

Replace the Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Complex *Project & Environmental Assessment*

Public Webinar

12/12/2018

12 – 1 pm PST



Yosemite National Park

Replace Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Project & Environmental Assessment



NPS Staff Introductions:

- Ninette Daniele, Compliance Specialist – Main Presenter
- Randal Corral, Project Manager – Panelist
- Madelyn Ruffner, Chief of Environmental Planning & Compliance – Panelist

Agenda

- Introduction
- Project Purpose
- Environmental Assessment & Proposed Actions
- Public Comment Period
- Project Schedule and Next Steps
- Questions or Comments

Terminology

- Welcome center / welcome center complex
- Comfort Station = public restroom
- Mather District Office / law enforcement / emergency services
- EA= Environmental Assessment

Introduction - Project Purpose - EA & Proposed Actions - Public Comment - Schedule - Questions

Replace Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Project & Environmental Assessment



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK MAP

Yosemite Campgrounds



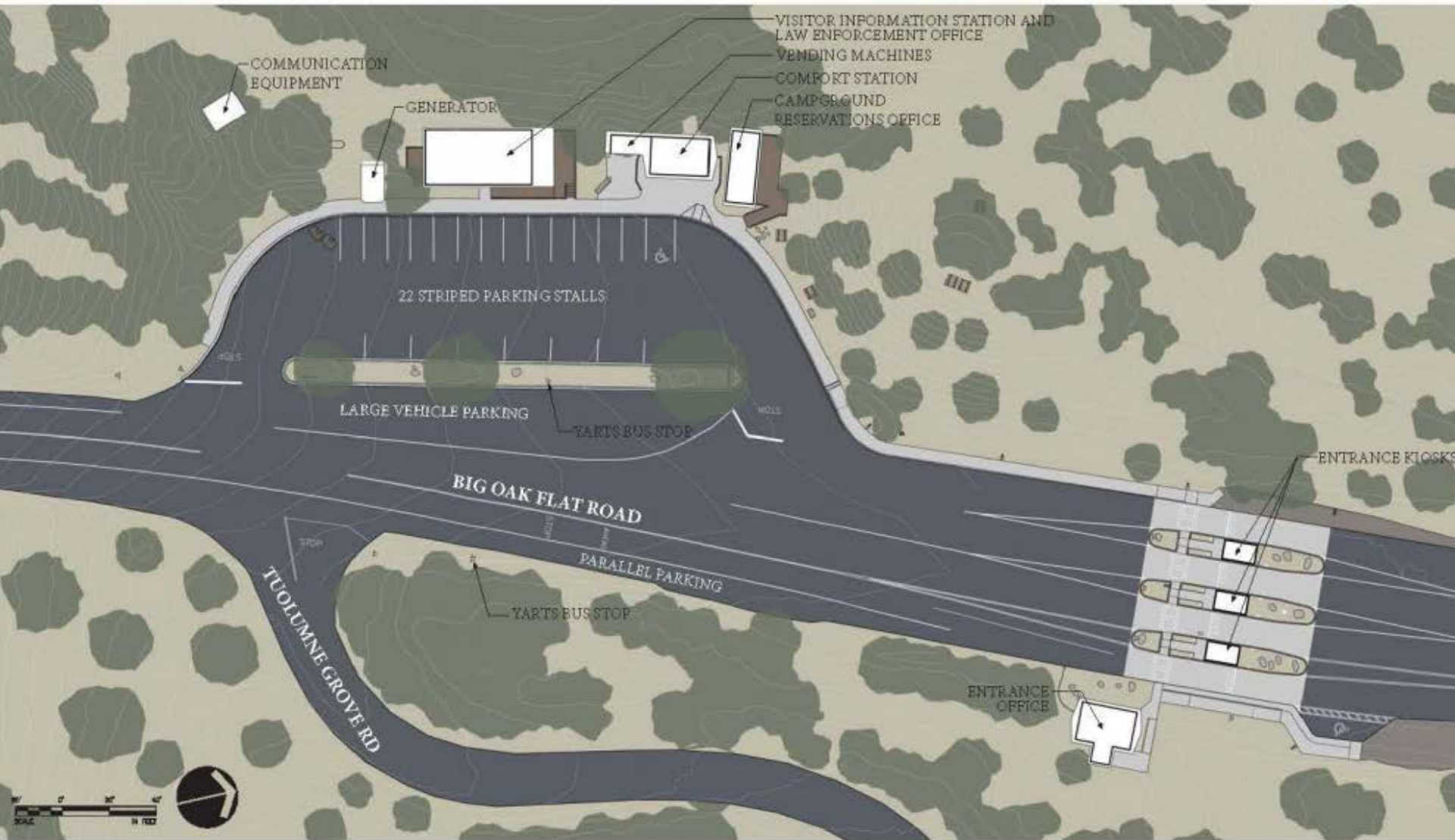
- Entrance welcomes over 1 million visitors annually
- Complex serves over 500,000 visitors per year
- The welcome center complex houses many programs and visitor facilities, including:
 - Interpretation & general information
 - Campground reservations & information
 - Wilderness permits & information
 - A small retail sales operation
 - Law enforcement offices
 - A comfort station (public restroom)
 - Trash disposal, drinking fountain



