

8. ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the six alternatives proposed in the *Merced River Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)*. These alternatives represent a range of reasonable alternatives as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) including a “No Action” Alternative (Alternative 1), in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1502.14). The No Action Alternative represents a continuation of current management practices and provides a basis to compare differences among the alternatives. This chapter addresses the following topics:

- The process used to develop the alternatives and identify the preferred alternative for the *Merced River Plan/DEIS* (Figure 8-1)
- A description of each alternative (page 8-10)
- Identification of the Environmentally Preferred Alternative (page 8-317)
- Alternatives and actions considered and eliminated from further study (page 8-319)
- A Summary of Capacities (Table 8-56)
- A Summary of Alternatives and Actions (Table 8-58)
- River Value Analysis

The Process used to Develop the Alternatives

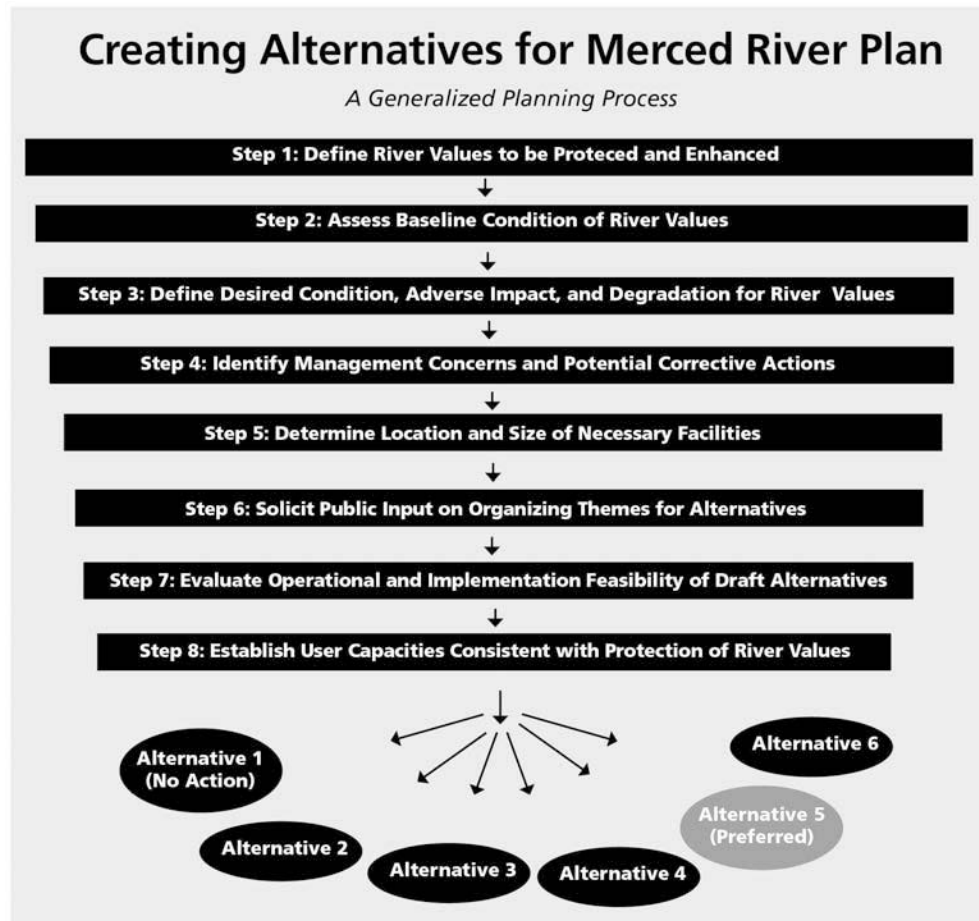
The Merced River Planning Framework

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to rigorously explore a range of reasonable alternatives when planning for a major federal action. NEPA also mandates an early and open process to determine the scope of issues surrounding the proposed action, to develop options for addressing those issues, and to provide for public review and comment on the environmental analyses presented in the project’s draft environmental impact statement (Draft EIS).

Using a full complement of park personnel, including experts in park operations, facilities, and cultural and natural resources, the Merced River planning team devoted several years of effort, from 2009 to 2012, to develop five action alternatives for managing the river corridor (See Figure 8-1). In building the alternatives, the team worked within a planning framework that included eight major steps, which are explained below. Although this framework is described as a series of sequential activities, planning is fundamentally iterative. At each step, new information is uncovered and new insight is gained that can trigger changes to prior decisions. Additionally, extensive internal review and public input affected the process, occasioning still more revisions to it. In the case of the Merced, some of these steps were revisited almost yearly. Although time-consuming, this process of review and revision ultimately lead to a stronger end product, both in form and content.

The NPS has identified its preferred alternative, but all alternatives protect and enhance river values while providing for kinds and amounts of visitor use that are protective of river values. Collectively, the alternatives represent a wide range of choices for the future management of the Merced River corridor. The following sections provide greater detail with regard to each step in the planning process.

Figure 8-1: Creating Alternatives for Merced River Plan



Step 1. Define River Values to be Protected and Enhanced

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) mandates that each wild and scenic river "... shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system" (WSRA, Section 10 (a)). The values to be protected include the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and those values that are "outstandingly remarkable." The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council (Interagency Council) criteria for outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) state that the value must be river-related and rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context.

The National Park Service (NPS) began the process of identifying the ORVs for the Merced River in 1996. After completing other steps in the alternative development process (below), park planners re-visited the ORVs several times (in 2000, 2005, and 2009). Each time, park planners revised and updated the list, with further definitional clarification from the Interagency Council.

The planning team conducted internal ORV workshops, drawing upon scientific information, subject-matter expertise, peer review, government partners, management input, and expert guidance from other wild and scenic river professionals. Public scoping comments regarding ORVs were integrated into the *Draft 2010 Outstandingly Remarkable Values Report* for the Merced Wild and Scenic River, which represented the culmination of this work.

Step 2. Assess Baseline Condition of River Values

After the release of the 2010 report, workshops were held to solicit additional information on ORV locations and important features; to acquire more knowledge and information about specific ORVs or their components; and to gather suggestions about how river values could best be protected. A revised ORV report was posted to the Yosemite National Park's website in May 2011. Additional opportunities to comment on the ORVs were provided through the release of the fall 2011 and spring 2012 planning workbooks. Public comment and agency and tribal consultation resulted in yet another round of refinement and revision to the Merced River ORVs. Information used to evaluate the baseline condition of the Merced River ORVs included historic photos, maps, and archival materials; research studies and models of natural systems developed specifically for this planning effort; and the professional judgment of experienced subject-matter specialists. External peer reviews of specific research findings and the implications for overall river conditions were solicited.

The park planning team consolidated all of this information into the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Values Draft Baseline Conditions Report*. The assessment was also incorporated into "River Values and Their Management" (Chapter 5) of the *Merced River Plan/Draft EIS*. The report provides an assessment of river values at the time of the river's designation (1987) and represents the existing (or "baseline") condition of those values. This important step in the planning process provides a basis for comparison with the expected outcome of the actions described in the alternatives. It was also essential for identifying areas where actions must be taken to improve conditions in the river corridor.

The first draft of the baseline conditions assessment report, completed in 2011, informed park planners' understanding of river value conditions early in the planning process, guiding the structure and content of the alternatives in response to the identified management considerations.

In an effort to educate the public, the NPS facilitated a series of spring 2011 workshops and associated webinars. The workshops provided an opportunity to learn more about the conditions of the Merced River and the management considerations that needed to be addressed in the Merced River Plan. The *Merced Wild and Scenic River Values Draft Baseline Conditions Report* was subsequently posted on the park's website at http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp_documents.htm, and public review and comment was encouraged. All public comments received during this phase of the planning process were posted online in May 2011.

Step 3: Define Desired Condition, Adverse Effect, and Degradation for River Values

In concert with assessing river values, NPS park managers determined the desired condition for those values, based on guiding legislation, available research and monitoring information, best professional judgment of subject-matter experts, and current trends in the relevant academic and public land management fields. Further, a comprehensive river management plan must contain provisions designed to prevent any adverse effect or degradation from occurring to the river values. Specific thresholds must be stated for mandatory management action that will occur ahead of any such impacts or degradation, to keep the state of river values at or above the desired condition (see "River Values and Their Management" Chapter 5).

Park managers developed indicators of river-value condition that are sensitive to change, along with the monitoring protocols needed to standardize data collection over time. By following these protocols, park managers will have early indications of changing conditions and be able to correct downward trends before they broach management standards. In some cases, a river value may not lend itself easily to monitoring,

such as stairstep river morphology, which is affected only by massive geologic forces that are well beyond human control. Consequently, park managers did not define these terms for that river value. Indicators were developed for all other river values.

Step 4: Identify Management Concerns and Potential Corrective Actions

This step involves applying the definitions of river condition (Step 3's management standard, adverse effect, and degradation) to the existing river value conditions (identified in Step 2). By comparing the actual river condition to the management standard, park managers obtained a clear picture of which values needed remedial action to bring them up to the management standard or forestall a downward trend in conditions. In addition, due to the comprehensive and systematic nature of this review, a host of localized areas of concern were identified as places where action could be taken to enhance river values.

The planning team separated this step of the process into two stages, primary and secondary scope. The first stage or primary scope, involved a systematic review of the river corridor to identify management considerations related to the free-flowing condition of the river, water quality, hydrologic/geologic, recreational, cultural, biological, and scenic ORVs. The team used scientific and geospatial data, such as floodplain maps, remote sensing imagery, rock-fall hazard zone models and maps, and channel migration history to support this review. All public comments received during scoping were screened to ensure that location-specific concerns were identified and paired with corrective measures. Finally, subject-matter specialists used their knowledge of the river system to supplement and clarify the findings of the baseline conditions report.

The team ranked the primary scope issues using the following factors:

- Degree of impact from existing infrastructure or current uses on the free-flowing condition of the river (primarily impacts to river flows below the ordinary high-water mark, approximated by the 2- to 10-year floodplain)
- Degree of impact from existing infrastructure or current uses on specific ORVs (biological, scenic, cultural, geological/hydrological)
- Specific locations where potential threats to water quality need to be addressed (point source pollutants, such as nutrients, or petro-chemicals, for example)
- Degree of impact from existing infrastructure or current uses on the Recreation ORV (conflicts between types and locations of activities, density and crowding at key use areas)

The primary scope evaluation was completed first to ensure all alternatives would include protective measures to remedy problems identified with natural and cultural ORVs. The ecological restoration program (detailed in Appendix E) forms the centerpiece of restoration actions in the *Merced River Plan/DEIS*, though there are others (such as removing some structures from riparian areas). Actions must also correct past impacts to the extent possible (earlier impacts can be irreversible—some effects of historic manipulation of the river corridor, such as blasting of the El Capitan Moraine, may never be reversed, for example). By identifying all known areas of concern and options for corrective actions, managers ensured all alternatives would protect and enhance river values. These actions form the core of all action alternatives.

The next stage, or secondary scope evaluation, pertained to issues related to visitor use, including congestion, transportation and visitor experience. Transportation modeling identified the limitations associated with the existing road system design and options for improving traffic flow. Various mixes of

parking, overnight accommodations, camping, and services were packaged to provide for significantly different visitor experiences within the range of alternatives.

A summary of the primary and secondary scope issues, along with potential solutions, was developed and packaged as the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Planning Workbook* (fall 2011). The NPS conducted five workshops in conjunction with the release of the workbook to gather input on the range of potential options developed to protect and enhance river values. Comments on this workbook were posted on Yosemite's website.

Step 5: Determine Location and Size of Necessary Facilities

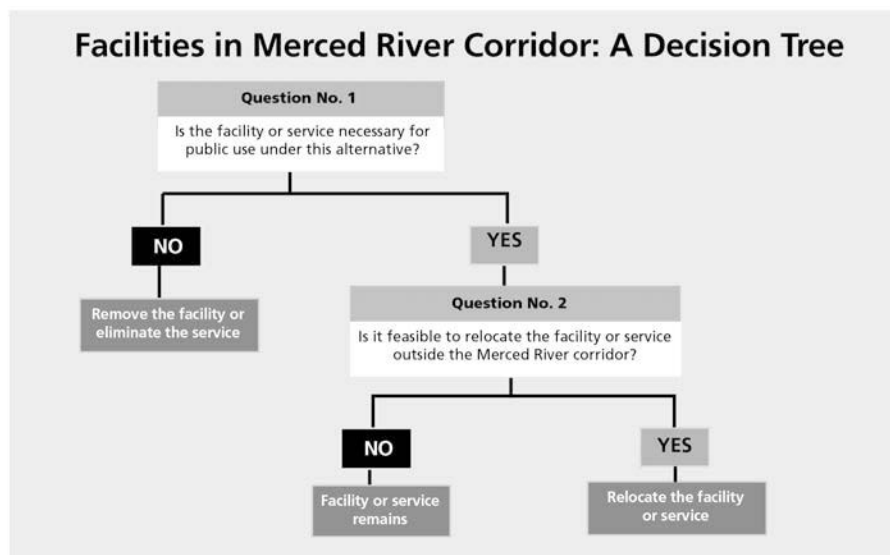
WSRA and the 1982 National Wild and Scenic River System; Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification and Management of River Areas provide direction on the types of facilities that are allowed in designated river corridors. In addition, the 2008 opinion of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit on the 2005 Revised MRP questioned whether the level of development in some parts of the river corridor was protective of ORVs. The planning team, therefore, evaluated existing facilities and services within the river corridor to determine whether they should be retained, removed or relocated in order to protect and enhance river values.

“River Values and Their Management” (Chapter 5) identifies locations where the development footprint, visitor uses and /or administrative uses were found to be causing local effects to components of river values.

