer questions and collect comments on the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation* and other projects. Copies of the EA were available to the public at the September 26 and October 31, 2007 open houses. Invitations to the October 31, 2007 open house in Yosemite Valley were extended in the public review and comment announcements for the EA.

The National Park Service distributed approximately 165 copies of the EA to individuals and organizations, including the California State Library, the City of San Francisco Public Library, the Salazar Library at Sonoma State University, the University of Minnesota Forestry Library, and the Columbia College Library. The National Park Service published the EA to the park’s website on September 25, 2007.

Comments received during the formal public comment period consisted of letters, emails, and direct submissions at the open house from 14 individuals and organizations. Issues raised during the public comment period included impacts on visitor experience, scenic resources, historic resources, vegetation, and questions and comments on installation of restrooms, interpretive signage, and public safety. None of the comments received introduced substantive new information or raised any substantive issues not fully considered in the EA. No modifications are included in the Selected Alternative as a result of comments. The comment letters and the *Summary of Public Comments and Responses* are available at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/tunnelview.htm>.

Several of the public comments received provided additional non-substantive information or requested additional clarification. The information has been added to the EA through Errata sheets, which are attached to the *Tunnel View Overlook Environmental Assessment*. The Errata sheets also provide clarification of the Interpretive Exhibits, Traffic Circulation, and usage of tree material removed from site.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Yosemite National Park consults with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office pursuant to Section 7 (a) (2) of the Endangered Species Act (U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). Yosemite National Park obtained a list of federally designated Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate species for Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 23, 2007. This list was used as the basis for analyzing the affects of this project on federally protected species. Based on this list, park data, and park staff's professional knowledge and judgment it was determined that the project would have "no affect" on any federally protected species or their critical habitat. Therefore, no further consultation is required (50 CFR 402.14).

CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER/ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In accordance with the 1999 PA, public involvement was coordinated with the NEPA Public Involvement and Scoping discussed above. Pursuant to the 1999 PA, the park has responsibility to review projects of this nature and magnitude in-house. SHPO made site visit to Tunnel View Overlook on May 22, 2007. Pursuant to Stipulation VIII of the 1999 PA, the EA facilitated notification to the SHPO and the public of the intention to implement standard mitigation measures. The SHPO was provided with a copy of the EA, and had an opportunity to review and comment on this project during the public comment period. The SHPO will also be provided with a copy of this FONSI.

In accordance with the 1999 PA among Yosemite National Park, the California SHPO, and the ACHP, professional staff from Yosemite National Park have determined that implementation of the Selected Alternative will have no effect on archeological or traditional cultural properties. Adverse effects on historic sites, structures, and landscapes will be resolved by implementing standard mitigation measures detailed in the 1999 PA.

AMERICAN INDIAN CONSULTATION

Yosemite National Park is consulting with American Indian tribes having cultural association with this geographical area of the park, including the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, aka Southern Sierra Miwuk, the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, the North Fork Mono Rancheria and the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians. The Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation project was presented by park staff at the annual All-Tribes meeting held July 24, 2007. No American Indian Traditional or Contemporary Cultural Practices are known to be associated with the project area, nor are there any known Traditional Cultural Properties within the site. Therefore, no Traditional or Contemporary Cultural and Religious Practices or Traditional Cultural Properties will be affected by implementation of this project. Associated American Indian Tribal Governments were provided with a copy of this EA during the public comment period. During the consultation, information was provided that showed Yosemite Indians, including Chris Brown and Maggie Howard, were involved in the 1933 "Pageant of Progress" dedication ceremony through Miwok dancing and Paiute prayers. This information was added to the EA through an Erratum. Consultation will continue through project development and implementation and will include providing these governments with a copy of this FONSI.

NON-IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES

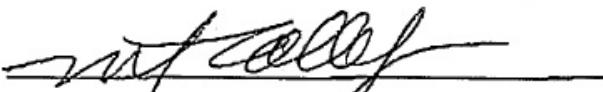
Pursuant to the 1916 Organic Act, the NPS has a management responsibility “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of future generations.” Therefore, the NPS cannot take an action that will “impair” park resources or values.

Based on the analysis provided in the EA, the NPS concludes that implementation of the Selected Alternative will have no major adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of Yosemite National Park; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of Yosemite National Park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or (3) identified as a goal in the park’s 1980 General Management Plan or other relevant NPS planning documents. Consequently, implementation of the Selected Alternative will not violate the NPS Organic Act.

