



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
L7615(YOSE-PM)

### Memorandum

**To:** Rob Grasso, Project Manager, Yosemite National Park

**From:** Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

**Subject:** NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2015-030 Yosemite Valley Restoring Native Frogs and Turtles (60758)

The Executive Leadership Team has reviewed the proposed project/action and completed its environmental assessment documentation, and we have determined that there:

- There will not be any effect on threatened, endangered, or rare species and/or their critical habitat.
- There will be no adverse effect on historical, cultural, or archeological resources.
- There will not be serious or long-term undesirable environmental or visual effects.

The subject proposed project, therefore, is now cleared for all NEPA and NHPA compliance requirements as presented above. Project plans and specifications are approved and construction and/or project implementation can commence.

For the proposed project actions to be within compliance requirements during construction and/or project implementation, the following mitigations must be adhered to:

- Adhere to conservation measures in the approved biological opinion.
- Wildlife staff should avoid the eastern end of the re-introduction area near Sentinel Bridge for project staging and predator pen staking based the location of a sensitive archeological resource. No archeological monitoring is required for any of the proposed re-introduction areas.

### Recommendations for Conditions or Stipulations: None

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 60758.

  
Don L. Neubacher

Enclosure (with attachments)

cc: Statutory Compliance File

Letter of Compliance Completion – Yosemite Valley Restoring Native Frogs and Turtles - PEPC ID: 60758



## Categorical Exclusion Form

**Project:** 2015-030 Yosemite Valley Restoring Native Frogs and Turtles

**PEPC Project Number:** 60758

### **Project Description:**

Yosemite National Park was once home to the federally threatened California red-legged frog (CRLF) and western pond turtle (WPT), a California species of special concern. Both species have disappeared from Yosemite Valley due in part to management actions that altered habitat suitability by impairing riparian function (e.g., removal of large woody debris) along the Merced River, artificially high populations of raccoons fed by previously abundant refuse, and the deliberate introduction of the invasive American bullfrog. The two species can be found in small strongholds elsewhere both inside (WPT) and outside (CRLF and WPT) of the park.

Factors leading to the disappearance of these species have been corrected. For example, bullfrogs have been eliminated in Yosemite Valley. However, the CRLF and WPT have not recolonized Yosemite Valley all on their own. This collaborative project between the San Francisco Zoo and Yosemite National Park will reintroduce CRLF and WPT to Yosemite Valley. The goal is to reintroduce 1,000 adult CRLFs and 100 adult WPTs to establish self-sustaining breeding populations in Yosemite Valley by 2020.

### **California Red-Legged Frog**

In 2016 and 2017, park biologists plan to collect 10% of donor source CRLF egg masses by hand from private land in El Dorado County. Egg masses will either go to the San Francisco Zoo for rearing (known as headstarting) or will be translocated immediately to Yosemite. Approximately 2,100 eggs per year (4,200 total) will be transferred directly to up to four sites in Yosemite Valley (see map). The eggs will be placed temporarily in predator protected pens (approximately the size of a laundry basket), reared onsite (approximately 10 - 20 weeks), checked daily and/or weekly, and then released once the tadpoles are large enough to avoid most predators. Tadpoles reared at the San Francisco Zoo will be released at the same points in Yosemite Valley. Should CRLF rearing and reintroduction goals not be met through the two initial CRLF phases, up to two additional phases of CRLF head-starting may occur, subject to the availability of funds.

### **Western Pond Turtle**

Over the next 3 - 5 years, park biologists plan to collect and transfer a minimum of 30 WPT eggs and/or hatchlings per year from three or more donor sites in Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties. Identified source populations currently include the following sites: (1) North Fork Merced River, Bureau of Land Management; and (2) Stockton Creek Reservoir. Eggs and/or hatchling turtles will be transferred to the San Francisco Zoo to be reared to adult-sized turtles over an approximately 12 month period. WPT eggs would be collected by temporarily retaining adult females, locally performing x-rays, and hormonally inducing egg deposition at the San Francisco Zoo. After releasing eggs, turtles would be permanently marked (using a Passive Integrated Transponder tag and shell notched with a unique identifier using a hand file) and returned to the original site of capture.

While WPT are being head-started in the zoo, the NPS plans to introduce (below Stoneman Bridge and near the Amphitheatre) 6 - 10 WPTs collected from 3 or more donor sites that will be fitted with radio transmitters and tracked in Yosemite Valley during summer 2016 to ascertain habitat suitability and preference for releases of

head-started WPT beginning in 2017 and beyond. Future release sites for captive reared turtles will be selected based on 2016 radio-tracking results for habitat preference.

**Project Locations:**

Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties

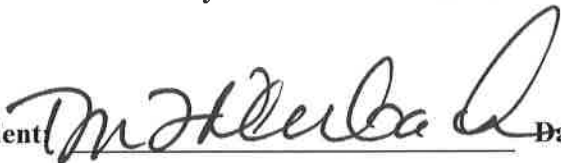
**Mitigations:**

- Adhere to conservation measures in the approved biological opinion.
- Wildlife staff should avoid the eastern end of the re-introduction area near Sentinel Bridge for project staging and predator pen staking based the location of a sensitive archeological resource. No archeological monitoring is required for any of the proposed re-introduction areas.