“Facilities and Services Analysis” (Chapter 7) presents the results of the planning team’s analysis of all existing public-use facilities and services to determine whether they are currently impacting any river values and, if so, how those impacts could be eliminated. In particular, the plan calls for removal, redesign, and/or relocation of those facilities. New development (and re-development) proposed across the range of alternatives was also screened using the above criteria.

It is important to note that, across the range of alternatives, changes to facilities and services are made for reasons other than impacts to river values (as shown in Figure 8-2). Some facilities and services are modified to further the thematic goals of the individual alternatives. “Alternatives” (Chapter 8) includes a determination of the location, size and type of facilities and services necessary for public use, as directly correlated to the visitor experience and land-use planning goals for each alternative.

Figure 8-2: Facilities in the Merced River Corridor: A Decision Tree



Step 6: Solicit Public Input on Organizing Themes for Alternatives

Even before beginning the alternatives development process, park managers solicited public input for the plan. While public input is addressed in some of the foregoing steps, it is reported as a separate step because it is foundational to the alternatives development process. Public input was solicited on a regular basis throughout the project, from the earliest public scoping period in 1999 through the review and revision of this *Merced River Plan/DEIS* over the next several months. Major topics discussed included the ORVs, their conditions, and indicators to assess those conditions; user capacity; other planning issues the alternatives needed to address; organizing concepts or themes for the alternatives, site plan concepts, and the preliminary alternatives themselves.

The *Merced River Plan/DEIS* has been developed through consultation with culturally associated American Indian tribes, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and other federal and state agencies. Gateway communities, organizations, and interested members of the public have provided nearly 1,500 public correspondences (including letters, faxes, emails, comment forms, and public meeting flip-chart notes). The NPS has conducted more than 40 public meetings, presentations, workshops, field visits, and open houses in support of the EIS process. Two planning workbooks were prepared and distributed for public review and comment (fall 2011 and spring 2012) prior to completion of the *Merced River Plan/DEIS*.

Step 7: Evaluate Operational and Implementation Feasibility of Draft Alternatives

Once draft action alternatives were completed, park planners put them through several rounds of review and critique by park managers, field staff, resource experts, and the public. Planners examined all site proposals and management actions, ensuring that no unresolvable operational or logistical conflicts remained within individual alternatives. Cost estimates were developed for the alternatives, subjecting those estimates to scrutiny as well.

Step 8: Establish User Capacities Consistent with Protection of River Values

WSRA and Secretaries' Guidelines direct managing agencies to address user capacity in river management plans and to establish "the kinds and amounts of public use which the river area can sustain without impact to the values for which it was designated." As with the other steps above, public input was a fundamental part of this step. During the scoping period for the Merced River Plan, the NPS asked the public to describe what activities they enjoy in the Merced River corridor, to help define the Recreational ORV and begin to address the issue of kinds and amounts of use the river can sustain. User-capacity experts developed a nine-step process to address user-capacity mandates (see "Visitor Use and User Capacity" Chapter 6). These steps were integrated into the overall planning process. User capacities were adjusted to reflect the experiences envisioned within each alternative. Planners produced a range of user capacities and recreation types, all within the existing constraints and all protective of river values.

As a part of the supporting research, the planning team compiled visitor-use data (Littlejohn et al. 2005; Le et al. 2008) that provided insight into the types of activities and experiences visitors preferred. The team also compiled information on the historic, current, and projected levels of visitor use along the Merced River (DEA 2007; NPS 2008d; NPS 2008e; NPS 2009c; and NPS 2009e) and conducted scientific studies to determine the extent to which visitor use affects river values. Additionally, comprehensive mapping and spatial data related to river values were gathered and compiled to represent planning constraints. Collectively, research studies,

constraint maps, and best professional judgment informed decisions on the kinds and amounts of visitor and other public use that may be accommodated without adverse effects to river values.

Implementation Plan

Not all of the actions in the alternatives will be described with enough detail to be considered implementable upon signing of the Record of Decision (ROD). Some actions will require follow-on NEPA compliance and further environmental analysis, in the form of Categorical Exclusions (CE), Environmental Assessments (EA) or Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). The details of the implementation plan and phasing will be outlined in the ROD.

Actions fell under three different categories in this plan; actions that are required to protect and enhance river values and actions that are required to address user capacity elements. The three categories are described below.

1. **Management Concerns:** A *Management Concern* describes a river value that is not presently in a protected state (Chapter 5); requiring immediate corrective actions. Corrective actions are a high priority for the NPS, as the managing agency of the Merced River Wild and Scenic River. These corrective actions will be implemented upon signing of the ROD or follow-on NEPA will be initiated immediately upon signing the ROD.
2. **Management Considerations:** A *Management Consideration* describes a river value that is currently in a protected state; however, corrective actions may be applied to specific localized areas to further enhance the river value. Most of the actions identified as enhancing river values will be implemented upon signing of the ROD, with a few exceptions, particularly those that fall into a CE category.
3. **Issues/Opportunities:** The terms *Issue/Opportunity* are applied to those areas in the river corridor that must be addressed as part of the user capacity mandate required under the Ninth Circuit Ruling on the 2005 Merced River Plan. These actions do not directly protect or enhance river values, but they are integral to generating the user capacity numbers, which are based on parking, overnight accommodations, transportation and circulation and must not through their implementation impact river values leading towards adverse or degraded conditions. Many of these actions were brought-up during scoping and are issues that the public is most interested in. Most of these actions will require follow-on NEPA upon signing of the ROD. Those issues/opportunities that are most integral to user capacity will be a higher priority for implementation.

How the Alternatives are Organized

Many of the actions described in the alternatives are considered “Common to All” and are detailed in the section “Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6” (see page 8-53). These “Common to All” actions are those actions that would be implemented regardless of individual alternative actions to protect river values as they are considered appropriate management responses to issues or concerns in the river corridor.

The individual alternatives do not repeat these actions; rather, readers should be aware that each alternative is made up of both the Actions Common to Alternatives 2-6 as well as the actions that vary across the alternatives (See Figure 8-5). The actions unique to each alternative (not Common to All) are outlined in each alternative description (See Figure 8-3). The actions that vary across alternatives are reflective of varying degrees of ecological restoration, levels of user capacities, and of varying types of visitor experiences. (See Figure 8-4)

Overview

Each alternative description follows the same structure. At the beginning of each alternative there is an overview of the alternative. This overview contains information on the goals of the alternative, the general guiding principles of the alternative as well as actions in the alternative that are corridorwide.

Maps

Maps of key locations in the Merced River Plan corridor are provided to orient readers to the planning areas and the context in which the actions and facilities are situated.

Figure 8-3: How to Read the MRP Alternatives

How to Read the MRP Alternatives	
Part 1	Overview of Each Alternative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview and Guiding Principles of Alternative Major Topic Areas and Associated Summary Tables Summary of Actions to Protect and Enhance River Values Management of User Capacities, Land Use, and Facilities 	
Part 2	Detailed Description of Each Alternative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions to Protect and Enhance River Values (Segment-by-Segment Actions in Alternatives) User Capacity, Land Use, and Facilities Management (Segment-by-Segment Actions in Alternatives) Maps Series (Site-specific Management Actions in Major Planning Areas) Facilities and Services Analysis Tables (Which Facilities are Retained, Relocated, or Removed) Conceptual Site Drawings (Site-specific Management Actions in Major Planning Areas) 	
Part 3	Actions Considered But Dismissed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of Suggested Actions with Rationale Why Dismissed 	
Part 4	Alternative Cost Comparison
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details Defining the Potential Cost of Each Alternative 	
Part 5	User Capacity Comparison
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illustrations of Site-specific Actions in Alternatives 	
Part 6	River Value Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to River Values Defined by Alternative 	

Figure 8-4: What Adds Up to An Alternative

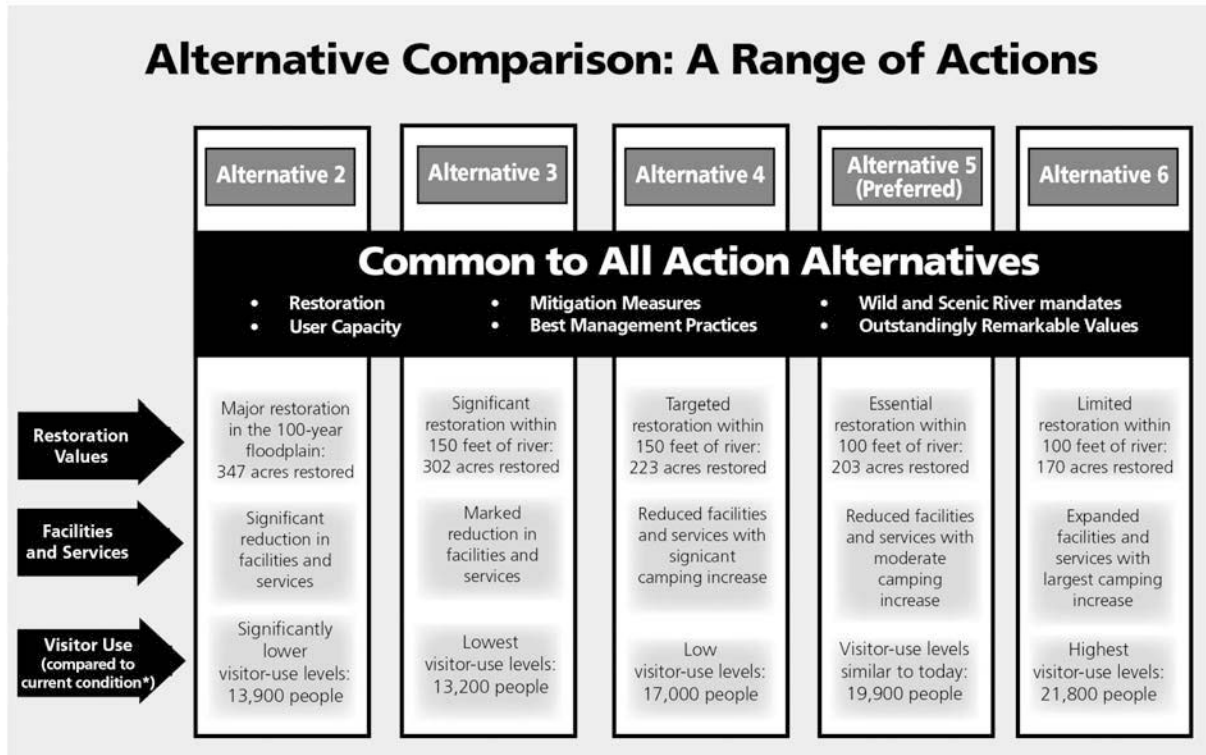
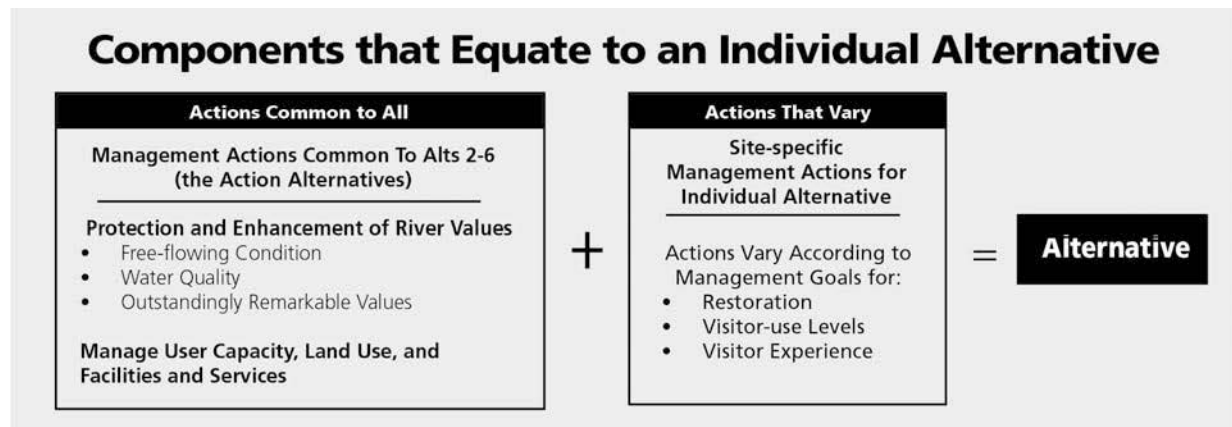


Figure 8-5: Components that Equate to an Individual Alternative



Detailed Description of Alternatives by Segment

Then what follows is a more detailed description of the actions that form the basis of each alternative. These actions are grouped under two main topic areas; summary actions to protect and enhance river values (i.e., Biological Values and Cultural Values) and a summary of User Capacities, Land Use and Facilities Management (i.e., camping, lodging, transportation). These topic areas are organized by segment.

Necessity of Facilities and Services

In each alternative the land use and visitor experience goals, coupled with specific measureable limits on use necessitate a set of facilities and services in accordance with the WSRM mandated discussed in Chapter 7. This section provides a list of facilities by segment, the action to be taken under the corresponding alternative, and presenting a justification for whether it is feasible to relocate the facility or service outside the river corridor.

The NPS used the following definitions as a basis for evaluating whether it would be feasible to relocate facilities outside the river corridor:

- **Feasible:** For the purpose of this analysis, “feasible” is defined as capable of being done, effected, or accomplished.
- **Infeasible:** For the purpose of this analysis, “infeasible” is defined as impracticable, incapable of being put into practice with the available means, or unsuitable for practical use or purposes.

Feasibility Factors – To determine whether NPS could accomplish the relocation of a facility, the NPS considered the factors including public safety, economic, engineering- and/or building-code requirements, as well as resource conditions. Additional factors include the availability of land suitable for such uses and the location of the existing road system within and outside the river corridor. Some proposed relocations require a sequencing of actions, such as the relocation of the shuttle maintenance function to the Government Utility Building followed by the removal of the Yosemite Village Garage facility. NPS staff also considered what actions were most important to protect river values and to provide for quality visitor experiences.

