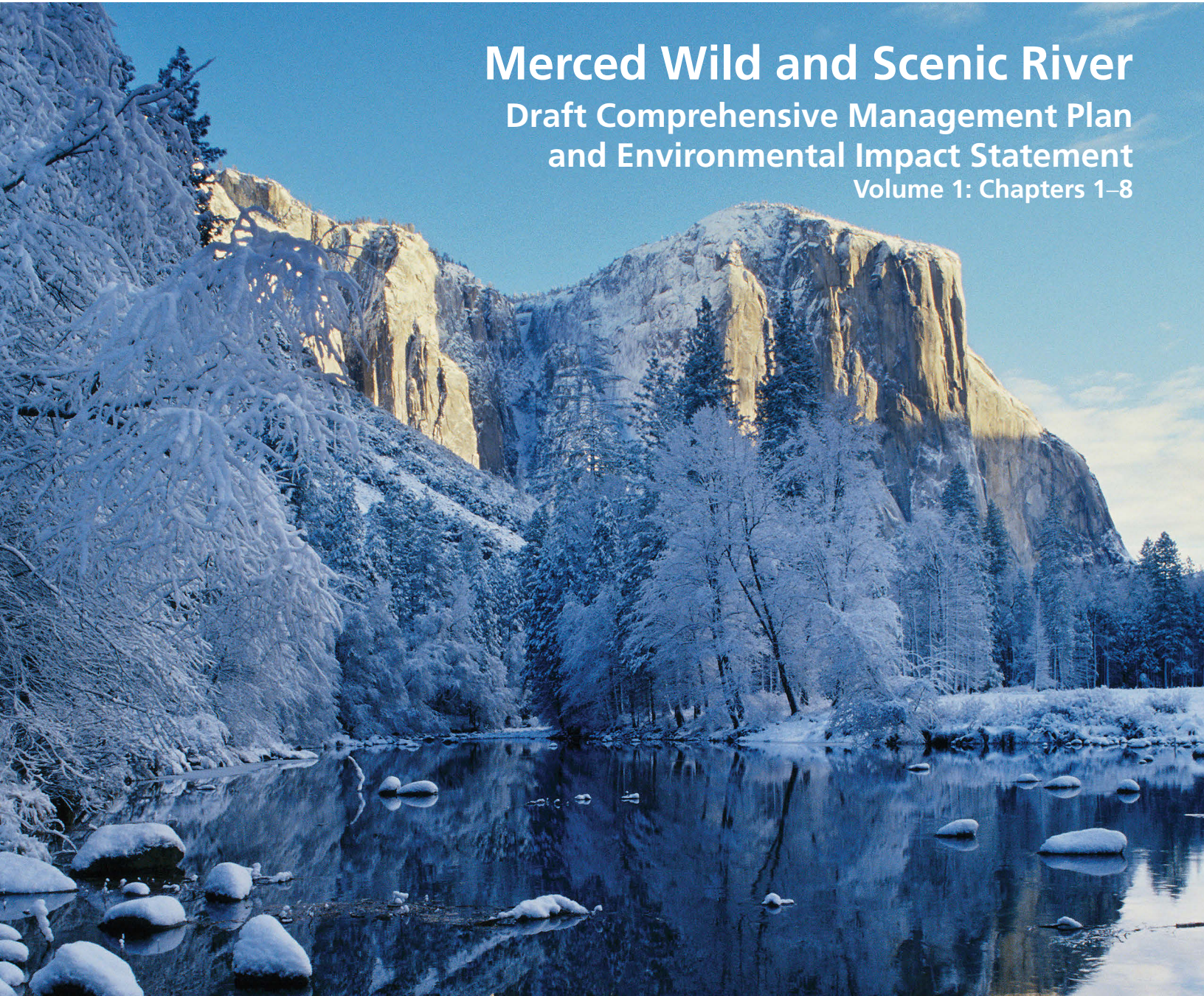




Merced Wild and Scenic River

Draft Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Volume 1: Chapters 1–8



Letter to Friends

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Merced Wild and Scenic River
Comprehensive Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Yosemite National Park

Lead Agency: National Park Service

ABSTRACT

This *Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* is intended to guide the management of the Merced Wild and Scenic River within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park for the next 20-plus years. The plan and its draft environmental impact statement, which evaluates potential impacts and the range of alternatives, are integrated in this document and are referred to collectively as the *Merced River Plan / DEIS*.

The *Merced River Plan / DEIS* directs the protection of the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and the outstandingly remarkable values that make it worthy of designation. The plan will:

- Establish the boundaries and segment classifications (as wild, scenic, or recreational) of the Merced Wild and Scenic River (Chapter 3) and provide a clear process for protection of the river's free-flowing condition in keeping with WSRA Section 7 (Chapter 4).
- Refine descriptions of the river's *outstandingly remarkable values* (ORVs), which are the unique, rare, or exemplary river-related characteristics that make the river eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and document the conditions of these ORVs, water quality, and free-flowing condition of the river (Chapter 5).
- Identify management objectives for the river, and specific actions and/or programs that will be implemented to achieve the objectives and commit ongoing studies and monitoring to ensure that river values are protected and enhanced over the life of the plan (Chapter 5).
- Establish a user-capacity program that addresses the kinds and amounts of public use that the river corridor can sustain while protecting and enhancing the river's ORVs (Chapters 6 and 7).
- Fulfill the specific direction of the 1987 legislation designating the Merced River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System (16 U.S.C. Section 1274 (a)(62)(A)) and make appropriate revisions to the park's 1980 *General Management Plan for Yosemite National Park*.

The *Merced River Plan / DEIS* presents and analyzes six alternatives. Alternative 1 (No Action) would continue current management and trends in the condition of river values. Action Alternatives 2-6 would protect and enhance river values by improving conditions that threaten sensitive meadows, archeological resources, and scenic vistas. The action alternatives vary in the degree of restoration and the amount of visitor use accommodated by the commensurate level of facilities and services necessary to protect river values under each alternative.

There will be a 90-day public comment period for the *Merced River Plan/DEIS*. Comments are due no later than 90 days after the publication of the EPA notice in the *Federal Register*. Please refer to the project website, www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp.htm, for the exact comment end date. Readers are encouraged to submit comments electronically through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp_deis.

Written comments regarding this document should be postmarked by the end of the review period and directed to: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, ATTN: Merced River Plan, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389. You may also fax your comments to 209-379-1294. To request a printed copy or CD of this document (available in limited quantity), please email yose_planning@nps.gov.

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Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Merced Wild and Scenic River Draft Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Volume 1: Executive Summary & Chapters 1-8

January 2013



Photo by Christine White Loberg / NPS

The Merced Wild and Scenic River, shown flowing by the iconic El Capitan in Yosemite Valley, meanders 81 miles through Yosemite National Park.



Photo by Erik Skindrud / NPS

Young campers properly store food at their Yosemite Valley campsite in a bear box to avoid attracting black bears to the campground.



Photo by Ray Santos / NPS

Julia Parker, an American Indian interpreter at Yosemite, patches a Mono Indian cooking basket used to prepare acorn mush.



Photo by Catherine Hilfiker / NPS

Sarah Stock, a Yosemite ornithologist, demonstrates bird banding techniques to members of the Yosemite Conservation Corps.

MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Volume 1: Executive Summary and Chapters 1-8

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