**CE Citation:** E.2 Restoration of noncontroversial native species into suitable habitats within their historic range and elimination of exotic species.

**On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.**

Superintendent



Don L. Neubacher

Date:

3/11/16



**ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)**

Updated Sept 2015 per NPS NEPA Handbook

**A. PROJECT INFORMATION**

**Project Title:** 2015-030 Yosemite Valley Restoring Native Frogs and Turtles  
**PEPC Project Number:** 60758  
**PMIS Number:** 221664  
**Project Type:** Restoration (REST)  
**Project Location:**  
**County, State:** Mariposa, California  
**Project Leader:** Rob Grasso


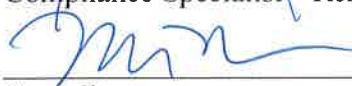
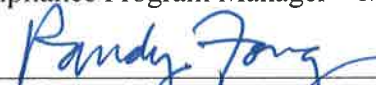
**B. RESOURCE IMPACTS TO CONSIDER:**

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
<b>Air</b> Air Quality	None	
<b>Biological</b> Nonnative or Exotic Species	None	
<b>Biological</b> Species of Special Concern or Their Habitat	Potential	Issue: This project aims to reintroduce the federally threatened California red-legged frog and the western pond turtle which is a California species of special concern. The project will have a beneficial impact to these species by establishing self-sustaining populations.
<b>Biological</b> Vegetation	None	
<b>Biological</b> Wildlife and/or Wildlife Habitat including terrestrial and aquatic species	Potential	Issue: The project will have a beneficial impact to the California red-legged frog and the western pond turtle by establishing self-sustaining breeding populations.
<b>Cultural</b> Archeological Resources	Potential	Mitigation: Wildlife staff should avoid the eastern end of the re-introduction area near Sentinel Bridge for project staging and predator pen staking based in the location of CA-MRP-920/H.
<b>Cultural</b> Cultural Landscapes	None	
<b>Cultural</b> Ethnographic Resources <i>Archeological</i>	None	


<b>Resource</b>	<b>Potential for Impact</b>	<b>Potential Issues &amp; Impacts</b>
<b>Cultural</b> Ethnographic Resources	None	
<b>Cultural</b> Museum Collections	None	
<b>Cultural</b> Prehistoric/historic structures	None	
<b>Geological</b> Geologic Features <i>Soils</i>	Potential	Issue: The project calls for the placement of frog egg masses or tadpoles in predator protective pens. The pens may need to be secured with small stakes that are driven into the river bed or bank at a shallow depth (approximately 1 foot in depth). (Remove pens after the release of the tadpoles)
<b>Geological</b> Geologic Processes	None	
<b>Lightsapes</b> Lightsapes	None	
<b>Other</b> Human Health and Safety	None	
<b>Other</b> Operational	Potential	Issue: Project manager, Rob Grasso is developing proper take provisions in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service so that the park operational and maintenance activities are not hindered by special status species.
<b>Other</b> Other	None	
<b>Socioeconomic</b> Land Use	None	
<b>Socioeconomic</b> Minority and low-income populations, size, migration patterns, etc.	None	
<b>Socioeconomic</b> Socioeconomic	None	
<b>Soundscapes</b> Soundscapes	None	
<b>Viewsheds</b> Viewsheds		
<b>Visitor Use and Experience</b> Recreation Resources	Potential	Issue: Project manager Rob Grasso is developing proper take provisions in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service in part because of proximity of visitors to the special status species.
<b>Visitor Use and</b>	Potential	Issue: Visitors can learn about and experience restored

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
<b>Experience</b> Visitor Use and Experience		biodiversity and the ecological factors related to these species.
<b>Water</b> Floodplains	None	
<b>Water</b> Marine or Estuarine Resources	None	
<b>Water</b> Water Quality or Quantity	None	
<b>Water</b> Wetlands	None	
<b>Water</b> Wild and Scenic River	None	

**Recommended:**

Compliance Specialists  Compliance Specialist – Renea Kenne	Date 3/9/16
 Compliance Program Manager – Madelyn Ruffner	3/8/16
 Chief, Project Management – Randy Fong	3/9/16

**Approved:**

Superintendent  Don L. Neubacher	Date 3/11/16
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# ASSESSMENT OF ACTIONS HAVING AN EFFECT ON HISTORIC PROPERTIES

## A. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERTAKING

1. **Park:** Yosemite National Park

### 2. Project Description:

**Project Name:** 2015-030 Yosemite Valley Restoring Native Frogs and Turtles  
**Prepared by:** Sara Dolan    **Date Prepared:** 11/02/2015    **Telephone:** (209) 379-1308  
**PEPC Project Number:** 60758  
**Area of potential effects (as defined in 36 CFR 800.16[d])**