With this in mind, park staff has deliberated very fundamental questions about the relocation of facilities:

1. Could this action be implemented in the near term?
2. If not, what impacts are likely to occur prior to implementation?
3. Are there any intermediate steps short of relocation that could mitigate impacts?
4. What actions will be required to continue to operate in the existing location?
5. Would the gain be worth the cost, in terms of real dollars, and direct and indirect impacts to park resources or visitor experiences?
6. If a facility is relocated, is a suitable relocation area located within a reasonable time and travel distance? If a service is discontinued, what options are available outside the park and what would be the effect or requiring park visitors or employees to obtain the service outside the park? Travel time from Yosemite Valley to the gateway communities of Mariposa, Oakhurst, Groveland or Sonora—where commercial services are readily available—ranges from 50-75 miles and takes 1 to 1-1/2 hours to drive to. Much of the land bordering the park is owned by the federal government (U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management) and is unlikely to be developed by the private sector to meet visitor needs.

Conceptual Site Drawings

Site Plan drawings are included for a few key locations in the discussion of the Alternative. These locations include Curry Village, Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area, Valley Maintenance Yard, and Yosemite Lodge Day-use Parking Area. These drawings are provided to demonstrate where facilities would be removed, relocated or constructed according to actions more fully described by project alternatives. These

drawings do not represent a final proposal. More detailed design and construction documents would be developed consistent with the general concept presented here.

River Value Analysis

At the conclusion of each alternative description, there is an analysis of how each alternative is protective of River Values. Consistent with Section 10(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to “protect and enhance the values which cause [the river] to be included in [the wild and scenic rivers] system,” all actions included in each alternative must be protective of river values. This section demonstrates how the actions to address management concerns and considerations (i.e., river value restoration) in combination with the actions addressing issues/opportunities (i.e., user capacity elements) would be protective of river values.

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ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Overview

Alternative 1, also known as the “No Action Alternative,” is required by NEPA implementing regulations and serves as a baseline from which to compare the action alternatives. Alternative 1 represents existing conditions in 2011, when the NPS completed research studies intended to assess conditions of the Merced River, and the continuation of current park management into the future. This alternative assumes that current trends in the conditions of natural and cultural resources and visitor experiences would continue, consistent with the management activities that are ongoing under currently approved plans. Future actions that would require additional planning and environmental compliance could still occur, independent of the *Merced River Plan/DEIS*, but they are not considered part of the No Action Alternative for the purposes of conducting environmental compliance for the *Merced River Plan*.

The overall management direction of Alternative 1 is based on current guiding management documents. The 1980 *General Management Plan* is the primary guiding document for park management, along with subsequent park-wide management documents such as the *Wilderness Management Plan* (1989), *Concessions Services Plan* (1992), *Fire Management Plan* (2004, with operational updates in 2009), and the *Invasive Plant Management Plan* (updated in 2010). In addition to following park-specific management policy, the NPS would also continue to comply with federal laws, including the NPS Organic Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Water Act, and all other federal laws, directives, policies, and executive orders pertaining to park management.

Under Alternative 1, the NPS would not adopt a comprehensive management plan to protect and enhance river values and address user capacity and land use in the corridor. The two prior versions of the river plan would not be in effect, because the courts determined that prior versions of the plan were invalid. Ecological restoration actions would be limited to those that would only require a Categorical Exclusion in compliance with NEPA, and those identified in the 2009 Settlement Agreement. The river corridor would be ¼ mile on either side of the ordinary high-water mark because the WSRA provides for these default boundaries in the absence of agency designated boundaries. The segment classifications would be the same as those in the 1982 National Rivers Inventory in which the river was designated wild and scenic. There would no Section 7 Determination Process. The ORVs, as articulated in Yosemite’s 1996 *Draft Yosemite Valley Housing Plan*, would continue to be protected and enhanced. There would be no established limit to the number of visitors or vehicles that would be allowed within the corridor. There would be no changes to existing facilities, transportation systems or services.

Summary of Current Actions and Issues Affecting River Values

This section is intended to summarize (1) those actions that would protect and enhance river values that are already underway, and (2) issues that affect river values corridorwide. This section is not intended to summarize all the current management of resources in the river corridor; rather, it focuses on the actions that are directly related to issues identified in Chapter 5. This provides a baseline for comparing the actions that might be taken under the action alternatives (Alternatives 2-6) to protect and enhance river values.

The following conditions would continue throughout all segments of the Merced River corridor under Alternative 1.

Free-Flowing Condition

Impediments to free flow and their associated impacts would continue in all segments.

- Riprap and revetment – All riprap would remain in place.
- Abandoned infrastructure in river channel – Abandoned underground infrastructure in the river channel and meadow floodplains can alter the free-flowing condition of the river. This infrastructure, including remnants of former sewer treatment facilities, sewer and water lines, man-holes, and former bridge abutments, would remain in place.
- Large Wood Management – Large woody debris would continue to be removed from the river due to safety concerns and infrastructure protection, as it has for decades, particularly in the areas around the campgrounds and areas where rafting occurs.

Water Quality

As reported in 2010, water quality throughout the corridor would be expected to remain high, with isolated instances of minor contamination especially after storm events, but would not be expected to exceed water quality standards. Water quality would continue to be monitored and managed to meet NPS standards (which are higher than state water quality standards).

Biological Values

Under Alternative 1 (No Action), ecological restoration actions would be limited to those projects that would only require a Categorical Exclusion in compliance with NEPA, and those identified in the 2009 Settlement Agreement. The Settlement Agreement outlines that the NPS could proceed with restoration projects at the El Portal Greenemeyer sand pit, drainage improvements at Bridalveil, Cook's, and El Capitan Meadows, comprehensive restoration at El Capitan Meadow, and riverbank restoration at North Pines Campground. Some ecological restoration at North Pines Campground and Cook's Meadow has already occurred and is listed under cumulative effects (Appendix B). Table 8-1 gives representative examples of ecological restoration actions in the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor that can take place under Alternative 1.

TABLE 8-1: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE BIOLOGICAL VALUES - ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

Yosemite's Existing Ecological Restoration Program	
Ecological restoration actions assist the recovery of damaged ecological systems with the aim to bring damaged systems back to a condition that is structurally and functionally similar to the pre-disturbance state. Restoration takes place on a case-by-case basis, in compliance with the 2009 Settlement Agreement. Any action taken will comply with NEPA and other laws and policies.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-routing trails out of sensitive areas 	Example: Move established trails farther from the river Example: Add boardwalks across sensitive meadow habitat Example: Restore informal trails to avoid crossing sensitive areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing abandoned infrastructure 	Example: Remove outdated utility infrastructure to restore a wetland's hydrology and connectivity to adjacent riparian floodplain Example: Remove an old building foundation and bring in topsoil to allow for native plant establishment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairing damaged riverbanks 	Example: Fence highly eroded riverbanks Example: Plant willows to stabilize riverbanks
Monitoring: An essential component in any restoration project is to monitor completed projects to ensure that project goals are met.	

Despite some ongoing impacts that would occur under the No Action Alternative, the NPS would continue to mitigate some impacts to biological values. As noted above, the NPS would continue restoration projects in several Yosemite Valley meadows and on the riverbank in certain places (per the Settlement Agreement). Specifically, the NPS would proceed with restoration projects at Bridalveil, Cook's, and El Capitan Meadows, as well as riverbank restoration at North Pines Campground. Ecological restoration at North Pines Campground would be limited to planting willows and alders along approximately 300 linear feet of riverbank, using a bobcat or small excavator to move rocks for planting, planting herbaceous plants on the terrace, and mulching with native leaves and duff. Other riverbank restoration projects that would require a categorical exclusion for NEPA compliance could also occur. The NPS would also continue invasive species control where such plants are present, as well as conifer removal from some meadows.

The following issues identified in Chapter 5 would remain under this alternative:

- Meadow trails – Informal trails in meadows would remain.
- Encroaching conifers in meadows – Conifers would continue to encroach in meadows. The *Fire Management Plan* would continue to be implemented, thus addressing some of these encroachment areas through fire reintroduction.
- Riparian habitat – The current level of protection for the riparian zone along the beds and banks of the Merced River in all segments would remain in place.
- Riparian restoration and river access – Localized riverbank erosion and scouring effect associated with bridges would remain. Visitor use continues on sensitive banks of the Merced River. Locations include those adjacent to Lower and North Pines Campgrounds, Yosemite Lodge beach access, Swinging Bridge Picnic Area, Sentinel Beach Picnic areas, Cathedral Beach Picnic Area, Devil's Elbow, riverside areas between Pohono Bridge and the El Portal Road/Big Oak Flat Road intersection, and along the Valley Loop Trail.

Cultural Values

Under Alternative 1 (No Action), park staff would continue to identify, document, monitor, evaluate, and protect significant archeological sites in consultation with traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups through monitoring for changing site conditions, developing and implementing treatment measures, implementing visitor and employee education, and conducting research.

However, many resource impacts deriving from visitor and administrative use in all segments would continue to be present. Undertakings with potential to impact archeological and ethnographic resources and activities would be subject to review through compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and required consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups.

- Archeological sites (general) – Informal trails, and non-essential roads and infrastructure on archeological sites would remain. Bike paths, campsites, roads, bridle paths, parking, staging areas, and trails remain on sensitive areas. Graffiti and climbing would continue on rock art and other sensitive features.

Scenic Values

- Scenic vista points – Traffic congestion would continue to affect scenic views, as would vegetation growth that blocks views, social trails, and trampled vegetation and riverbanks. Under the No Action Alternative, no scenic vista management actions would be taken in the Merced River corridor.

Summary of User Capacities, Land Use and Facilities Management

Alternative 1 (No Action) would perpetuate the kinds and amounts of use that exist today (See Table 8-2).

Under the No Action Alternative, existing user capacity management actions would continue. These include the use of the wilderness permit system for overnight use of the backcountry and the reservations systems for camping and lodging accommodations. Day use capacity would be managed through the active management of day-use parking. Traffic staff would be needed to direct parking in Yosemite Valley, in particular, and during peak use days inbound traffic may be diverted.

Pilot transit programs would continue to provide limited additional service to destinations within the river corridor and Yosemite Valley in particular.

TABLE 8-2: USER CAPACITIES BY USE TYPE AND LOCATION- ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

	Unit Type	Units	People
Wilderness Above Nevada Fall			
Visitor Overnight Use	Zone Capacities & Beds	380	380
Visitor Day Use	Day Hikers	350	350
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	15	15
Administrative Day Use	Day Patrols	5	5
Yosemite Valley			
Visitor Overnight Use	Rooms & Campsites	1,500	6,564
Visitor Day Use	Parking Spaces	-	8,272
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	1,315	1,315
Administrative Day Use	Parking Spaces	166	332
Gorge			
Visitor Overnight Use	Rooms & Campsites	-	-
Visitor Day Use	Parking Spaces	180	869
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	9	9
Administrative Day Use	Parking Spaces	2	4
El Portal			
Visitor Overnight Use	Rooms & Campsites	-	-
Visitor Day Use	Parking Spaces	214	740
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	192	192
Administrative Day Use	Parking Spaces	610	1,220
South Fork Above Wawona			
Visitor Overnight Use	Permits	20	20
Visitor Day Use	Day Hikers	6	6
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	-	-
Administrative Day Use	Day Patrols	1	1
Wawona			
Visitor Overnight Use	Rooms & Campsites	203	865
Visitor Day Use	Parking Spaces	-	1,295
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	121	121
Administrative Day Use	Parking Spaces	30	60
South Fork Below Wawona			
Visitor Overnight Use	Backpackers	3	3
Visitor Day Use	Day Hikers	3	3
Employee Housing	Employee Beds	-	-
Administrative Day Use	Day Patrols	1	1

Visitor Overnight Capacity

Camping

Under Alternative 1, campgrounds in the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor, including Yosemite Valley, would remain in their present locations and configuration, and at their existing capacities. The total camping capacity in the corridor under Alternative 1 would be 565 campsites accommodating up to 3,510 people per night. Table 8-3 outlines existing campground locations in the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor and the capacities of those campgrounds.

TABLE 8-3: CAMPING FACILITIES- ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

Existing Locations	Alt 1 (No Action)
Segment 2: Yosemite Valley	
Backpackers Campground	25 walk-in sites
Camp 4 Campground	35 walk-in sites
Lower Pines Campground	76 sites
North Pines Campground	86 sites
Upper Pines Campground	240 sites
Yellow Pine Administrative	4 group sites
Segment 7: Wawona	
Wawona Campground	99 sites (one group site and two stock use sites)
Total Camping in Corridor	565 sites

Lodging

Under Alternative 1, lodging facilities in the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor, including Yosemite Valley, would remain in their present locations and configuration, and at their existing capacities. The total lodging capacity in the corridor under Alternative 1 would be 1,160 units accommodating up to 3,979 people per night. Table 8-4: Lodging – Alternative 1 (No Action)

outlines the existing lodging locations in the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor and their capacities.

TABLE 8-4: LODGING – ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

Existing Locations	Alt 1 (No Action)
Segment 1: Wilderness	
Merced Lake High Sierra Camp	22 units (60 beds)
Segment 2: Yosemite Valley	
Ahwahnee Hotel	123 rooms
Housekeeping Camp	266 units
Curry Village	400 units*
Yosemite Lodge	245 rooms
Segment 7: Wawona	
Wawona Hotel	104 rooms
Total Lodging in Corridor	1,160 units
*Curry Village's number accounts for the removal of temporary guest lodging units at Boys Town, per the 2009 Settlement Agreement.	

