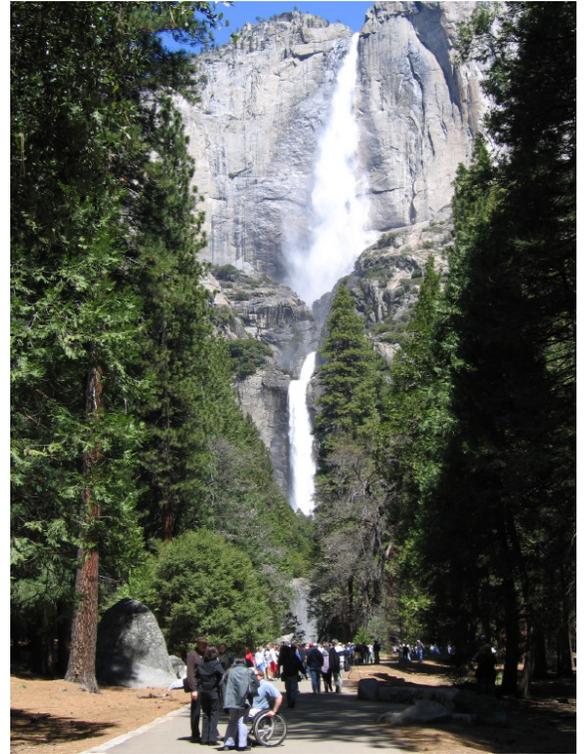




Lower Yosemite Fall Project

On April 18, 2005, The National Park Service and The Yosemite Fund celebrated the completion of a ten- year, \$13.5 million restoration of the Yosemite Falls area, North America's highest waterfall. The park's 3.5 million annual visitors will approach the Lower Yosemite Fall in a fresh setting that showcases its natural beauty and improved vistas and offers unobtrusive visitor amenities and access for the disabled. This is the largest public/private partnership project ever undertaken in Yosemite and was the first major improvement project to begin after the approval of the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.

Financial support for this project came from a partnership between the National Park Service and The Yosemite Fund, a nonprofit park partner that is the primary fundraising organization for Yosemite National Park.



What was this project about?

The Lower Yosemite Fall Project consisted of a series of re- landscaping, removal, restoration, and reconstruction projects at one of Yosemite Valley's most popular natural destination areas. This improvement project:

- enhanced a world- class visitor experience
- created a loop trail system, including a trail to the base of Lower Yosemite Fall, which is fully accessible to people with mobility impairments
- reduced the perception of crowding and congestion at the main view areas and along the trail
- replaced pre- existing bridges with narrow openings (which restrict the natural stream flow) in order to improve the hydrology of the braided stream system

The restoration project features an open space and picnic area which replaced a crowded parking lot. For the first time, disabled visitors have easy wheelchair access to the main bridge at the Lower Fall viewing area. The project enhanced forest and stream habitats, using native plants and materials throughout the area. Newly reconstructed western and eastern trails ease crowding while new benches and alcoves along the entire trail loop provide for a more leisurely, contemplative visit. Strategic placement of logs, vegetation, and boulders directs visitors away from vulnerable natural areas.

What new facilities will I notice while visiting the falls?

A new shuttle stop and visitor staging area at the eastern trailhead better distribute foot traffic to reduce crowding. The new picnic area includes larger restroom facilities constructed from wood and stone to blend with nature's beauty. The new restroom puts an end to the long line at the former dilapidated cinder block structure. Facilities have more than doubled and now include disabled access.

Educational opportunities are improved through new interpretive exhibits that describe John Muir's historic cabin site, the former area used for James Hutchings' sawmill and cabin, the area's natural history, and 4,000 years of Indian culture. A topographical exhibit has been created specifically for sight-impaired visitors.

Public Participation

Here are some ways to learn more and stay involved:

- Add your name to the park's mailing list (to address/fax/email below) and receive the *Planning Update* newsletter as well as other planning-related notices. You can also submit your email address to receive Yosemite National Park's periodic electronic newsletter.

Mail: Superintendent
Attn: Planning Mailing List
National Park Service
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Fax: 209/379- 1294

Email: YOSE_Planning@nps.gov

- The status of other Yosemite National Park improvement projects will be periodically updated on the park's planning web site. Visit online: www.nps.gov/yose/planning.
- Visit The Yosemite Fund's web site at www.yosemitefund.org.