CONCLUSION

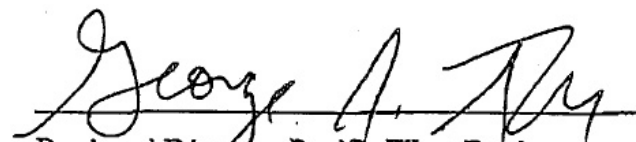
Based on information contained in *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment* as summarized above, the minor nature of comments received from affected agencies, tribal governments, and the public, and the incorporation of the mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, it is the determination of the NPS that the Selected Alternative is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. The Selected Alternative as detailed in this *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Finding of No Significant Impact* may be implemented as soon as practicable.

RECOMMENDED:


Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

12/13/07
Date

APPROVED:


Regional Director Pacific West Region
National Park Service

12/14/07
Date

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ERRATA FOR THE *TUNNEL VIEW OVERLOOK REHABILITATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT*

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

DECEMBER 2007

This section provides a catalog of the corrections and changes made to the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment* since its original release for comment. New language is underlined. Deleted text is marked by strikethrough.

Where a change is made as part of a response to a comment on the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment*, the comment number is noted in brackets at the end of the text change; see the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation: Summary of Public Comment and Response Report* (NPS 2007).

1. In the Abstract, paragraph 3 has been revised to read as follows:

The objectives are based in part on the need to correct long-standing safety concerns. Since the Wawona Tunnel was completed in 1932, the NPS has responded to vehicle-to-vehicle accidents, single-vehicle accidents, and vehicle-to-pedestrian fatalities and near-misses. Drivers traveling ~~west~~ east through the tunnel often speed, are blinded by light as they exit the tunnel, encounter ice-patches at the east portal, and are faced with crowds of pedestrians and slow moving vehicles moving in and out of the roadway from the Tunnel View Overlook parking areas. Combined, these conditions create a sustained and serious safety problem. Drainage issues are among the contributing factors to the hazardous conditions and have existed since the construction of the overlook. This project is also needed to reduce traffic congestion and visitor crowding as well as making the site accessible to visitors with disabilities. In addition, the project is needed to restore the historic vista. The vista has been obscured by trees growing up in the granite fill material adjacent to the primary viewing platform. [Individual, Los Altos, CA, Comment #3-1]

2. In the Executive Summary, page ES-1, paragraph 3 has been revised to read as follows:

The objectives are based in part on the need to correct long-standing safety concerns. Since the Wawona Tunnel was completed in 1932, the NPS has responded to vehicle-to-vehicle accidents, single-vehicle accidents, and vehicle-to-pedestrian fatalities and near-misses. Drivers traveling ~~west~~ east through the tunnel often speed, are blinded by light as they exit the tunnel, encounter ice-patches at the east portal, and are faced with crowds of pedestrians and slow moving vehicles moving in and out of the roadway from the Tunnel View Overlook parking areas. Combined, these conditions create a sustained and serious safety problem. Drainage issues are among the contributing factors to the hazardous conditions and have existed since the construction of the overlook. This project is also needed to reduce traffic congestion and visitor crowding as well as making the site accessible to visitors with disabilities. In addition, the project is needed to restore the historic vista. The vista has been obscured by trees growing up in the granite fill material adjacent to the primary viewing platform. [Individual, Los Altos, CA, Comment #3-1]

3. In the Executive Summary, page ES-2, the following bullet has been added to the bulleted list:

- Automobiles traveling eastbound will be directed into the South Lot while oversized vehicles will be directed into the North Lot. Vehicles traveling west will be allowed to make left-hand turns into the South Lot for overflow purposes and for trailhead access.

4. In the Alternatives, page 2-5, the following Actions Common to All Action Alternatives has been added:

Interpretive Signage and Maps

Interpretive signage/panels would be remounted, restored, or replaced and additional signage/maps would be installed and would include new signage for the Inspiration Point Trailhead.

Traffic Circulation

Oversized vehicles traveling east on Wawona Road would be directed into the North Lot. Eastbound automobiles would be directed into the South Lot. Vehicles traveling west will be allowed to make left-hand turns into the South Lot for overflow purposes and for trailhead access. [Individual, Los Altos, CA, Comment #3-4]

5. In the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, page 3-19, paragraph 1 has been modified to read as follows:

Analysis. All Action Alternatives would include removal of approximately 20 trees ranging from 1-inch to 26-inch dbh, restoring the view from the North Lot to its historic condition—completely open and unobstructed. These trees would include two ponderosa pines—one 26-inch dbh, and one 20-inch dbh—and one 24-inch dbh incense cedar. Three trees ranging from 10-inch to 20-inch dbh would be removed to clear the vista from the South Lot. Selective thinning of approximately 5-10 trees (ranging from 1-inch to 18-inch dbh) would be removed along the Canyon View sidewalk and the Valley View sidewalk. The trees proposed for removal are growing up in the fill material that was deposited during construction of the overlook in 1931 and 1932. None of the trees are more than seventy-five years old, nor have any of them been identified as hazard trees. Trees that were removed would be hauled to a woodyard where they would be used for park purposes such as fabric for historic preservation, heating public buildings or offices, interpretive campfires programs, bridge timbers, or fence rails. [Individual, San Dimas, CA, Comment #2-3]

6. In the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, page 3-27, under the Heading “Historic Background for the Wawona Tunnel Historic Site”, a third paragraph has been added to read as follows:

The Wawona Tunnel “Pageant of Progress” dedication ceremony was held on June 10, 1933, Yosemite Indians, including Chris Brown and Maggie Howard, were involved in the event, which was one of the first dedication ceremonies in Yosemite to included Miwok dancing and Paiute prayers. [Response to consultation letter from Tuolumne Me-wuk Tribal Council]

7. In the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, page 3-36, paragraph 4 has been modified to read as follows:

Data on visitor use at Tunnel View Overlook was collected by the park over five weekend and mid-week days between June 22, and July 10, 2007 (NPS 2007b). Researchers recorded information on the number of visitors within each of the parking lots at one time, the number

and type of vehicles, the length of stay, and whether they were using the Inspiration Point trailhead for dayuse or backpacking. While data on the direction of vehicle travel was not officially recorded during the study, researchers noted that most vehicles stopping at Tunnel View Overlook were traveling west on Wawona Road (Adam Barnett, Resource Management and Science Division, Yosemite National Park, personal communication). [Individual, Los Altos, CA, Comment #3-2]

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SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

TUNNEL VIEW OVERLOOK REHABILITATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

DECEMBER 2007

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service (NPS) is considering the rehabilitation of Tunnel View Overlook in Yosemite National Park, California. The Wawona Tunnel View, located adjacent to Wawona Road at the east portal of the Wawona Tunnel, is one of the most popular scenic overlooks in Yosemite National Park. The overlook, constructed in 1932, affords expansive views of Yosemite Valley, El Capitan, Half Dome, Sentinel Rock, and Bridalveil Fall that have captured the awe of visitors for 75 years. Very little change has occurred to Tunnel View Overlook's physical features (including rockwork, circulation patterns, and configuration) since it was built in 1932. Tour buses, tram tours, and single-family vehicles bring an estimated 3,000-5,000 people to the site per day during the height of the visitation season.

The objectives of the Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation are to remedy vehicle and pedestrian safety issues, correct drainage deficiencies, provide clear circulation patterns for pedestrians and vehicles, enhance and maintain viewing opportunities, provide accessibility to viewing areas for visitors with disabilities, and correct safety problems associated with the existing Inspiration Point trailhead, while preserving the naturalistic, rustic appearance and integrity of this historic site.

The objectives are based in part on the need to correct long-standing safety concerns. Since the Wawona Tunnel was completed in 1932, the NPS has responded to vehicle-to-vehicle accidents, single-vehicle accidents, and vehicle-to-pedestrian fatalities and near-misses. Drivers traveling west through the tunnel often speed, are blinded by light as they exit the tunnel, encounter ice-patches at the east portal, and are faced with crowds of pedestrians and slow moving vehicles moving in and out of the roadway from the Tunnel View Overlook parking areas. Combined, these conditions create a sustained and serious safety problem. Drainage issues contribute to the hazardous conditions and have existed since the construction of the overlook. This project is also needed to reduce traffic congestion and visitor crowding as well as making the site accessible to visitors with disabilities. In addition, the project is needed to restore the historic vista. The vista has been obscured by trees growing up in the granite fill material adjacent to the primary viewing platform.

This report summarizes public comments submitted on the *Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment* (EA). The EA was released for public review on October 3, 2007. The NPS accepted comments through November 2, 2007. Written public comments were received by email, U.S. mail, and by direct submission at the monthly open house held in Yosemite Valley on October 31, 2007. During the comment period, 14 public comments letters were received. This report provides (1) a summary of substantive public concerns expressed in the public comments received; and (2) a specific response to each of these concerns.

COMMENT ANALYSIS PROCESS

Public comments received during the public comment period were reviewed and analyzed using the park's Comment Analysis and Response system. Analysis of public comment letters is performed in a series of stages which require review by staff and members of the Management Team during review and processing. Initially, each letter received is reviewed to determine the discrete points the author is expressing. Each sentence or paragraph in the letter that conveys a discrete comment is then coded in order to associate that comment with a particular resource topic or element of the plan (such as water resources or the plan's relationship to other projects).