Visitor Day Use Capacity and Transportation Options

Under Alternative 1, parking and transportation infrastructure remain the same as existing conditions. Parking areas would remain at their current locations and the supply of spaces would be the same. During peak use periods parking demand would generally exceed the formally designated parking supply, and the number of vehicles searching for parking remains in the transportation circulation system and cause considerable traffic congestion and crowding.

In 2011, for example, 68 out of the 100 days of the peak summer season had more vehicles in Yosemite Valley than there were parking spaces. On the highest visitation day in 2011, as many as 6,300 vehicles were in East Yosemite Valley at one time with only 5,200 available spaces (200 of which producing vegetation or related impacts), and an estimated 1,200 vehicles were on East Valley roadways that can handle only 400 circulating vehicles without unacceptable congestion impacts (long travel times or growing queues at intersections and searching/waiting for parking spaces). On many high use days in recent years, vehicle queues form in mid-to-late afternoon along Northside Drive from Yosemite Lodge to Camp 6. On some days, the queue may reach past Curry Village as far as Stoneman Bridge (1.5 miles). This increases average travel times from Curry Village to Camp 4 to 30 minutes or more; under “free flow” conditions the trip takes about 8 minutes. It also increases the likelihood of traffic jams that may last for hours.

Under these conditions, traffic management staff try to react to specific traffic circulation, flow, and parking problems, sometimes implementing temporary access restrictions to East Yosemite Valley or maintaining emergency lanes (which further congests traffic).

Under Alternative 1, transportation models indicate that during the peak 100 days of summer use, there would be 81 days where inbound traffic exceeds the supply of parking spaces in East Yosemite Valley and creates congestion on roads as described above. Under this no-action alternative, use would also be allowed to increase in future years because there are no formal user capacities prescribed for day use. Taken together, the ad hoc traffic management actions (the shunt, emergency lane closures, directed parking at lots, traffic management at pedestrian crossings) are stop-gap measures to control impact and avoid gridlock, but traffic and parking conditions on these days will be poor.

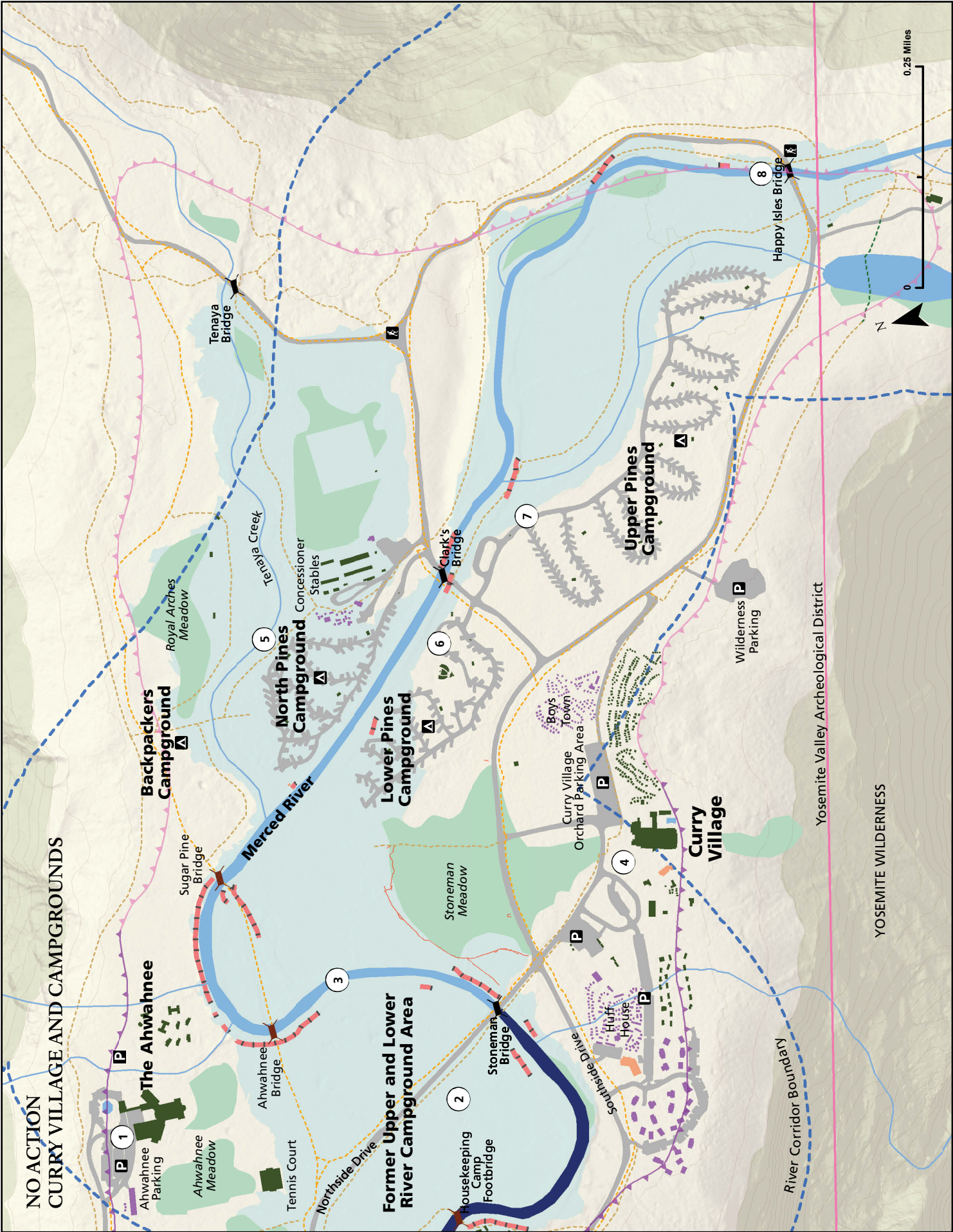
The total day-use parking spaces available in Yosemite Valley under Alternative 1 would be 2,337 and corridorwide the total day-use parking spaces available under would be 3,021. Table 8-5 summarizes the number of parking spaces for day use for each relevant segment of the river corridor.

Under Alternative 1, transit would be provided to and around Yosemite Valley using a combination of in-valley free shuttle bus service, regional transit, and private tour buses. Under Alternative 1, public transit options would include all existing routes and continuation of the 2012 summer pilot program for expansion of transit on the Highway 120 corridor.

TABLE 8-5: DAY-USE PARKING AREAS – ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

Location	Alt 1 (No Action)
Segment 2: Yosemite Valley	2,337 spaces
Segment 3: The Gorge	180 spaces
Segment 4: El Portal	214 spaces
Segment 7: Wawona	290 spaces
Total Parking	3,021 spaces

ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION

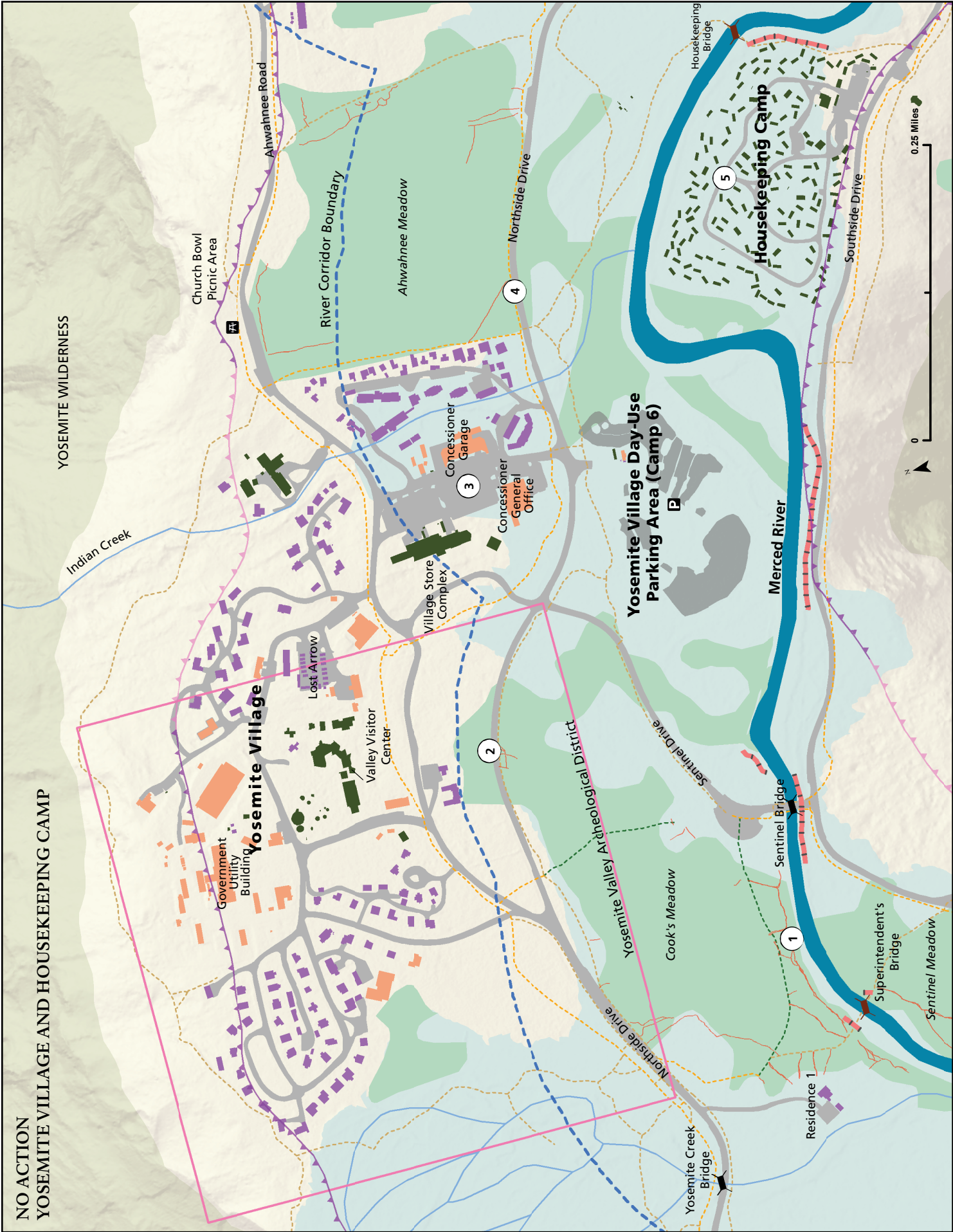


EAST YOSEMITE VALLEY: CURRY VILLAGE AND CAMPGROUNDS

1. The Ahwahnee
 - Ahwahnee Meadow Former Golf Course and Tennis Court: Meadow and oak habitats around The Ahwahnee would continue to contain ditching, fill material, encroaching conifers and abandoned infrastructure.
 - Ahwahnee Hotel Parking: Parking at The Ahwahnee would not meet overnight and day-use demand, and the historic gate house would not be restored.
 - Ahwahnee Hotel Services and Facilities: The National Historic Landmark would have 123 lodging units and provide visitor services, including food service, dining, bar, gift shop, sweet shop and pool.
2. Former Upper and Lower River Campground
 - Former Upper and Lower River Campground: This area, which is critical to the hydrologic connectivity between Ahwahnee and Stoneman meadows, and once contained 262 campsites before the 1997 flood, would continue to passively restore to natural conditions.
3. River Reach Between Clark’s and Sentinel Bridge
 - River Reach Between Bridges: Between Clark’s and Sentinel bridges, the river channel would continue to lack channel complexity and be shallower and wider than naturally would occur.
4. Curry Village Area
 - Residential Area: Temporary accommodations at Huff House would continue to house concessioner employees.
 - Curry Village Lodging: There would be 400 guest units, which accounts for the removal of temporary guest lodging units at Boys Town, per the 2009 Settlement Agreement.
 - Stoneman Meadow: Ditching, roads, and informal trails would remain in Stoneman meadow.
 - Curry Orchard Parking Area: The parking lot would be unimproved and contain 424 parking spaces.
 - Curry Village Services and Facilities: The facilities and services would be unchanged. The grocery store, pizza deck and bar, pavilion, swimming pool, bike stand, raft rental, ice rink, Happy Isles Snack Stand, and the Nature Center at Happy Isles would continue to provide visitor services.
 - Curry Village Wilderness Parking Area: The parking lot would be unimproved and contain 190 parking spaces.
5. North Pines and Backpackers Campground Area
 - Backpackers Campground: There would be 25 sites in close proximity to Tenaya Creek.
 - Royal Arches Meadow: The meadow would contain tiles, pipes and conifer saplings, as well as the remains of a former road bed.
 - North Pines Campground: There would be 86 campsites.
 - Concessioner Stables in Yosemite Valley: The stables would be used by the concessioner to provide day rides in the Valley and house stock animals used to operate the High Sierra camps. The kennel service would continue to operate.
 - Valley Campgrounds: Campsites would remain in close proximity to the river, without formal designated river access points.
 - Eroded Riverbanks: Heavy visitor use of the riverbanks along some river reaches would continue, leading to denuded areas and accelerated riparian erosion.
6. Lower Pines Campground Area
 - Western Portion of Lower Pines Campground Loop: The closed portion of Lower Pines campground, damaged by the 1997 flood, would continue to passively restore. Compacted soils and fill material would remain.
 - Lower Pines Campground: There would be 76 campsites.
7. Upper Pines Campground Area
 - Upper Pines Campground: There would be 240 campsites.
 - Upper Pines RV Dump Station: The dump station would remain in close proximity to the river.
8. Happy Isles Area
 - Happy Isles: Inadequate way-finding and unclear pedestrian circulation would continue, contributing to vegetation trampling.
 - Happy Isles Road Bridge, Stoneman, Clark’s, Ahwahnee and Sugar Pine Bridges: The historic bridges would continue to have footings within the bed and banks of the Merced River, constricting the hydrologic flow of the river. The berm connecting the Ahwahnee and Sugar Pine Bridge would remain.
 - Pack Stock Trail: Trail from Concessioner Stables to Happy Isles would continue to be within the bed and banks of the river, subject to seasonal flooding, accelerated erosion, and sediment deposition in the river.
- Scenic Vista Management: Conifers would continue to impinge views of iconic viewpoints and locations.
- Cultural Resources: Informal and formal trails, pack stock trails, stock use and operational staging, vehicles and bicycles, camping, illegal campfires, graffiti, and trash would continue to impact culturally sensitive areas.