### 3. Has the area of potential effects been surveyed to identify historic properties?

No  
 Yes

Source or reference:

### 4. Potentially Affected Resources:

**Archeological resources affected:**  
**Name and numbers:** Yosemite Valley Archeological District  
**NR status:** 1 - Listed in Register and documented

**Name and numbers:** Yosemite Valley Historic District  
**NR status:** 1 - Listed in Register and documented

### 5. The proposed action will: (check as many as apply)

- Destroy, remove, or alter features/elements from a historic structure
- Replace historic features/elements in kind
- Add non-historic features/elements to a historic structure
- Alter or remove features/elements of a historic setting or environment (inc. terrain)
- Add non-historic features/elements (inc. visual, audible, or atmospheric) to a historic setting or cultural landscape
- Disturb, destroy, or make archeological resources inaccessible
- Disturb, destroy, or make ethnographic resources inaccessible
- Potentially affect presently unidentified cultural resources
- Begin or contribute to deterioration of historic features, terrain, setting, landscape elements, or archeological or ethnographic resources

No Involve a real property transaction (exchange, sale, or lease of land or structures)  
Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Supporting Study Data:**

(Attach if feasible; if action is in a plan, EA or EIS, give name and project or page number.)

**B. REVIEWS BY CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALISTS**

The park 106 coordinator requested review by the park's cultural resource specialist/advisors as indicated by check-off boxes or as follows:

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106 Advisor

Name: Kimball Koch

Date: 02/22/2016

Comments: Based on Cultural Resource Advisors comments, no historic properties are affected.

*Check if project does not involve ground disturbance*

Assessment of Effect:  No Potential to Cause Effect  No Historic Properties Affected  No

Adverse Effect  Adverse Effect  Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

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Anthropologist

Name: Eirik Thorsgard

Date: 02/18/2016

Comments: The project as scoped will not affect any known ethnographic resources.

*Check if project does not involve ground disturbance*

Assessment of Effect:  No Potential to Cause Effect  No Historic Properties Affected  No

Adverse Effect  Adverse Effect  Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

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Archeologist

Name: Sara Dolan

Date: 11/02/2015

*Check if project does not involve ground disturbance*

Assessment of Effect:  No Potential to Cause Effect  No Historic Properties Affected  No

Adverse Effect  Adverse Effect  Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations: Wildlife staff should avoid the eastern end of the re-introduction area near Sentinel Bridge for project staging and predator pen staking based the location of a sensitive archeological resource. No archeological monitoring is required for any of the proposed re-introduction areas.

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**No Reviews From:** Curator, Historical Architect, Historian, 106 Advisor, Other Advisor, Anthropologist, Historical Landscape Architect



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## C. PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Assessment of Effect:

- No Potential to Cause Effects  
 No Historic Properties Affected  
 No Adverse Effect  
 Adverse Effect

### 2. Documentation Method:

A. STANDARD 36 CFR PART 800 CONSULTATION  
Further consultation under 36 CFR Part 800 is needed.

B. STREAMLINED REVIEW UNDER THE 2008 SERVICEWIDE PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT (PA)

The above action meets all conditions for a streamlined review under section III of the 2008 Servicewide PA for Section 106 compliance.

APPLICABLE STREAMLINED REVIEW Criteria  
(Specify 1-16 of the list of streamlined review criteria.)

C. PLAN-RELATED UNDERTAKING

Consultation and review of the proposed undertaking were completed in the context of a plan review process, in accordance with the 2008 Servicewide PA and 36 CFR Part 800.  
Specify plan/EA/EIS:

D. UNDERTAKING RELATED TO ANOTHER AGREEMENT

The proposed undertaking is covered for Section 106 purposes under another document such as a statewide agreement established in accord with 36 CFR 800.7 or counterpart regulations.

Explanation: 1999 Parkwide PA as amended in 2014

E. COMBINED NEPA/NHPA Document

Documentation is required for the preparation of an EA/FONSI or an EIS/ROD has been developed and used so as also to meet the requirements of 36 CFR 800.3 through 800.6

G. Memo to SHPO/THPO

H. Memo to ACHP

SHPO/THPO Notes:

### 3. Additional Consulting Parties Information:

Additional Consulting Parties: No

**4. Stipulations and Conditions:**

Following are listed any stipulations or conditions necessary to ensure that the assessment of effect above is consistent with 36 CFR Part 800 criteria of effect or to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects.

**5. Mitigations/Treatment Measures:**

Measures to prevent or minimize loss or impairment of historic/prehistoric properties:  
(Remember that setting, location, and use may be relevant.)

No Assessment of Effect mitigations identified.

**D. RECOMMENDED BY PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR:**

Historic Preservation Officer

Kimball  
Koch



Date: 3/7/2016

**E. SUPERINTENDENT'S APPROVAL**

The proposed work conforms to the NPS *Management Policies and Cultural Resource Management Guideline*, and I have reviewed and approve the recommendations, stipulations, or conditions noted in Section C of this form.

Superintendent:



Don L. Neubacher

Date: 3/11/16