Once all letters have been coded for individual comments, similar comments are grouped together and a concern statement is generated. The concern statement captures the main point of the comment and is worded in a way that affords the NPS the opportunity to respond to a requested action. Concern statements are then screened to determine whether or not further clarification is needed in the document, or whether they call for a modification of the proposed action. In the case of the latter, these types of concerns would be brought to park management for deliberation. Lastly, the planning team prepares responses presenting the NPS' reasoning as to how and why public concerns will be incorporated into the project's planning process.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This Response to Public Comments summary is divided into sections based upon the topics identified during coding of comments. Each section includes one or more statements of public concern. The public concerns attempt to present common themes identified from comments in a statement that captures what action the public feels the NPS should undertake. [Note: Because all substantive public concerns are presented, oftentimes these statements may offer contradictory direction.] Each public concern is, in turn, followed by supporting quotes from public comments referenced to original letters.

Each supporting quote is followed by an attribute which identifies the number assigned to the original letter it came from, whether the comment was made by an individual or an organization, a general description of the organization type, and a reference to the letter number and the comment number within the letter. This information appears as a parenthetical clause in the following format: organization or individual, city and state of letter – relevant planning effort – letter number. For example, “(Individual, Merced, CA - #7-3)” is a letter from an individual in Merced, California, and assigned the letter number 7; the supporting quote is from the third coded comment in the letter.

Finally, each public concern statement, and its supporting quote, is followed by the NPS Response. Note that minor technical comments are corrected in the appropriate document or errata sheet and do not receive either a public concern statement or NPS response in this report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The EA was available for public review and comment for a 30-day period from October 3, 2007 through November 2, 2007. The comments received were screened to determine whether any new issues, reasonable alternatives, potential for significant impacts, or mitigation measures were suggested. The comments received did not identify new issues, alternatives, or mitigation measures, nor did they correct or add substantially to the facts presented in, or increase the level of impact described in, the EA. Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, or comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, are not considered

substantive (i.e., they did not challenge the accuracy of the analysis, dispute information accuracy, suggest different viable alternatives, and/or provide new information that makes a change in the proposal). Several of the public comments received provided additional non-substantive information or requested additional clarification. In such cases, the information has been added to the EA through Errata sheets, which shall be attached to the *Tunnel View Overlook Environmental Assessment*. The Errata sheets also provide clarification of the Interpretive Signage and Maps, Traffic Circulation, and usage of tree material removed from site. No modifications to the Preferred Alternative were made as a result of comments.

PLANNING PROCESS AND POLICY

Public Concern #1: The NPS should preserve the park, not add commercialism or expand to accommodate additional traffic.

“I would like to see the park PRESERVED and not be subject to added commercialism and expansions to accommodate more traffic. Such changes will destroy this park maybe not in the next few years but certainly in the future. We need to respect Teddy's [Roosevelt] wishes for Yosemite.” (Individual, Saratoga, CA, Comment #5-6)

Response: This project would not increase the footprint of the existing parking lot. Implementation of the proposed action would result in the net loss of three parking spaces at Tunnel View Overlook. Five new spaces would be added to the North Lot by modifying the alignment of parking spaces and eight spaces would be removed from the South Lot to accommodate a new viewing platform. No new facilities would be built as a result of this project, nor would this project add commercial services. Preservation of park resources would include reduced erosion through improved drainage, restoration of the historic views, and repointing of the historic rockwork.

Public Concern #2: The NPS should restore the original view by removing parking from the Valley.

“Restoring the park to the original view would require the removal of day-use parking and bus parking spots. This point seems to be conveniently left off the plan as removing any parking in the valley is so politically charged. If parking removal was included, I would be more inclined to agree with the project.” (Individual, Saratoga, CA, Comment #5-3)

Response: Since 1932, Tunnel View Overlook has offered visitors awe-inspiring views of some of Yosemite Valley’s most iconic features. Tunnel View Overlook is located above the west end of Yosemite Valley where there is little development. Therefore Valley floor views from Tunnel View do not include development such as parking. Since construction, trees have grown up in the fill material obscuring the view. Therefore, removal of these trees will restore the historic view as originally intended by the designers.

ALTERNATIVES

Public Concern #3: The NPS should add signs informing visitors of nearby restrooms rather than constructing restrooms at Tunnel View.