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ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION



EAST YOSEMITE VALLEY: YOSEMITE VILLAGE AND HOUSEKEEPING CAMP

1. Superintendent's and Sentinel Bridge Areas
 - Superintendent's and Sentinel Bridges: The bridges would continue to have footings within the bed and banks of the Merced River.
 - Southside Drive Intersection: The three-way intersection at Sentinel Drive and Southside Drive would remain.
2. Cook's Meadow Area
 - Informal Shoulder Parking Along Meadows and Sensitive Habitat: Informal parking would continue along meadow edges and sensitive habitats at Cook's Meadow.
 - Cook's Meadow Abandoned Roadbed: The old roadbed north of Northside Drive between the Rangers' Club and the three-way stop would remain in meadow habitat.
3. Yosemite Village
 - Way-finding from the Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area: Visitors would continue to have difficulty finding the Village visitor center from the Camp 6 day-use parking area.
 - Yosemite Village Day-Use Parking Area: This parking area would continue to be a six-acre unimproved parking lot in close proximity to the river (portions in the 5- and 10-year floodplain). Approximately 517 vehicles would be accommodated. The Yosemite Village parking lot would continue to have approximately 237 parking spaces.
 - Concessioner General Office Building: The Concessioner General Office would remain in the river corridor and the 100-year floodplain.
 - Lost Arrow: Concessioner employees would continue to be housed in these temporary accommodations.
 - Intersections: The three-way intersection at Sentinel Drive and Southside Drive would remain, and the offset four-way intersection at Village Drive and Northside Drive (Camp 6) would remain.
 - Yosemite Village Services and Facilities: The level of services and facilities offered in Yosemite Village would remain unchanged.
 - Valley Garage: The Valley Garage, located in the river corridor and 100-year floodplain, would continue to service shuttles, tour buses, and visitor and concessioner vehicles.
 - Concessioner Employee Housing: Tecoya and Ahwahnee Row employee housing would continue to house concessioner employees.
4. Ahwahnee Meadow Area
 - Ahwahnee Meadow: Northside Drive, the adjacent bike path and other formal trails would continue to bisect the meadow.
 - Ditches in Meadows: Human-constructed ditches would remain in meadows throughout Yosemite Valley.
5. Housekeeping Camp Area
 - Housekeeping Camp Lodging: Many of the 266 Housekeeping Camp lodging units would continue to exist in the 2- to 10-year floodplain. The riprap that armors the riverbank to protect this infrastructure would be retained. High visitor use in this area would continue to result in denuded riverbanks in some areas.
 - Housekeeping Camp Services and Facilities: Visitor-use facilities would remain unchanged. Services would include shower houses, restrooms, laundry, and groceries.

Scenic Vista Management: Scenic Views: Conifers would continue to impinge views of iconic viewpoints and locations.

Cultural Resources: Informal trails and rock-climbing activities impact culturally sensitive areas. The LeConte Memorial Lodge National Historic Landmark would remain in “fair” condition.

Legend

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Parking Area | 100-year Floodplain | Housing | Stream |
| Campground | Meadow & Riparian Vegetation | Management Activities & Services | Merced River (Rafting Prohibited) |
| Ranger Station | Sierra Sweet Bay Vegetation | Visitor Based Activities & Services | Merced River (Rafting Permitted) |
| Picnic Area | Surfaced Area | Recreational Segment | |
| Trailhead | Designated Wilderness | Wild Segment | |
| 100 ft. Contour | Archeological District | Scenic Segment | |
| Revetment | | | |
| Calculated Rock-fall Hazard Line | | | |
| Inferred Rock-fall Hazard Line | | | |
| Informal Trail | | | |
| Valley Loop Trail | | | |
| Bike Path | | | |
| Boardwalk | | | |
| Trail | | | |

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EAST YOSEMITE VALLEY: YOSEMITE LODGE AND CAMP 4

- Yosemite Lodge Annex
 - West of Yosemite Lodge: The west of Yosemite Lodge area would continue to provide over flow parking for tour buses and transit buses, day use and overnight use. The area was formerly employee housing prior to the 1997 flood.
 - Bike Path: The bike path through Leidig Meadow would remain in close proximity to the river and be inundated during parts of the year.
 - River Access: There would continue to be no designated river access point for visitors.
 - Former Yosemite Lodge Cabins: Fill and compacted soils would remain in the former cabins area, which were removed following the damage of the 1997 flood.
- Camp 4 Area
 - Camp 4 Shuttle Stop: Camp 4 shuttle stop would remain an informal shuttle stop.
 - Camp 4 Campground: Camp 4 would have 35 campsites.
 - Camp 4 Parking: The unimproved parking lot at Camp 4 would contain 89 parking spaces.
- Yosemite Lodge Area
 - Yosemite Lodge: There would be 245 lodging units. Yosemite Lodge would continue to be used for overnight lodging, parking, and food service. There would be no change to the level of service and facilities; services would include post office, pool, bicycle rental and snack stand. Buildings would remain within the 100-year floodplain.
 - Temporary Concession Employee Housing at Yosemite Lodge: Concessioner employees would continue to be housed at the Thousands Cabins and in temporary accommodations at Highland Court.
 - Day-use Parking Demand: Demand for day-use parking would continue to exceed supply during summer peak-use periods.
- Yosemite Lodge Intersection at Northside Drive
 - Yosemite Lodge Intersection: Traffic congestion resulting from visitors using the on-grade pedestrian crossing at Northside Drive to get to Yosemite Falls would continue.
- Former Pine and Oak Area
 - Former Pine and Oak cabins at Yosemite Lodge: The former Pine and Oak cabins area, removed following damage sustained from the 1997 flood, would continue to passively restore. Nonnative fill soils, soil compaction and an abandoned road network.
- Sentinel Meadow
 - Sentinel Meadow Trampling: Sentinel meadow would continue to receive visitor use impacts.
- Residence 1
 - Residence 1: This historic structure, also known as the Superintendent's House, would continue to be subject to recurring flooding and subsequent water damage. The poor condition of the historic interior finishes of the Superintendent's House and structural issues related to settling of the foundation would remain. Visitor use in this area would continue to cause radiating informal trails in Cook's Meadow.

Scenic Vista Management: Conifers would continue to impinge views of iconic viewpoints and locations.

Cultural Resources: Non-technical climbing on a large bedrock mortar (pounding rock) near Lower Yosemite Falls would continue to cause impacts to the archeological resource.

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ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION



EL PORTAL

- Roadside Parking at the NPS Administrative Complex: Off-street parking between the Merced River and Foresta Road would continue to lack design features to prevent water contamination from automotive fluids, surface water runoff, or sediment transport.
- Employee Housing at Rancheria Flat: Vacant lots would continue to exist in the Rancheria Flat area of El Portal.
- Greenemeyer Sand Pit: This former mine operation area would continue to contain fill material that precludes natural flooding and regeneration of riparian plants.
- Abbieville and Trailer Village
 - Housing: This area, located outside the 100-year floodplain, would continue to occupy a large development footprint and provide for housing land use for temporary NPS employees and park partner employees. Also, 36 private residences currently exist here.
 - Riparian Zone: Development, including paved roads, parking and compacted soils, would continue to exist in the riparian zone.
- Old El Portal
 - Valley Oak Restoration: The valley oak population at El Portal exists in a generally protected state, but oak seedling recruitment is limited by competition from invasive species, parking under the drip lines of trees and associated soil compaction, herbivory, and existing development. Valley oaks are also sensitive to overwatering, pruning, grade changes, and asphalt covering the root system.
 - Odger's Fuel Storage Facility: Presence of this facility in the floodplain is not in compliance with NPS Floodplains Guidelines that require fuel storage facilities to be located outside of the 500-year floodplain.
 - Residential Area: Nine vacant lots exist in Old El Portal.

Cultural Resources: Informal trails, gravel roads, abandoned infrastructure, and visitor use would continue to impact culturally sensitive areas.

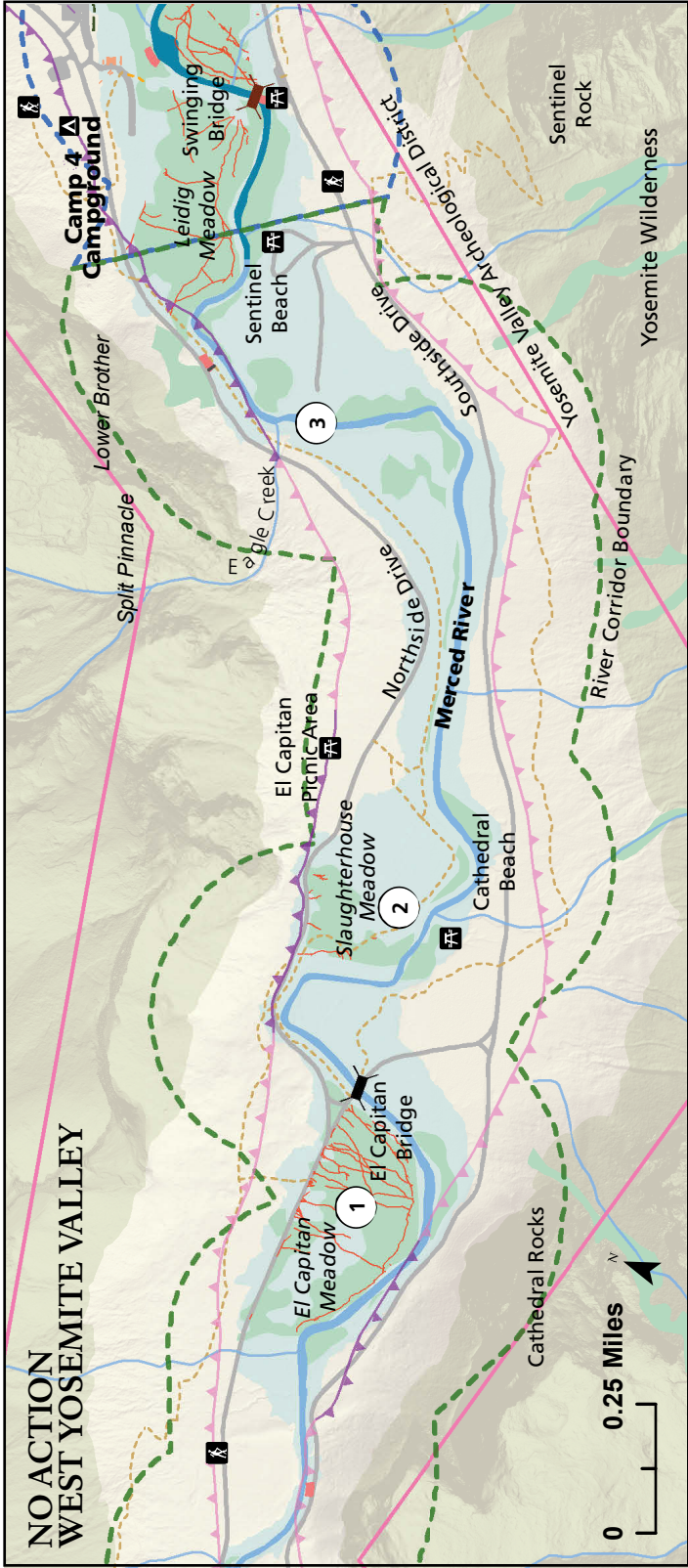
WEST YOSEMITE VALLEY

- El Capitan Meadow and Devil's Elbow
 - Valley Meadows: Conifers would continue to encroach into Yosemite Valley meadows.
 - Upstream of El Capitan Moraine: The river reach upstream of the El Capitan moraine to the Sentinel picnic area would continue to lack channel complexity and large wood accumulation.
 - El Capitan Meadow: Soil compaction and trampled vegetation would continue to exist due to informal trails and easy access to the meadow from roadside parking. The NPS would continue to remove invasive non-native plants following the Invasive Plant Management Plan and continue with prescribed fire following the Fire Management Plan, including mechanical removal of conifer saplings to reduce fuel load.
 - El Capitan Bridge, River access: No formal designated river access would be established along a high visitor use stretch of river with sensitive riverbanks.
 - El Capitan Shuttle Stop: The shuttle stop in this area would remain an informal shuttle stop.
- Devil's Elbow and Slaughterhouse Meadow Area
 - Devil's Elbow: Visitor use between El Capitan Bridge and Devil's Elbow would continue to exceed the design of existing infrastructure. Visitor parking and river access would continue to create safety and resource concerns.
 - Valley Loop Trail impacts through meadows: The Valley Loop Trail would continue to pass through sensitive and sometimes inundated meadow habitat in Slaughterhouse Meadow and Bridalveil Meadow.
 - Cathedral Beach Picnic Area: Visitor use would continue to exceed the design of the existing infrastructure in this picnic area. There would be no formal river access and the parking would not be delineated. Picnic benches would continue to be easily moved through out the area.

- Sentinel Beach and Swinging Bridge
 - Eagle Creek meadow and drainage: The Eagle Creek/Rocky Point sewage plant infrastructure would remain underground in Eagle Creek meadow. The natural braided morphology of Eagle Creek would continue to be channelized near Northside Drive.
 - Yellow Pine Administrative: Yellow Pine Campground would continue to be available for administrative use (four group sites for up to 120 people.)
 - Sentinel Beach Picnic Area: The picnic area would continue to be affected by high visitor use that exceeds the design of the existing infrastructure.
 - Leidig Meadow: Informal trailing in Leidig meadow would continue to cause extensive levels of habitat fragmentation, particularly in the area surrounding the north side of Swinging Bridge.
 - Valley Swinging Bridge river access: Current fencing along the bike path would continue to lead people to access the river upstream, river right of Swinging Bridge, causing streambank erosion.

