

# Yosemite National Park

Merced Wild & Scenic River

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Camping



*I would not be the nature-loving person I am without the many summers spent camping along the Merced River. We didn't have a lot of money but we felt like we were the luckiest kids in the world in that old canvas tent!—2009 Scoping Comment*

Camping in Yosemite is a treasured tradition. Many families return year after year to camp within the beauty of Yosemite National Park. With campgrounds nestled between sheer granite rock faces and along the Merced River, these views are some of the most spectacular in the world. Many of the campgrounds in Yosemite trace their roots to U.S. Calvary camps established more than a century ago.

---

### What are the issues and opportunities related to camping in Yosemite?

During public scoping for the Merced River Plan the park received many comments on camping. Many comments noted that demand for campsites exceeds the current supply and cited the closure of campgrounds following the 1997 flood as contributing to the problem. The *Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Baseline Conditions Report* identified high levels of foot traffic between Valley campgrounds and the river's edge. These social trails contribute to erosion and vegetation loss along the river's edge. Riparian plants protect water quality by filtering run-off and stabilizing the river bank. Riverside brush and trees also provide valuable habitat to many animals. The Merced River Plan seeks to provide access to Yosemite while protecting the river so that future generations have the opportunity to experience camping in Yosemite.

---

### What is the current level of camping in Yosemite?

Presently, there are 466 campsites within six campgrounds in Yosemite Valley. There are 99 campsites at the Wawona Campground. Many of these campsites, particularly at Backpackers, North Pines, and Wawona, are in close proximity to the Merced River and pose risks to sensitive natural and cultural resources.

---

**What changes are common to all alternatives?**

Campsites located in close proximity to the river allow people to access the river directly from their site, trampling riparian vegetation, compacting soil, and causing riverbank erosion. Under all action alternatives, campsites located within 100 feet of the river would be removed or relocated to ensure river values remain fully protected. A small number of campsites would be removed across all alternatives to facilitate cultural resource protection, particularly at Wawona and Upper Pines campgrounds.

---

**What are the changes in the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5)?**

Despite these changes, the Preferred Alternative would see a significant increase in campsite inventory over present levels while maintaining a 100 foot protective buffer between campsites and the river. Total campsites in Yosemite Valley would increase from 466 to 640 (37%). Two campsites at Upper Pines Campground and 13 campsites at Wawona Campground would be removed to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. There would be an increase in campsites at Upper Pines, Camp 4, and Backpackers; new campsites would also be added at Former Upper River campground (30 sites) and at a new campground at Eagle Creek (42 sites). This expansion of camping opportunities covers the full spectrum of camping options, including new group sites, traditional drive-in tent and RV sites, and walk-in campsites.

---

**What are the changes in the other action alternatives?**

In Yosemite Valley, Alternatives 2 and 3 would see very slight decreases in camping to allow for natural and cultural resource protection. Under Alternative 2, there would be a decrease in campsites of 16 (-3%), and under Alternative 3 there would be an increase in campsites of 11 (+2%). Both Alternatives 4 and 6 would increase camping opportunities even more than the Preferred Alternative. Alternative 4 would increase camping opportunities by 235 sites (+50%), and Alternative 6 would increase camping opportunities by 273 sites (+59%). New campsites would be added under both Alternatives 4 and 6 west of Backpackers, east of Camp 4, west of Yosemite Lodge, and at Upper Pines, Former Upper River, and Former Lower River campgrounds.

---

**Find Out More**

If you're interested in learning more about the Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, you can download the entire document at [www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp-deis.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp-deis.htm). For those that have the time, reading the entire document will convey the fullest understanding of the plan. For those interested in an overview of the Merced River Plan, park staff suggest you begin with:

- Summary Guide for the Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan/ DEIS
  - These sections of Chapter 8: Alternatives:
    - o Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6
    - o Overview section of Alternatives 2-6 (includes map series for each alternative)
    - o Full narrative for Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)
- 

**Tell Us What You Think**

Comment on this draft environmental impact statement by visiting the Merced River Plan Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at [http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp\\_deis](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp_deis). Electronic comment submittal through PEPC saves resources and allows for direct entry to the NPS comment analysis system. Comments can also be submitted by email to [yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:yose_planning@nps.gov) or by U.S. mail at the following address:

Superintendent  
Yosemite National Park  
Attn: Merced River Plan  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389