“Rather than take up valuable space with a bathroom rest area, why not use road signage to advise drivers where the next rest area is - they can always return to the Tunnel view area later in their visit. .” (Individual, Allen, TX, Comment #4-2)

Response: NPS has determined that no restrooms will be constructed at Tunnel View as a result

of this proposed action. There are restrooms available at Bridalveil Fall parking area approximately 2.5-miles east of Tunnel View Overlook, and at Chinquapin approximately 10-miles southwest of Tunnel View. Additional signage along the Wawona Road corridor alerting visitors to the locations of restrooms is currently under consideration by park management. The adequacy of restroom facilities along the Wawona Road corridor will be reassessed after sign improvements are made. If it is determined that more restrooms are needed, the west portal of Wawona Tunnel would be assessed for suitability.

Public Concern #4: The NPS should consider constructing a pedestrian overpass or underpass between the North and South parking lots.

“Consideration could be given to either an overpass or underpass for pedestrians who must cross the road. We understand the cost of such a feature may be beyond the funds available for this project but it would be helpful to know if that option has been explored.” (Organization, Environmental, Tehachapi, CA, Comment #8-1)

Response: Construction of a pedestrian overpass or underpass would have major impacts on the character of the site. Wawona Road is one of two roads into Yosemite Valley that can currently accommodate tractor-trailers and full-sized buses. The average height of these vehicles is 13.5 feet. Based on the existing vertical clearance of Wawona Tunnel, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and NPS standards, and the need to allow 0.5 feet for future pavement overlays, the pedestrian overpass would need 14-foot vertical clearance. Constructing a structure this large at Tunnel View Overlook would obstruct the view and would have a major impact on the character of the historic site. An underpass would require tunneling under the road and providing stairs and/or ramps leading up from below the viewing platform.

Public Concern #5: The NPS should install alternative technology toilets at Tunnel View Overlook.

“Restrooms (pp. 2-11) could be installed at the underused south end of the South Parking lot. No water or sewer lines are needed if the traditional vault or composting toilets are used. The Bridalveil Fall parking lot is often crowded or full and the next restrooms (Chinquapin or Swinging Bridge) are several miles away. From personal observation, the Inspiration Point trailhead appears to be often used as substitute restroom.” (Individual, San Diego, CA, Comment #1-5)

Response: During the environmental assessment, NPS considered installation of restrooms at Tunnel View Overlook but dismissed this action from further consideration. Currently, there are no water or sewer lines at Tunnel View. Therefore, alternative technologies (e.g., vault, composting or combustion toilets) would need to be used at this site. These technologies would not be feasible due to the lack of adequate space and the high volume of visitors (3,000 to 5,000 per day) at Tunnel View Overlook. Additionally, there are restrooms available at Bridalveil Fall parking area approximately 2.5-miles east of Tunnel View Overlook, and at Chinquapin approximately 10-miles southwest of Tunnel View. Additional signage along the Wawona Road corridor alerting visitors to the locations of restrooms is currently under consideration by park management.

Public Concern #6: The NPS should consider constructing a terrace below the main viewing area at Tunnel View.

“Develop an additional terrace to east of main viewing area of parking level.” (Individual, Torrance, CA, Comment #13-1)

Response: During the environmental assessment, NPS considered constructing a 900-square-foot viewing terrace below the main North Lot viewing terrace, however this action dismissed from further consideration. Park management and staff determined that the Action Alternatives sufficiently addressed the purpose and need of the project, and that the addition of a lower terrace would not provide substantial benefits to meeting the project goals. The addition of a lower terrace would not meet the projects purpose and need (improving safety and circulation) and would increase dwell time and adversely impact the function of the overlook by placing higher demand on available parking. Furthermore, construction of this feature would be very costly, approximately \$750,000 to \$1 million, and would provide little gain for the monies spent.

Public Concern #7: The NPS should consider installing restrooms at the west end of Wawona Tunnel and signage at Tunnel View Overlook informing visitors of the restroom's location.

"Another alternative could be adding vault toilets at the west end of the Wawona Tunnel, with a sign at Tunnel View." (Individual, San Diego, CA, Comment #1-6)

Response: There are restrooms available at Bridalveil Fall parking area approximately 2.5-miles east of Tunnel View Overlook, and at Chinquapin approximately 10-miles southwest of Tunnel View. The restrooms suggested by this concern would be approximately 1-mile from Tunnel View. Additional signage along the Wawona Road corridor alerting visitors to the locations of restrooms is currently under consideration by park management. The adequacy of restroom facilities along the Wawona Road corridor will be reassessed after sign improvements are made. If it is determined that more restrooms are needed along the Wawona Road corridor, the west portal of Wawona Tunnel would be assessed for suitability.