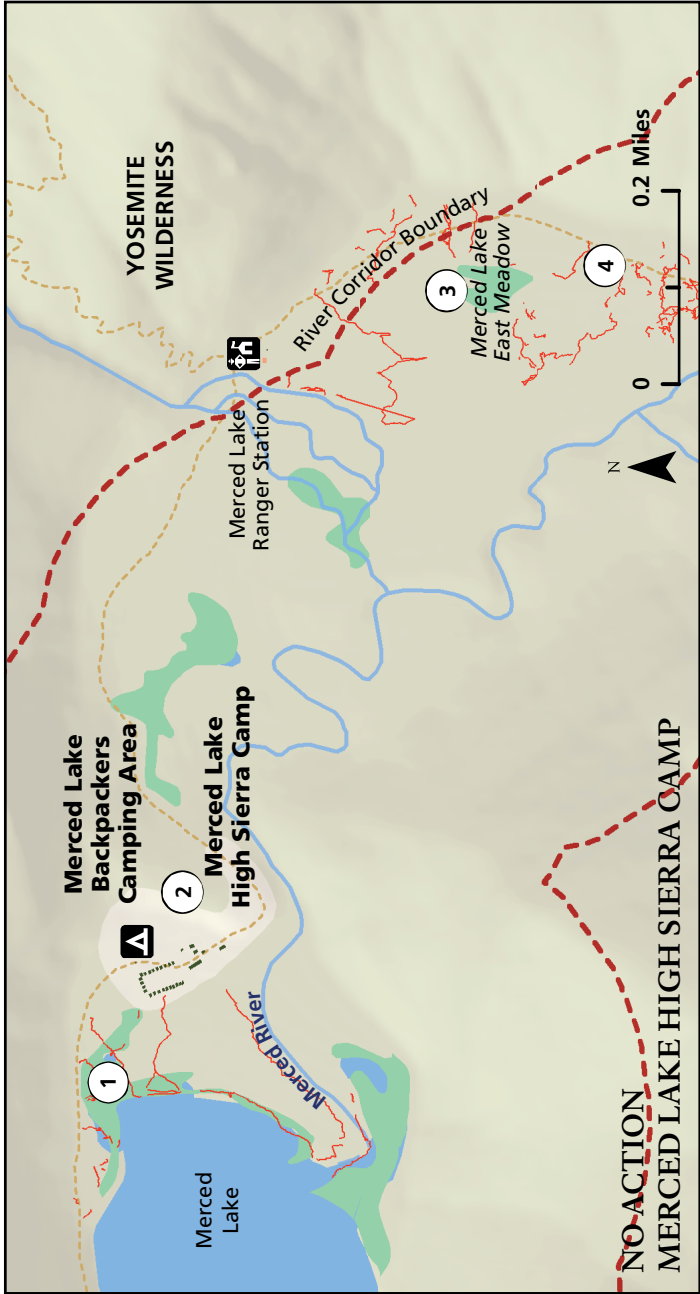
Scenic Vista Management: Trees would continue to impinge views of iconic viewpoints and locations.

Cultural Resources: Informal trails, rock climbing, camping, vandalism, human waste and fire rings, would continue to impact culturally sensitive areas.



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ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION



MERCED LAKE HIGH SIERRA CAMP

1. Merced Lake Shore Meadow: Informal trails would continue to exist in Merced Lake Shore Meadow, adjacent to the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp.
2. Merced Lake High Sierra Camp and Merced Lake Backpackers Camping Area
 - Merced Lake Backpackers Camping Area: Infrastructure at the camping area would include a water system with flush toilets and bear boxes for food storage.
 - Merced Lake High Sierra Camp: The High Sierra Camp would continue to have 22 lodging units (60 beds) and a water system with flush toilets.
3. Merced Lake Ranger Station Meadow: The meadow would continue to have high levels of bare ground associated with administrative pack stock grazing.
4. Special-Status Plants: Trails through sensitive habitats would continue to impact fragile plant species in several places in the river corridor.

OTHER SEGMENT 1 CAMPING AREAS

- Little Yosemite Valley Camping Area: Infrastructure at the camping area includes a composting toilet and bear boxes for food storage. This would remain a designated camping area for the Little Yosemite Valley Wilderness Zone.
- Moraine Dome Camping Area: This area would remain as a designated camping area for the Little Yosemite Valley Wilderness Zone.

WAWONA

1. Wawona Campground and South Fork Picnic Area
 - Wawona Campground would contain 97 campsites (96 individual sites and 1 group site) and would continue to be served by septic tanks and leach fields.
 - The South Fork Wawona picnic area would continue to be undelineated and have no designated river access.
2. Wawona Store Area
 - Roadside parking on Wawona Road would continue to create vehicle/pedestrian conflicts and associated traffic congestion.
 - The Wawona Store parking facility would not accommodate parking demand.
 - The restrooms, existing numbers of picnic tables, and parking spaces would continue to serve visitors in their present condition and configuration. There would be no formal river access point from the picnic area to the river.
3. Wawona Stables: The concessioner would continue to provide day rides originating from the Wawona Stables.
4. Wawona Hotel Complex
 - The hotel would continue to have 104 lodging units, providing overnight guests with a swimming pool and tennis courts.
 - A nine-hole golf course, associated with the hotel with retail and food service, would remain in service. The golf course would continue to serve as a spray field for the water reclaimed by the Wawona wastewater treatment plant.
5. Recreational Vehicle Facilities: The RV dump site in Wawona would continue to be located in close proximity to the river.
6. NPS Maintenance Area
 - Maintenance Yard: The maintenance facility would continue to exist in its current location, condition and configuration.
 - Wawona Stock Camp: The stock camp has two sites and would continue to be located in a sensitive resource area.

Cultural Resources: Ground disturbing activities, potential loss to shallow deposits of historic artifacts and features, abandoned infrastructure, informal trails and visitor use affect culturally sensitive areas.

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Detailed Description of Alternative 1 (No Action)

The following section describes the existing issues affecting river values in the Merced River corridor that would continue under Alternative 1 for the purposes of providing a baseline for comparison with the action alternatives (Alternatives 2-6). The intent is to identify where additional management is needed to address these issues, as described in Chapter 5. This section also describes the existing condition user capacity, land use, and facilities management in the Merced River corridor. All of the descriptions are organized by river segment.

Segment 1- Wilderness above Nevada Fall (Wild Segment)

Current Conditions: Issues Affecting River Values

Biological Values

- Administrative pack stock grazing – Merced Lake Ranger Station Meadow would continue to reflect high levels of bare ground and trampling associated with high levels of administrative pack stock grazing.
- Meadow trails – There would be few or no mitigations for informal trails, trails in wet and/or sensitive vegetation, and trails that fragment meadow habitat, including meadow trails in the Triple Peak Fork, wetlands near Echo Valley and Merced Lake shore, and the mineral springs between Merced Lake and Washburn Lake.

Scenic Values

The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp would remain, affecting scenic views in the Merced Lake area.

Recreational Values

The wilderness experience would continue to be affected by high levels of visitor use along trails, at the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, and at designated camping areas.

Current Condition: User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

This alternative would accommodate the same kinds and amounts of use that exist today in this segment. The kinds of use would continue to focus on wilderness-oriented experiences characterized by self-reliance and opportunities for solitude.

Visitor Activities and Services

Primary activities in this segment would continue to include hiking and overnight backpacking.

- Merced Lake Backpackers Camping Area and the associated infrastructure, such as flush toilets, water system, and bear boxes, would remain.
- Merced Lake High Sierra Camp would continue to have a 60-bed capacity, offer the same level of services, and all associated infrastructure would remain.
- Designated camping areas would continue to include Little Yosemite Valley, Moraine Dome, and the Merced Lake Backpackers Camping Area.
- Private boating would be allowed in this segment. Generally, use in this segment would consist of short floats using pack raft or other craft that can easily be carried into this remote area.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

The Merced Lake High Sierra Camp would remain at its current capacity of 22 units (60 people per night). For dispersed camping, including those staying in the designated areas mentioned above, the wilderness zone capacities would remain unchanged as follows in Table 8-6:

TABLE 8-6: WILDERNESS ZONE CAPACITIES – ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

Wilderness Zones	Alt 1 No Action Zonewide Capacity	Alt 1 No Action Zone Capacity in River Corridor
Little Yosemite Valley Zone	150 people	150 people
Merced Lake Zone	50	50
Washburn Lake Zone	150	100
Mount Lyell Zone	50	10
Clark Range Zone	50	10

Visitor Day Use Capacity

Day use generally occurs along the trail between the top of Nevada Fall and Little Yosemite Valley. This use is primarily associated with hikers going to Half Dome, outside of the river corridor. This specific activity is managed through a permit system. As this is a wilderness area, the only access to this segment is by way of hiking trails. Day-use parking for the trailheads that access this segment is included in the calculations for Yosemite Valley (see Segment 2 below).

Administrative Activities

Administrative uses in Segment 1 consist primarily of regular ranger patrols and backcountry utility work as well as occasional trail/restoration crews. These activities are seasonal and minimal in comparison to visitor use and would not affect the overall user capacity.

Employee Housing Capacity

The Merced Lake ranger station and the Little Yosemite Valley trail crew and ranger camp would remain as temporary housing for employees working in this area. Rangers are stationed in Segment 1 for 4-8 days at a time. At any one point in time, between 6-10 NPS employees are stationed at Little Yosemite Valley ranger camp and 0-4 Merced Lake ranger station. On occasion trail crews of 5-15 people will pass through these areas may stay for 1-4 weeks at a time. There is no permanent housing in this segment.

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

Employee and administrative parking for this segment is located in Yosemite Valley and therefore is accounted for in the Segment 2 employee and administrative parking capacities.

Transit Options

Similar to parking, the only access to this wild segment is via hiking trails and the trailheads that provide access to this segment are located in Yosemite Valley (Segment 2). Thus, visitors who wish to recreate in this segment would use the transportation options to the Valley to access these trailheads. (Specific transportation options for reaching Segment 1 trailheads are listed below under Segment 2).

Segment 2- Yosemite Valley (Recreational and Scenic Segments)

Current Condition: Issues Affecting River Values

Free-Flowing Condition

- **Riverbank riprap** – The approximately 15,589 feet of riprap along the bed and banks of the Merced River within the park would remain.
- **Bridges** – All bridges and elevated roadways would remain in place without mitigations to address bridge-related impacts on free-flowing condition; this includes footings within the bed and banks of the Merced River, which serve as an impediment to hydrologic flows.
- **Abutments and abandoned infrastructure** – The abutments and infrastructure associated with the former bridge at Happy Isles and the gauge base would remain in their current location and condition. The infrastructure associated with the Pohono Bridge gauging station would remain inside the bed and banks of the river.

Water Quality

- **Pack Stock trail** – The pack stock trail, north of the river, between Clark's Bridge and the Concessioner Stables, would remain within the ordinary high-water mark; the area would continue to be subject to seasonal flooding, accelerated erosion, and sediment deposition in the river.
- **Upper Pines (RV) Dump Station** – The Upper Pines RV dump station would remain in close proximity to the river.
- **Yosemite Valley Day-use Parking Area (Camp 6)** – This unimproved parking area would remain without appropriate mitigations for water quality protection. It would continue to be located within the 5-10-yr floodplain, on former meadow, in the potential channel migration zone. Fill would remain in sensitive areas of this parking area.

Biological Values

As described above under "Overview", some ecological restoration could occur under Alternative 1 (No Action); however most of the management concerns identified in Chapter 5 regarding meadow fragmentation in several Yosemite Valley meadows and localized impacts on riparian habitat along the river would not be addressed in this alternative. Specifically:

- All existing development adjacent to the bed and banks of the river would remain, including camping, lodging facilities, and parking.
- **Ditching** – Human-constructed ditches would remain in meadows throughout Yosemite Valley.
- **General meadow hydrology** – Conifers would continue to encroach into Yosemite Valley meadows. While the NPS would continue the mechanical removal of conifers to reduce fuel loads under the park's *Fire Management Plan*, no additional action would be taken to mitigate conifer encroachment. Formal and informal trails, abandoned roadbeds, and informal roadside parking would remain in meadows and wetlands in Ahwahnee Meadow, El Capitan Meadow, Cook's Meadow, Leidig Meadow, and Sentinel Meadow. Roads and bike paths would continue to bisect Ahwahnee Meadow, Stoneman Meadow, Leidig Meadow, and Sentinel Meadow. Curry Village orchard parking area would remain in what was formerly part of Stoneman Meadow.
- **Former Pine and Oak Yosemite Lodge units** – There is no development in the site of the former Pine and Oak cabins at Yosemite Lodge. However, fill and impacts from soil compaction from

removal of the former Yosemite Lodge units and cabins after the 1997 flood would remain. A network of roads remains that once facilitated access to these lodging units would remain.

