



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: Sonny Montague, Project Manager, Yosemite National Park

From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Subject: NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2016-010 National Register Evaluation of Critical Wilderness Archeological Sites (64179)

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:

- No mitigations identified.

Recommendations for Conditions or Stipulations: None

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 64179.

// Don Neubacher //

Don L. Neubacher

Enclosure (with attachments)

cc: Statutory Compliance File

*The signed original of this document is on file at the
Environmental Planning and Compliance Office in
Yosemite National Park.*



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: 2016-010 National Register Evaluation of Critical Wilderness Archeological Sites

PEPC Project Number: 64179

Project Description:

This project would conduct archeological research and develop National Register evaluations for a sample of archeological sites in Yosemite Wilderness. The project would be conducted in collaboration with the park's tribal partners and University of California, Merced (UC Merced). The initial work would include outreach with the park's tribal partners to identify issues, concerns and opportunities for collaboration and ways in which traditional perspectives can be incorporated into the analysis. The highest priority archeological sites would be identified for consideration, using criteria such as uniqueness of materials, threats from climate change, visitor use, intensity of ongoing uses and impacts, tribal considerations, need for information to support wilderness management decisions, and opportunities to involve students or other volunteers. Second, the project would develop an archeological research design identifying the historic (or prehistoric) contexts of the resources, the National Register criteria potentially applicable to the resources, requirements for both materials and site integrity, and research methods necessary to conduct the evaluation. Third, the project would implement a phased field and laboratory work plan, addressing the minimum requirements of work within wilderness and other logistical considerations and constraints. Finally, the results of the research would be formulated into a professional archeological report, National Register nomination(s), educational materials for the tribes, and interpretive material for park programs. All resultant documents and collections would be cataloged and accessioned into the Yosemite Museum. All work would be overseen by principal investigators meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Standards.

Given the anticipated funding at present, the project would be conducted over a span of three years. Fieldwork would be limited to the summer of 2017. Two or three sites will be selected for test excavations. If funding becomes available after Fiscal Year 2017, additional sites may be considered for fieldwork. The specific methodology for fieldwork will be detailed in the research design. Such work typically entails limited excavation at sites, amounting to a sample of less than 5% of a site's total volume. Initial excavation would employ the use of augers or shovel probes, measuring less than 50 cm in diameter, to identify horizontal extent, depth of deposit, and distribution of cultural material. Contingent on the findings, few formal excavation units (1 x 1 meter or smaller) would be placed to retrieve samples in a controlled manner. No modern materials, such as tree tags or other markers, would remain in Wilderness upon completion of the work. If vegetation is present within excavation areas, plugs would be saved, replanting and the area would be restored.

A small field crew (8 or fewer) of National Park Service and UC Merced archeologists, tribal representatives, interns, and volunteers would conduct the work. Stock support would be necessary for transport of excavation equipment and gear, but the field crew would hike to the sites. Campsites near the selected sites would use previously established camping locations. Team leaders would ensure that all regulations for Wilderness travel and camping would be followed. A project-specific safety plan would be developed to address Wilderness travel, camping, and the archeological work.

Project Locations:

Mariposa, Madera, Mono, and Tuolumne Counties, CA

Mitigations:

- No mitigations identified.

CE Citation: E.1 Archeological surveys and permits involving only surface collection or small-scale test excavations.

Decision: I find that the action fits within the categorical exclusion above. Therefore, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No extraordinary circumstances apply.

Superintendent: // Don Neubacher // **Date:** 6/15/2016
Don L. Neubacher

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Extraordinary Circumstances:

If implemented, would the proposal...	Yes/No	Notes
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?	No	
B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	No	
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?	No	
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	No	
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	No	
F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?	No	
G. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by either the bureau or office?	No	
H. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?	No	
I. Violate a federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	No	
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898)?	No	
K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)?	No	
L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?	No	



ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

Updated Sept 2015 per NPS NEPA Handbook

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: 2016-010 National Register Evaluation of Critical Wilderness Archeological Sites
PEPC Project Number: 64179
PMIS Number: 18797
Project Type: Resource Management (RM)
Project Location:
County, State: Madera, California
County, State: Mariposa, California
County, State: Mono, California
County, State: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Sonny Montague

B. RESOURCE IMPACTS TO CONSIDER:

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
Air Air Quality	Potential	Screening of sediments could add dust to the air, exposure would be very localized and brief.
Biological Nonnative or Exotic Species	None	
Biological Species of Special Concern or Their Habitat	None	
Biological Vegetation	Potential	Manual excavation of archeological sediments would remove plant/sod layer. Plant plugs would be removed with the roots intact so that they can be replanted upon backfilling of the unit. Shovel probes not to exceed 50 centimeter in diameter and formal units anticipated to measure 1 x 1 meter in size
Biological Wildlife and/or Wildlife Habitat including terrestrial and aquatic species	None	
Cultural Archeological Resources	Potential	The project would entail archeological excavation of shovel probes (less than 50 centimeter in diameter) and few, small formal units (1 x 1 meter). Depth of the units would be contingent on the depth of the archeological deposit. A project-specific research design would describe the methods, quantity and size of units anticipated for each site to be evaluated. The NPS will use minimal excavation strategies at the archeological sites proposed for investigations to be consistent with a no adverse effect determination.

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
Cultural Cultural Landscapes	None	
Cultural Ethnographic Resources	Potential	The park initiated tribal consultation on April 12, 2016, via correspondence and held a consultation meeting to discuss the three project options on May 19, 2016. AICMC expressed preference for the option that focuses on investigations at two northern sites. To date, no other comments or concerns have been received by the other tribal partners.
Cultural Museum Collections	None	
Cultural Prehistoric/historic structures	None	
Geological Geologic Features	Potential	Maximum depth of soil disturbance is one foot.
Geological Geologic Processes	None	
Lightscares Lightscares	None	
Other Human Health and Safety	None	
Other Operational	None	
Socioeconomic Land Use	None	
Socioeconomic Minority and low-income populations, size, migration patterns, etc.	None	
Soundscapes Soundscapes	None	
Viewsheds Viewsheds	None	
Visitor Use and Experience Recreation Resources	None	
Visitor Use and Experience Visitor Use and Experience	Potential	The project would allow for a positive visitor education experience regarding archeological resources in Wilderness. Temporary, anticipated work at each site would be up to 10 days.
Water Floodplains	None	
Water Marine or Estuarine	None	

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
Resources		
Water Water Quality or Quantity	None	
Water Wetlands	None	
Water Wild and Scenic River	Potential	Wild and Scenic River impacts are dependent on site selection. The project will avoid impacts to river values.
Wilderness Wilderness	Potential	Minimum Requirement Analysis will be developed in consultation with the park Wilderness Management Office once test sites are selected.

Recommended:

Compliance Specialists	Date
<u>// Renea Kennec //</u> Compliance Specialist – Renea Kennec	<u>6/6/2016</u>
<u>// Madelyn Ruffner //</u> Compliance Program Manager – Madelyn Ruffner	<u>6/7/2016</u>
<u>// Randy Fong //</u> Chief, Project Management – Randy Fong	<u>6/10/2016</u>

Approved:

Superintendent	Date
<u>// Don Neubacher //</u> Don L. Neubacher	<u>6/15/2016</u>

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