RESOURCES (GENERAL)

Public Concern #8: The NPS should retain the trees that are obscuring the view at Tunnel View Overlook.

"We were visitors to Yosemite last month for the very first time and loved the park. We stopped twice at the Tunnel view northside parking/viewing lot to take photos and didn't really have a problem seeing around the trees growing below the viewing area. Perhaps rather than cutting down the beautiful Ponderosa Pines and Incense Cedars, their limbs could merely be trimmed to afford a wider view during the height of tourist season if that seems to be a real issue. It's painful to think those wonderful trees might be cut down when they do provide so much beauty and their branches can easily be used to frame a photograph of the valley. These trees' roots must also help to keep the hillside vegetation and soils in place and must help in times of water erosion. They also provide resting places for the many wildlife and birds of the area. And, even give tourists a closer view of the wildlife at that level of the park." (Individual, Allen, TX, Comment #4-1)

Response: NPS determined that it is necessary to remove the trees that have grown up in the fill material as they obscure the views and narrow the viewing area from its original design, which was intentionally aligned to capture the dramatic view. Additionally, NPS determined that removing these trees would have negligible impacts on wildlife and vegetation while having beneficial impacts on historic properties, visitor experience, scenic resources, park operations, and transportation.

VEGETATION (NOT RARE, THREATENED, OR ENDANGERED)

Public Concern #9: The NPS should consider re-planting, donating or selling the trees that

are obscuring the view.

“One question arises, however, has there been any thought about re-planting the various trees elsewhere assuming that the trees themselves are still healthy and would, in the absence of the cutting, continue to grow? The federal government should seek to manage all of its resources responsibly, and that includes avoidance of waste, i.e., killing trees (even ponderosas and the other unidentified species, that are not on any endangered or threatened list) when there are other choices--replanting, donation, sale to third-parties, use at other locations.” (Individual, San Dimas, CA, Comment #2-3)

Response: Mature trees with deep root systems, such as those growing in the fill, would not be likely to survive relocation. However, the trees removed from the project area would be hauled to a woodyard where they would be used for park purposes such as fabric for historic preservation, heating public buildings or offices, interpretive campfires programs, bridge timbers, or fence rails.

SCENIC RESOURCES/VISUAL QUALITY/CULTURAL RESOURCES

Public Concern #10: The NPS should remove the trees that are obscuring the view.

“We also support removing trees that have grown up around the view area since it was constructed. The view of Yosemite Valley from the overlook is one of most iconic and dramatic in the entire National Park System and should remain one of the major experiences visitors enjoy in a visit to Yosemite National Park.” (Environmental Organization, Tehachapi, CA, Comment #8-8)

“One of the guidelines in the management of Yosemite Valley and other areas of the park should be the preservation of historic appearance and vistas to whatever extent possible. A main action of this proposal, the removal of view obstructing trees, seems to be in accordance with this principle.” (Individual, Los Angeles, CA, Comment #6-1)

Response: Tunnel View Overlook is one of the most popular scenic vistas in the park. Since 1932, it has offered visitors awe-inspiring views of some of Yosemite Valley’s most iconic features: El Capitan, Half Dome, Sentinel Rock, and Bridalveil Fall. Tunnel View Overlook offers views of the glacially carved, densely forested, U-shaped Yosemite Valley all the way east to the mouth of Tenaya Canyon. The siting and alignment of the tunnel was designed to capture this dramatic view and the scenic overlook was built to provide visitors traveling along Wawona Road a place to stop and see the wonders of Yosemite Valley. There are three primary vistas at the Tunnel View Overlook distinguished by the view that is offered and the manner in which the view is intended to be experienced. These primary vistas were intentionally designed by the original landscape engineers who designed the tunnel and overlook. Secondary viewing areas exist that are less immediately spectacular, but still afford quality viewing experiences. NPS determined that it is necessary to remove the trees that are obscuring the views in order to restore these historic views. Additionally, NPS determined that removing these trees would have negligible impacts on wildlife and vegetation while having beneficial impacts on historic properties, visitor experience, scenic resources, park operations, and transportation.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Public Concern #12: The NPS should address the problem of adequate bus parking at Tunnel View Overlook.