- **Abandoned Infrastructure**– Abandoned infrastructure would remain in Eagle Creek Meadow, Royal Arches Meadow, Cook’s Meadow, the western (closed) portion of former Lower Pines Campground and the former lodge cabin/volunteer center at Yosemite Lodge.
- **Valley Loop Trail** – The Valley Loop Trail would continue to pass through sensitive and sometimes inundated meadow habitat in Slaughterhouse Meadow and Bridalveil Meadow.
- **Ahwahnee Meadow** – The Ahwahnee Meadow topography would continue to be modified by ditching; fill material found in the former golf course; a former roadbed in the southwest corner of the meadow; and large conifers that have become established along the former roadbed. Additionally, the tennis court would remain in a black oak community.
- **Bridalveil Meadow** – A head-cut from former ditch would remain adjacent to Bridalveil Meadow.
- **Former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds** - Graded landscape, filled drainages, compacted soils, existing (amphitheater), abandoned infrastructure, and invasive plant infestations would remain.
- **El Capitan Meadow**- Soil compaction and trampled vegetation resulting from informal trails and easy access to the meadow from roadside parking would continue. The NPS would continue to remove invasive non-native plants following the *Invasive Plant Management Plan*.
- **Foot traffic** – Heavy foot traffic associated with campgrounds, lodging, rafting operations, and picnic areas would continue to denude riparian vegetation. High levels of visitor use would remain near the river at Valley Campgrounds, El Capitan Bridge, Swinging Bridge, and Sentinel Beach Picnic Areas.
- **Housekeeping Camp** – Several Housekeeping Camp units would remain located in the 2-10 year floodplain.
- **Yosemite Lodge** – Several buildings would remain in the 100-year floodplain.
- **Pohono Bridge to Diversion Dam** – There would continue to be no designated river access points in this reach; as a result, soil erosion and loss of vegetation would continue as well as unsafe parking practices resulting from improper roadside parking.

Geologic/Hydrologic Values

- **River Reach Upstream of El Capitan Moraine** – The NPS would take no action to enhance the riparian habitat and improve channel complexity in the river reach upstream of El Capitan moraine to the picnic area at Sentinel Beach.
- **Eagle Creek Drainage** – No action would be taken to remove the berm or repair the channelization near Northside Drive.
- **River channel** – The NPS would take no action to mitigate river widening and low channel complexity between Clark’s Bridge and Sentinel Bridge.

Cultural Values

- **Traditionally used plant populations** – Traditionally used plant populations would continue to be managed by actions prescribed in the park’s invasive plant management program. Conifers and abandoned infrastructure would remain in black oak habitat.
- **Archeological sites** – Informal and formal trails, various types of visitor use, parking, and graffiti would continue to impact archeological sites in Yosemite Valley.

- **Residence 1 (Superintendent's House)** – This historic structure would remain subject to recurring flooding and subsequent water damage. The historic interior finishes, especially the distinctive plaster work, would remain in poor condition. Structural issues related to settling of the foundation have resulted in displacement of walls and floors would not be addressed. In addition, informal trailing that impact Cook's Meadow would not be addressed.
- **Historic resources** – Alternative 1 would maintain all the collective sites representing the prominent historic patterns of development in Yosemite Valley in their current locations and in their current status. Those resources that are in conflict with other ORVs (e.g., Sugar Pine Bridge) and in poor or fair condition (e.g., Residence 1 and LeConte Memorial Lodge) would remain as such.

Scenic Values

The following visual intrusions into the natural scenery in Yosemite Valley would remain:

- Human-made structures in Yosemite Valley (including roads and traffic through meadows and the presence of certain visitor and administrative facilities in the river corridor),
- Vegetation growth that has intruded on scenic viewpoints historically available to park visitors, and
- Riverbank erosion, informal trails, and riparian vegetation that affect direct and foreground views of the river, river-dependent resources, and the peaks and walls rising above the river.

Recreational Values

The following recreational values would continue:

- **Recreational Activity Participation**- All current recreational activities would continue in the No Action Alternative, including site seeing, scenic driving, day hiking, wildlife viewing, picnicking, floating, creative arts, camping, bicycling, nature study, rock climbing and engaging in ranger lead programs.
- **Recreational Setting Attributes**- The Merced River would continue to serve as a focal point for recreation in Yosemite Valley. Existing conditions of natural and cultural conditions will also negatively impact the recreational values by diminishing the quality of settings for visitors to enjoy.
- **Recreational Experience Quality**- Visitors in both park surveys and other studies report feeling crowded by other visitors in Yosemite Valley during peak periods, especially in parking areas that provide access to the river and other major visitor destinations. However, visitors still report a relatively high level of visitor satisfaction.

Current Condition: User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

Alternative 1 (No Action) would accommodate the same kinds and amounts of use that exist today.

Visitor Activities and Services

Under the No Action Alternative, recreational activities would remain as they are today. Yosemite Valley would provide for a diversity of river-related and other recreational opportunities.

Activities:

- **Interpretation** – There would continue to be limited interpretive nature walks that educate the public on natural river processes and stewardship of river-related resources.

- *Way finding* – Inadequate way finding and unclear pedestrian circulation would remain at Happy Isles.
- *Boating*- Commercial and private boating is currently allowed on a 2.4 mile reach of the Merced River between Stoneman Bridge and Sentinel Picnic Area. Peak use levels of the open boating reach in Yosemite Valley is most commonly between 150-250 boats per day, but can be as high as 300 boats per day. About two-thirds of this use is from commercial rafts.

Services:

- *Curry Village Services*: The configuration and level of services and facilities in Curry Village would remain unchanged. The Concessioner Stables would continue to be used by the concessioner to house the stock animals used for and day rides and to operate the High Sierra Camp. The herd has decreased in size since this facility was constructed, but the facility footprint remains the same. A kennel service would also continue to be operated out of the stables.
- *Housekeeping Camp*: Visitor use facilities at Housekeeping Camp would continue to include shower houses and restrooms, laundry and a grocery store.
- The configuration and level of services and facilities in *Yosemite Village* would remain unchanged, including facilities such as the Concessioner General Office, Concessioner Garage, and the Bank Building. Inadequate visitor way-finding at Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area (Camp 6) would persist.
- *Bridalveil Fall*: The existing design of the pedestrian circulation system at this popular attraction site does not accommodate the level of visitor use it receives. A network of social trails exists. Neither the pedestrian walkways nor the restrooms meet current accessibility standards.
- *El Capitan Meadow*: The shuttle stop at El Capitan is not a formal, appropriately designed stop.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

Overnight capacities would remain the same. Reservation systems for both lodging and camping would continue.

Campgrounds would maintain a total of 466 sites accommodating up to 2,892 people per night.

- *Backpackers Campground* – 25 campsites including 2 administrative sites would remain in close proximity to the river.
- *Former Upper River Campground* – The former campground area would continue to passively ecologically restore to natural conditions. Material such as asphalt and fill material would remain.
- *Former Lower River Campground*: The former campground area would continue to passively ecologically restore to natural conditions. Material such as asphalt and fill material would remain.
- *Lower Pines* – 76 campsites would be retained (16 sites are for administrative use; 18 sites are RV-only).
- *North Pines* – 86 campsites would be retained (5 sites are for administrative use; 23 sites are RV-only).
- *Upper Pines* – 240 campsites would be retained (2 are for administrative use; 44 sites are RV only sites)
- *Camp 4* – The current configuration and number of campsites would remain at Camp 4.

Lodging would remain at a total capacity of 1,034 units, accommodating up to 3,672 people per night.

- *The Ahwahnee*: Services and facilities that include bar and food service, dining room, gift shop, sweet shop, pool, and tennis courts would be retained.
- There are 400 lodging units at *Curry Village* that can be included Alternative 1 (No Action) per the 2009 Settlement Agreement; 103 additional temporary guest lodging units currently in the Boys Town area are not considered part of this alternative.
- The *Curry Orchard Parking* area would continue to have approximately 424 parking spaces that are not formalized with best management practices.
- All 266 units at *Housekeeping Camp* lodging units would be retained, and would remain within the 100-year floodplain.
- *Yosemite Lodge* services and facilities would be retained in current configuration and at current level of service, and would continue to be used for overnight lodging, parking and food service.

Visitor Day Use Capacity

In this alternative, no changes would be made to available parking capacity in Yosemite Valley (2,337 spaces accommodating up to 7,260 people at one time).

Parking and traffic circulation at The Ahwahnee would continue to be inadequate to meet overnight and day-use demand.

The Wilderness Parking Area was not designed as a formal parking area and would continue to be undelineated and undersized for demand. Soils in this location, which once served as a landfill for Curry Village, would not be remediated.

Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area (Camp 6/Village Store): There is currently a four-way intersection at the exit of the parking area near Northside and Sentinel Drives. People cross at this intersection to get to and from visitor services from the parking area. Informal shoulder parking overflow from the day-use parking area is encroaching on sensitive habitat in this location. This parking area is an approximately 6 acre dirt lot, currently being used to park approximately 517 vehicles on peak days using directed parking. There are 237 Yosemite Village parking spaces.

Yosemite Lodge: Demand for day-use parking would continue to exceed supply during summer peak-use periods. There would continue to be no parking at Highland Court, due to the placement of temporary housing in the parking lot after the 1997 flood. The west portion of the Yosemite Lodge parking area would continue to be used for overflow parking for tour buses and transit buses, day use and overnight use.

Camp 4: The Camp 4 Parking Lot would continue to be inadequately sized for current levels of overnight and trailhead parking. There would continue to be a total of 89 parking spaces in the main Camp 4 Parking Lot, 29 overnight vehicles and 33 day use vehicles in the overflow parking across Northside Drive.

Administrative Activities

Administrative uses are well-established in this segment. Both NPS administrative offices and concessioner offices are located in the Valley along with NPS and concession employee housing.

Employee Housing Capacity

All employee housing would remain in this segment under this alternative. This would include 1,151 beds for concessioner employees and 71 units (164 beds) for NPS employees. There would continue to be temporary housing at Huff House. Temporary housing would continue to occupy the Lost Arrow parking

lot. The Tecoya Dorms, Ahwahnee Row Housing, and associated parking would remain within the 100-year floodplain, with no development setback from Indian Creek. There would continue to be employee housing in the Yosemite Lodge area at Highland Court and the Thousands Cabins. Yellow Pine Administrative Campground would continue to only be available for administrative use (4 group sites for up to 120 people.)

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

Parking for administrative functions would be located within the land assignments for these uses, and would not compete with visitor parking.

Transit Options

Regional bus service into Yosemite Valley is shown in Table 8-7. A maximum of 270 people at one time could arrive to the Valley on regional transit.

Commercial tour buses are allowed to park in 15 parking spaces allocated for that use near the Yosemite Lodge. With all seats filled on these buses, a maximum of about 720 people could arrive to Yosemite Valley on commercial tour buses. All regional transit runs are done with 48 passenger buses.

TABLE 8-7: TRANSIT OPTIONS- ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

9. Regional Transit Options	
HWY 140 Merced/Mariposa to Yosemite Valley	8 runs / day (4 from Merced; 4 from Mariposa) (year round)
HWY 41 Fresno/Oakhurst to Yosemite Valley	No Service
HWY 120 West Groveland/Sonora to Yosemite Valley	1 weekday run- Sonora to Valley 2 weekend runs- Groveland to Valley (summer only)
HWY 120 East Inyo/Mono County (Mammoth Lakes) to Yosemite Valley	1 run per day (summer only)
10. Yosemite Valley Shuttle Options	
East Yosemite Valley	7 minute peak interval between buses Year round except Visitor Center direct
Visitor Center Express Yosemite Valley Day-use Parking Area to Visitor Center	15 min. interval between buses (summer only)
El Capitan Crossover	30 min. interval between buses (summer only)
West Yosemite Valley	No service

Segment 3 – Merced Gorge (Scenic Segment)

Current Conditions: Issues Affecting River Values

Scenic Values

Views from the river and roads in Segment 3 continue to have high aesthetic value. Pullouts and roadside interpretive displays would be maintained.

Current Conditions: User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

Visitor Activities and Services

The kinds of use that are currently provided in this segment would continue. The primary activity would remain scenic driving along Highway 140 for travelers to other park destinations. However, several pull-outs provide parking and access to the river and other parts of the corridor along this segment.

- River related recreational activities would continue to include swimming, fishing, and climbing. These activities occur in summer when the river is low and the air and water temperatures are warm.
- Kayaking/boating would not be allowed in this segment under this alternative due to the safety concerns associated with accessing the river for search and rescue operations during high use periods. This section of river is steep and rocky, and boatable only by the most advanced paddlers.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

There are no overnight accommodations in this segment.

Visitor Day-use Parking Capacity

The day-use parking capacity in this segment would remain at 180 spaces.

Administrative Activities

Administrative use in this segment would continue to be focused on the Arch Rock Entrance Station and the thru-traffic accessing Yosemite Valley and other park destinations.

Employee Housing Capacity

The residential unit at the Arch Rock Area would continue to house up to 9 NPS employees.

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

Minimal designated parking would be available for administrative use at the Arch Rock Entrance station. This parking is signed for employees only; employees do not compete with visitors for parking and access.

Transit Options

Public transit options along this segment would be expanded as described in the Yosemite Valley segment (see Segment 2 above).

Segment 4- El Portal (Scenic Segment)

Current Conditions: Issues Affecting River Values

Free-Flowing Condition

- **Abandoned infrastructure**– Abandoned infrastructure and imported fill at Cascades Picnic Area, Abbeville, and Trailer Village would remain.
- **River channel** – The Merced River in El Portal would continue to be confined by riprap and Highway 140. Standards for revetment repair would not be developed in partnership with CalTrans.
- **Greenemeyer sand pit** – Greenemeyer sandpit would continue to contain fill material that precludes natural flooding and regeneration of riparian plant communities.

Water Quality

- **NPS Maintenance and Administrative Complex**– The off-street and roadside parking areas would be continue to be located between the Merced River and Foresta Road. These areas were not designed or built to prevent water quality contamination from automotive fluids, surface water runoff or sediment transport.

Cultural Values

- **Archeological sites** - Abandoned infrastructure located on site number CA-MRP-0181/H would continue to impact an area that is highly valued by traditionally associated American Indians. In addition, informal trails, non-essential gravel roads, and visitor use that contribute to archeological site disturbances at CA-MRP-0250/H and CA-MRP-0251/H in Old El Portal would remain.