“There are places in Yosemite where it is clear that user capacity is sometimes exceeded, and Tunnel View is one of them. The EA states that existing parking is adequate to meet

present levels of use. That may usually be true of cars, but is not true of buses. It is not unusual to see a third or fourth bus having difficulty trying to get into the north lot. Common sense would tell us that sometimes buses find the lot full, and they are unable to stop for the view. So we find it surprising that you have chosen to ignore this problem by declaring that there is no shortage of parking, and have chosen not to consider possible means of ameliorating the problem.” (Environmental Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #9-2)

Response: The visitor use study conducted by NPS from June 22 through July 10, 2007 found that roughly 8% of the vehicles using the North Parking lot at Tunnel View were oversized commercial and/or private vehicles. While the researchers did observe commercial bus drivers and tram operators directing traffic to facilitate parking of oversized vehicles in the center of the lot, for the most part the four spaces in the center of the lot were adequate. On rare occasions five buses would try to enter to the lot. Therefore, realigning and remarking the parking spaces in the center of the lot should improve the flow of oversized vehicle traffic while providing adequate bus parking the majority of the time.

Public Concern #13: The NPS should not implement the proposed action because construction-related noise and dust will impact visitor experience.

“Yosemite is one our most treasured visiting spots and I am very concerned with any human attempts to change the park. This project especially concerns us. I'm not sure what is driving the NPS to want to take on this project to restore Tunnel view to the way it was in the 30's. Maybe its the current climate in our government to change for the sake of change. However, there is a cost. In recent years many of our trips have been impacted by current construction that is occurring in the park. Running heavy equipment, the noise and dusty air compromised our visits. Smog in Yosemite Valley is clearly not in the public interest.” (Individual, Saratoga, CA, Comment #5-2)

Response: The Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation will only result in a short-term adverse impact to visitor experience. These impacts are addressed in the EA for this project, and are mitigated to the extent possible, through measures such as implementation of Best Management Practices to reduce dust, and communication strategies to notify the public of traffic delays. Ultimately this short-term impact to a few visitors will make a long-term benefit to many more visitors possible.

VISITOR SERVICES

Public Concern #14: The NPS should make the “Guide to the Inspiration Point Nature Trail” available to the public in vending machines.

“The Inspiration Point trailhead should have a better sign and map explaining the historical highlights on the trail. The Inspiration Point Nature Trail leaflet, “Guide to the Inspiration Point Nature Trail” . . . should be reprinted (with an update on fire, #5) and made available in a vending machine.” (Individual, San Diego, CA, Comment #1-7)

Response: This guide is currently available in Wawona and Yosemite Valley. The suggestion regarding making the “Guide to the Inspiration Point Nature Trail” available to the public in vending machines has been forwarded to the park’s interpretive staff. Additionally, park staff and management are working on an interpretive strategy for Tunnel View Overlook that will include the Inspiration Point Trailhead.

Public Concern #15: The NPS should slow traffic within the project area and install signage

to warn approaching vehicles of traffic congestion before and within the tunnel.

“Everything possible should be done to slow down traffic emerging from the tunnel. We expect that signs before entering the tunnel and in the tunnel to warn drivers of impending congestion will be designed tastefully and in fitting with park values. Garish flashing lights and intrusive designs should be avoided as much as possible.”
(Environmental Organization, Tehachapi, CA, Comment #8-2)

Response: The NPS is working with traffic engineers and designers to develop signage strategy and other traffic-calming features to reduce traffic speeds within the project area and to alert motorists of the overlook’s locations and associated traffic congestion. These measures would include installation of rumble strips within the tunnel and installation of signage alerting westbound vehicles of their proximity to the overlook and pedestrian crossing signs. Signage for eastbound traffic located prior to entering the tunnel would include speed limit signs, radar speed display signs, and signs alerting drivers of the overlook at the end of the tunnel. The overhead sign within the tunnel would be upgraded to a 2 or 3 line LED message board.

Public Concern #16: The NPS should install or improve existing interpretive signs to more fully explain topics such as: historical entryways into Yosemite Valley, reduction of meadows caused by fire suppression, and impacts of feeding wildlife.

“Interpretive signs in the viewing areas could more fully explain: Historical entryways into Yosemite Valley, such as the old Big Oak Flat Road and the Wawona Road, disappearing meadows no longer visible due to lack of fires, and impacts on people and wildlife by feeding rodents.” (Individual, San Diego, CA, Comment #1-8)

Response: Interpretive signs will be placed at key vistas at the overlook, and the suggestion regarding interpretive ideas such as: historical entryways into Yosemite Valley, reduction of meadows caused by fire suppression, and impacts of feeding wildlife have been forwarded to the park’s interpretive and management staff who are working on an interpretive strategy for Tunnel View Overlook.

TRANSPORTATION

Public Concern #17: The NPS should consider having vehicles traveling east on Wawona Road turn left into the east entrance to the North Parking Lot rather than turning left right after exiting the tunnel.