Current Conditions: User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

Visitor Activities and Services

Most recreational activities that take place in this segment are oriented toward the local community, while the vast majority of park visitors pass through en-route to Yosemite Valley and other park destinations. However, a small number of park visitors would continue to visit the Merced River in the El Portal segment as a destination, and not continue into Yosemite. Primary river recreation activities including swimming, fishing and boating would continue.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

There are no NPS overnight accommodations for the public in El Portal. An expansive lodging complex is located on private land near the park boundary, outside of NPS jurisdiction.

Visitor Day-use Parking Capacity

The current amount of visitor day-use parking (214 spaces) would be retained, consisting primarily of parking at the Store and Gas Station and along the roadsides.

Administrative Activities

The El Portal Administrative Site within this segment was established to accommodate administrative use in support of Yosemite National Park. These well-established administrative uses would remain under Alternative 1.

Employee Housing Capacity

Employee housing is currently made up of 126 units that house 192 employees in this segment.

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

Parking for administrative functions would be located within the land assignments for these uses and would not compete with visitor parking. NPS would maintain the 610 parking spaces for administrative uses and the 106 residential spaces.

Transit Options

As in the Yosemite Valley and Merced Gorge segments along Highway 140, public transit along this travel corridor would be maintained. For a complete summary of the transit option along this corridor, see the Segment 2 summary of Transit Options above.

Segment 5- South Fork Merced River above Wawona (Wild Segment)

Current Conditions: Issues Affecting River Values

Cultural Values

Informal trails and visitor use would continue to impact rock ring features and related archeological resources in this segment.

User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

Use in Segment 5 would remain very low and river values would remain protected under Alternative 1.

Visitor Activities and Services

Recreational activities in this segment remain limited to occasional overnight backpacking and day hiking. The kinds of recreational activities would remain the same in Alternative 1.

Private boating would be allowed in this segment. Generally, use in this segment would consist of short floats using pack raft or other craft that can easily be carried into this remote area. This use would not be regulated under Alternative 1.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

Very little overnight use occurs in Segment 5. No changes to wilderness zone capacities are proposed in Alternative 1.

Visitor Day-use Parking Capacity

As this is in Wilderness, the only immediate access to this segment is via hiking trails. Day-use parking for the trailheads that lead to this segment is included in the Wawona area (see Segment 7 below) or by way of USFS trails that via Quartz Mountain and Chiquito Pass. Otherwise, very little day use occurs along this segment.

Administrative Activities

Administrative uses are inconsequential in this segment and no changes are proposed.

Employee Housing Capacity

There is no employee housing in this segment.

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

There is no employee parking in this segment.

Transit Options

Similar to parking, the only access to this wild segment is via hiking trails and the trailheads that provide access to this area are located in Wawona (Segment 7) or by way of U.S. Forest Service trails. Visitors who wish to recreate in this segment would use the transportation options to Wawona to access these trailheads. (Specific transportation options for reaching Segment 5 trailheads are listed below under Segment 7).

Segment 6 and 7- Wawona and Wawona Impoundment (Recreational Segments)

Current Conditions: Issues Affecting River Values

Free-Flowing Condition

- **Wawona impoundment** – The current water collection and distribution system would be retained. The water conservation plan relating to the minimum flow analysis for the South Fork would continue to be implemented.
- **Abandoned infrastructure** – Abandoned metal pipes in side channels on the South Fork Merced River would remain, dewatering the terrace.

Water Quality

- **Water withdrawals** – Surface water withdrawals from the South Fork of the Merced River in Wawona would continue and when drought reduces river flows to less than 6 cubic feet per second. The NPS would continue to limit withdrawals to 10% or less of the river's actual flow, implementing water conservation measures as needed to provide adequate water service to the community.
- **Waste water collection system for the Wawona Campground** – Wawona Campground would be served by septic tanks and leach fields. When the capacity is exceeded, there would continue to be a potential for effluent to migrate into ground water and the river.
- **Wawona recreational vehicle (RV) dump station** – The Wawona RV dump station would remain very close to the banks of the river.

- **Wawona Store Picnic Area**– The Wawona Store Picnic Area near Pioneer History Center would continue to receive visitor use levels during peak periods that exceed the design of the existing infrastructure. There would be no formal river access point here on this steep riverbank.
- **South Fork Wawona Picnic Area** - The South Fork Wawona Picnic Area is not delineated and has no formal river access point. Visitors would continue to access the river by creating informal trails.

Cultural Values

- **Archeological Sites** - Informal trails and visitor use would continue to cause ground disturbing impacts to surface and sub-surface archeological resources.

Current Conditions: User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

Overall, Alternative 1 would provide for the same kinds and amounts of use that presently exist in the Wawona area. Segment 6 includes the Wawona impoundment and no use is allowed in this area due to water quality and safety concerns. Therefore, the summary of user capacity provided below pertains only to Segment 7.

Visitor Activities and Services

A range of visitor recreation activities would continue to be available. River related activities would include swimming, fishing and boating.

- Swimming opportunities would continue to be popular at the Swinging Bridge area.
- Fishing regulations would continue.
- Private boating would continue to be allowed, excluding the Wawona impoundment.

Other non-river related recreational activities in this segment include picnicking, camping, lodging, education and interpretation at the History Museum, special events at the Wawona Hotel, and golfing. Each of these activities would continue under this alternative.

- Picnicking would continue at the Wawona Store area and the South Fork picnic area. No improvements to these facilities would occur, other than routine maintenance. No designated river access would be provided.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

The overnight capacity of the Wawona Hotel would remain the same at 104 rooms accommodating a maximum of 247 people per night.

The Wawona Campground capacity would remain the same at 96 individual sites and 1 group site. The 2 stock-use campsites would also remain, bringing the total capacity of camping to a maximum of 618 people per night.

Visitor Day-use Parking Capacity

Day-use parking capacity would remain at 290 spaces, as in the other action alternatives.

Administrative Activities

NPS Administrative uses are well-established in this segment would continue. Both NPS administrative offices and visitor services offices remain located in their current locations.

Employee Housing Capacity

There are 79 employee housing units in this river segment. No changes are proposed to employee housing in this segment.

There would continue to be a total of 118 concessioner employees in Wawona under Alternative 1. The majority of these employees would live in the Wawona community or elsewhere outside the river corridor.

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

Parking for administrative functions would be located within the land assignments for these uses and would not compete with visitor parking.

Transit Options

Transit options would remain unchanged in Alternative 1. The Wawona area shuttle would continue, serving the key destinations within this segment along with the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. The daily concession operated shuttle between Wawona and Yosemite Valley would also continue.

Segment 8- South Fork Merced below Wawona (Wild Segment)

Current Conditions: Issues Affecting River Values

There are no issues or actions related to river values in this segment.

Current Conditions: User Capacity, Land Use and Facilities Management

Visitor Activities and Services

Most recreational use in this segment consists of day visitors swimming or hiking. Additionally, some rafters may put in below the Wawona campground, attempting the Class 5 multi-day adventure down the South Fork through the Sierra National Forest to the junction with the Main Stem Merced. However, this section of river is very short within the National Park, and very few people attempt this trip given the high skill level required. These activities would continue under this alternative.

Visitor Overnight Capacity

No overnight use is proposed for this segment.

Visitor Day-use Parking Capacity

The only immediate access to this segment is via hiking trails. Day-use parking is included in the Wawona area (see Segment 7 below). Otherwise, very little day use occurs along this segment.

Administrative Activities

Little or no administrative use occurs along this segment and no changes are proposed.

Employee Housing Capacity

There is no employee housing in this segment.

Employee and Administrative Parking Capacity

There is no employee or administrative parking in this segment.

Transit Options

Transit services for access to this segment are described above under Segment 7.

Necessity of Major Public-use Facilities and Services

Under this alternative all of the facilities and services evaluated in Chapter 7 would remain. A determination as to their necessity in accordance with the WSRA mandate is not required.

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|---|---------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Curry Village Residential Area | 7 | Curry Pavilion (food services) |
| 2 | Huff House Temporary Employee Housing | 8 | Stoneman Meadow |
| 3 | Historic cabins (guest lodging) | 9 | Curry Orchard Parking Area |
| 4 | Curry Village Ice Rink | 10 | Campground Reservation Center |
| 5 | Bicycle rental and raft rental stands | 11 | Tents (guest lodging) |
| 6 | Stoneman Cottage | 12 | Boys Town guest lodging |



NORTH

Alternative 1: No Action
Curry Village
Yosemite National Park
United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

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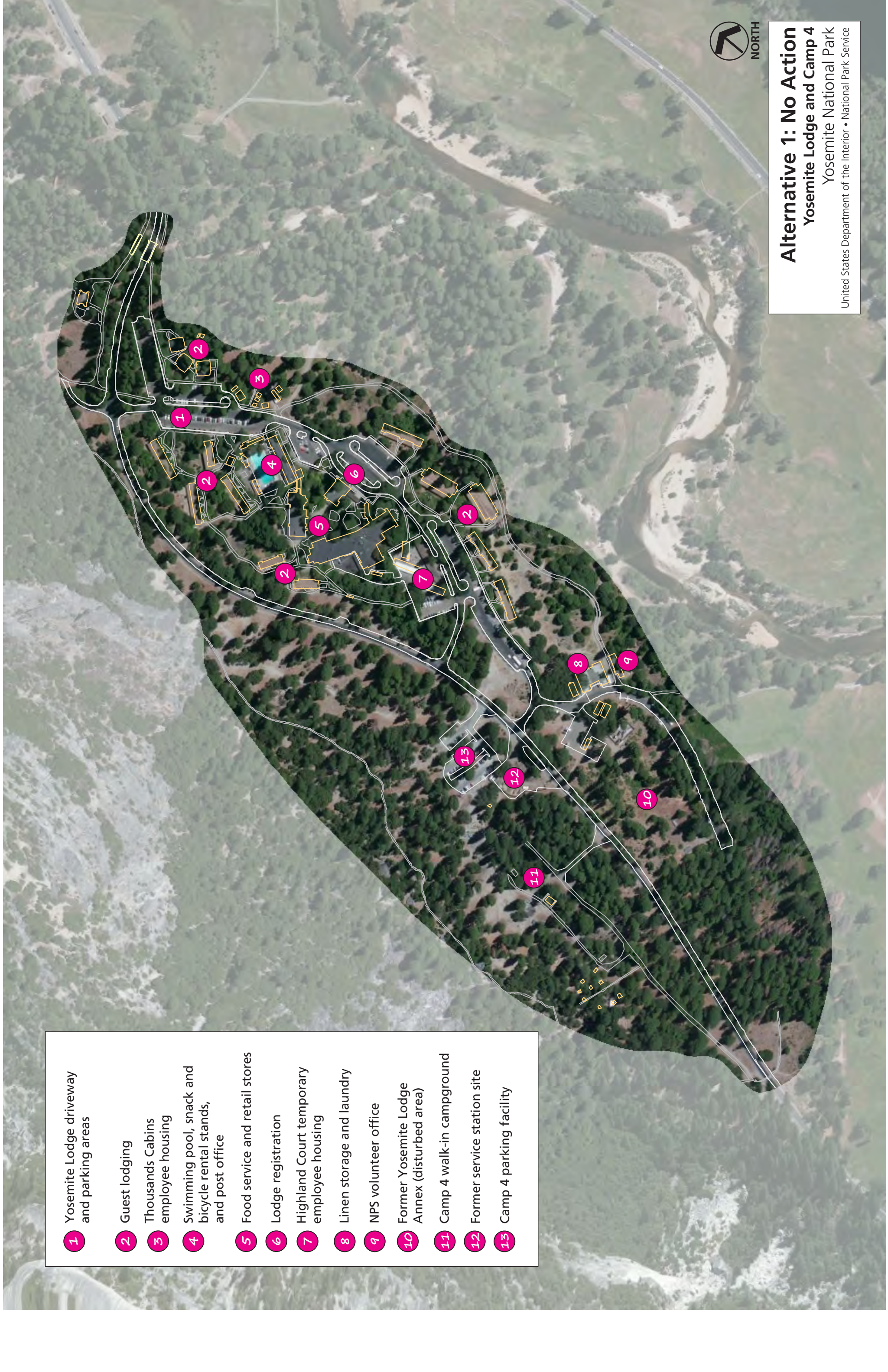
- 1 Food service
- 2 Village Mall
- 3 Village Store
- 4 Art Activity Center (former bank building)
- 5 Concessioner General Office
- 6 Parking area
- 7 Concessioner Garage
- 8 Employee housing area
- 9 Village Drive
- 10 Northside Drive
- 11 Sentinel Drive
- 12 Yosemite Village Day-use parking area (Camp 6)
- 13 Temporary restrooms and visitor contact station



Alternative 1: No Action
Yosemite Village Day-use Parking Area
Yosemite National Park
United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service



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- 1 Yosemite Lodge driveway and parking areas
- 2 Guest lodging
- 3 Thousands Cabins employee housing
- 4 Swimming pool, snack and bicycle rental stands, and post office
- 5 Food service and retail stores
- 6 Lodge registration
- 7 Highland Court temporary employee housing
- 8 Linen storage and laundry
- 9 NPS volunteer office
- 10 Former Yosemite Lodge Annex (disturbed area)
- 11 Camp 4 walk-in campground
- 12 Former service station site
- 13 Camp 4 parking facility



NORTH

Alternative 1: No Action

Yosemite Lodge and Camp 4

Yosemite National Park
United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

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- 1 Open storage areas
- 2 NPS stables and corral
- 3 Covered storage structures
- 4 Search and Rescue operations
- 5 Fueling station
- 6 Government Utility Building
- 7 Service bay access
- 8 Utility buildings
- 9 Former construction management office (removed)
- 10 Concessioner Maintenance and Warehouse Building



Alternative 1: No Action
Yosemite Valley Maintenance Area
Yosemite National Park
United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

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