“Providing a left turn into the north side parking lot immediately upon leaving the tunnel creates a dangerous situation. Drivers emerging from the tunnel into bright sunlight with an immediate optional left turn could become confused. Would it be possible to have over size vehicles and automobiles make their left turn into this parking lot at its east end instead of making an abrupt left turn right at the tunnel exit?”
(Environmental Organization, Tehachapi, CA, Comment #8-3)

Response: Aided by the advice of traffic engineers, the NPS determined that one-way traffic flow in and out of the North Lot would provide the safest and most intuitive traffic flow pattern for visitors and would have the greatest beneficial impact on traffic congestion. The eastern driveway provides the greatest sight distance for vehicles exiting the parking lot, and moves vehicles making left-hand turns away from the tunnel portal.

Public Concern #18: The NPS should not reduce parking spaces in the South Parking Lot for the sake of a new trailhead platform.

“It seems rather shortsighted to diminish the south lot by 8 (23%) spaces 4 of them for the sake of some kind of new trailhead platform, when what the trailhead people need most are temporary parking spots to load or unload.” (Individual, Los Altos, CA, Comment #3-3)

Response: The enhancement of the viewing platform and addition of two wheelchair accessible parking spaces and ramps will result in the reduction of eight parking spaces from the South Parking Lot. These new features will improve access for disabled visitors and enhance visitor experience. Implementation of the proposed action will result in the net loss of three parking spaces at Tunnel View Overlook. Relocation of the trailhead will not result in the elimination of additional parking spaces.

Public Concern #19: The NPS should not significantly increase the number of parking spaces at Tunnel View Overlook.

“We support not providing any significant increase in parking spaces in the project area.” (Environmental Organization, Tehachapi, CA, Comment #8-7)

Response: The NPS will not increase the overall number of parking spaces in the project area. Implementation of the proposed action will result in the net loss of three parking spaces at Tunnel View Overlook. Five new spaces will be added to the North Lot by modifying the alignment of parking spaces, and eight spaces will be removed from the South Lot to accommodate a new viewing platform.

Public Concern #20: The NPS should improve public safety by reducing traffic speeds, improving signage, installing speed bumps, and prohibiting left-hand turns by private vehicles into the North Lot.

“There are concerns for public safety when eastbound vehicles emerging from the dark tunnel turn left into the north parking lot. Significant but appropriate warnings must be posted in the tunnel eastbound, to alert drivers of slow traffic, pedestrians and congestion ahead. In addition the problem could be significantly reduced by prohibiting east bound privately owned vehicles emerging from the Wawona Tunnel from turning left into the north lot viewing area, directing traffic instead into a far less problematic right turn into the south parking lot viewing area. Permitting only commercial vehicles and tour busses to make a left turn into the north lot viewing area would reduce accidents and collisions that result when problematic left turns by privately owned vehicles back traffic up into the Wawona Tunnel. We believe this action along with appropriate electronic signage and strict traffic enforcement should adequately address the public safety issue at the Tunnel View Overlook.” (Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #10-2)

Response: The Preferred Alternative would include a number of measures to improve safety within the project area including: rumble strips within the tunnel, improved signage, and prohibiting left-hand turns for automobiles traveling east on Wawona Road.

Public Concern #21: The NPS should implement traffic management strategies and install clear signage during construction to minimize risks to public safety at Tunnel View Overlook.

“As with any of the many small, fairly non-controversial projects planned or taking place in the Park, we recognize that traffic control, signing, and changing conditions create the potential for distraction of drivers who are already often mesmerized by the

scenic beauty of the surrounding landscape. We encourage the Park in this specific project area to use especially clear signs and traffic management during construction so as to minimize the risk of hazards to the public during the project.” (Environmental Organization, Twain Harte, CA, Comment #11-2)

Response: A Comprehensive Traffic Control and Visitor Protection Plan is a requirement of the project, and will be in place during implementation of the proposed action.

PARK OPERATIONS

Public Concern #22: The NPS should implement the proposed action to improve drainage, and should also reduce roadway icing by consistently clearing drains and not creating snow berms in the parking lot.

“Improve drainage (p.2-3) would help prevent icing of the parking lot and road. Consistent clearing of drains and not creating of snow berms in the parking lot will also help prevent roadway icing.” (Individual, San Diego, CA, Comment #1-4)

Response: The Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation project will include improving drainage. Suggestions regarding routine maintenance and snow plowing have been forwarded to the Roads and Trails Branch of the Facilities Management Division.

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