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Existing Welcome Center Complex





Purpose and Need

- Enhance visitor experience
 - Provide a sense of arrival with informational resources for clear orientation and wayfinding
 - Provide adequate comfort station facilities
- Improve operational efficiency at the welcome center complex
- Provide functional and modern utilities
- Improve safety by addressing vehicle-pedestrian conflict

**Project will not alter entrance station operations or kiosks*



Photo: The existing Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Complex showing the parking area and buildings



Environmental Assessment

- Analysis of environmental impacts posed by proposed actions for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act
- The EA analyzes both an action alternatives & no action alternative
- Impact topics include:
 - > vegetation
 - > visitor use and experience

Background

- Public scoping meeting & formal scoping period – May 2018
- Comments received focused on improvement of staff operational space, increasing visitor information, and improving efficient delivery of services
- Comments regarding entrance operation, cellular service, and bus transport were considered out of the projects scope, but noted the future
- Construction of an Emergency Services/Law Enforcement facility will now be a separate project due to the need for additional scoping / studies



Environmental Assessment

No Action Alternative: Existing Conditions

Park programs remain located in disjunct, undersized, and ineffectively organized, modular buildings



Photo: The existing Big Oak Flat Information Station / Mather District Office (modular building) with visitors on the crowded deck

- Delivery of “face-to-face” visitor service hampered by a lack of space
- Inadequate counter space for conversations with visitors or use of map displays
- Visitor confusion continues
- Continued congestion and lines
- Visitor information & Mather District Office building remains (1,080 sq. ft.)
- Campgrounds Reservation Office trailer remains (570 sq. ft.)



Environmental Assessment

No Action Alternative: Existing Conditions

No improvement to operations space for park a staff



Photo: The existing staff space for wilderness and interpretation services at the Big Oak Flat Information Station / Mather District Office

- Continued inadequate office space and work stations for staff
- No meeting space for staff; staff travel to distant places in the park for meetings
- Inadequate staff break-room and restroom facilities remain



Photo: The existing counter space for wilderness and interpretation public services at the Big Oak Flat Information Station / Mather District Office



Environmental Assessment

No Action Alternative: Existing Conditions

Outdoor space remains the same, no plaza is constructed.

- Decks sever circulation and create awkward, compartmentalized spaces
- One informational board houses scant informational and wayfinding materials



Photo: The existing welcome center complex outdoor space.



Environmental Assessment

No Action Alternative: Existing Conditions

No change to existing comfort station (public restroom) and individual septic system



Photo: The existing comfort station with a line of Visitors waiting to use the restroom.

- Existing comfort station remains (627 sq. ft., built in 1966)
- 3 stalls for women, 3 stalls for men (no dedicated family or unisex bathroom)
- Water fountain & spigot (no bottle filling station)
- Lines continue during heavy visitation
- Unpleasant smells continue
- Aging facilities and septic systems will increasingly require emergency repair



Environmental Assessment

No Action Alternative: Existing Conditions

Parking area remains the same; no dedicated staff parking is constructed.



- Parking area provides 22 parking spaces, shared between park staff and visitors
- No crossing paths are added
- Congestion continues
- Vehicle-pedestrian conflict continues

Photo: The existing parking area during high visitation

Replace Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Project & Environmental Assessment



Summary of the No Action Alternative:

- Operations continue in existing facilities; visitor services continue to be impacted
- No changes to parking lot; staff parking would not be added; congestion & vehicle-pedestrian conflict continue
- Comfort station would not be expanded; lines & odors continue
- Aging septic system treats waste; emergency repairs are made as needed
- Mounting maintenance costs; infrastructure deterioration





Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action Alternative:

Unify park programs into an efficient Welcome Center building, replacing the existing modular facilities



Schematic design rendering of the proposed Big Oak Flat Welcome Center building

- Improve delivery of interpretation, wilderness permits, campgrounds reservations, and retail sales services
- Provide adequate counter space for conversations with visitors
- Provide clear orientation and wayfinding to park programs
- Decrease congestion and lines
- Roughly 2,200-2,500 square feet



Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action Alternative:

Improve efficiency of operations by constructing a Welcome Center, with adequate and innovatively designed staff spaces



- Adequate office space and work stations for staff
- Meeting space for staff
- Dedicated staff break-room and restroom facilities
- Temporarily re-locate the Mather District Office (law enforcement)

Schematic design rendering of the proposed Big Oak Flat Welcome Center building



Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action Alternative:

Construct a plaza to improve visitor experience, circulation, and wayfinding



- Raised plaza (~5,000-7,000 sq. ft.) between the welcome center and the comfort station
- Would house informational and wayfinding panels and materials
- Map layout table, some seating, shelter, and packing spaces
- Provides flexible space to be used by NPS staff for “pop-up” educational exhibits or programs

Schematic design rendering of the proposed plaza



Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action Alternative:

Construct a new, adequately sized comfort station (public restroom), connected to the Hodgdon community septic system



Schematic design rendering of the proposed comfort station

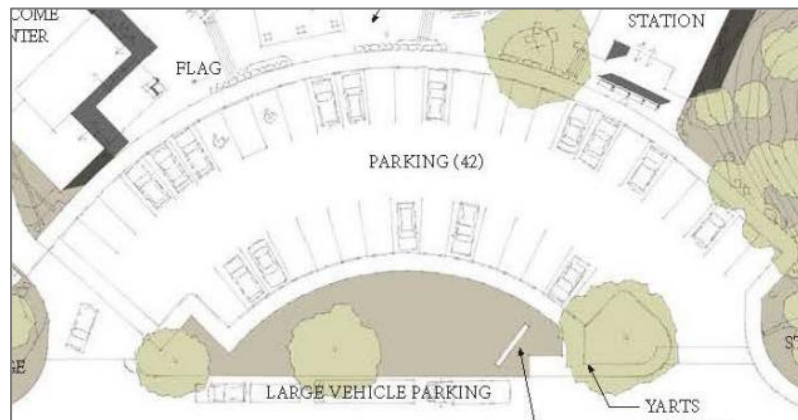
- 1,000 sq.ft. comfort station
- 9 stalls for women
- 4 stalls and 3 urinals for men
- 1 unisex, family restroom
- Water bottle filling station
- Gravity sewer (~ 2,500 linear feet) along Tuolumne Grove Road
- Decommission existing individual septic system/leach field



Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action Alternative:

Re-organize the existing parking area to increase safety and decrease congestion, and construct a small staff parking area



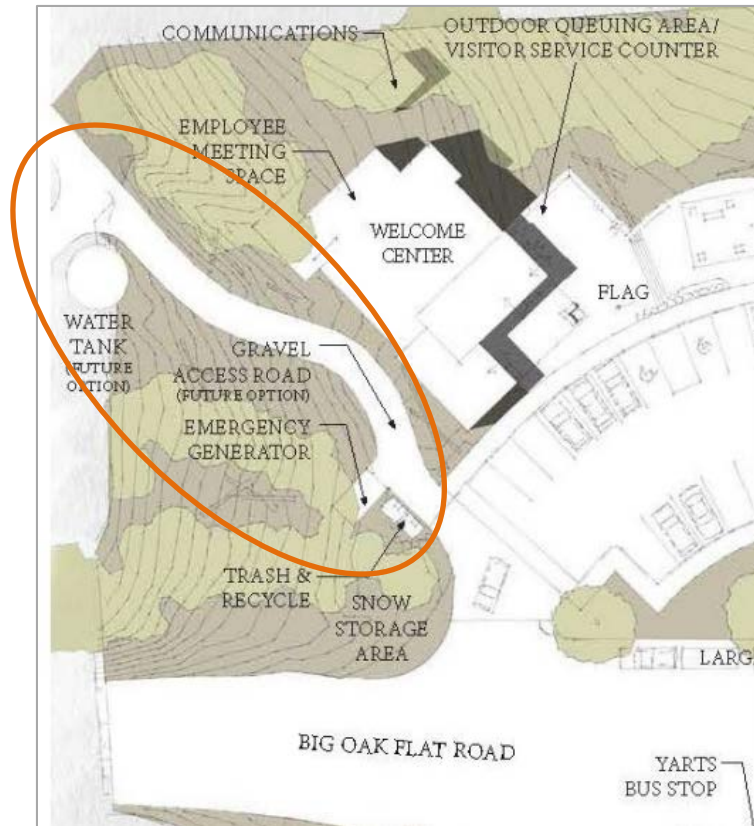
- Slightly reconfigure lot and restripe to provide 42 parking spaces
- Add designated crossing areas in the parking lot and across Big Oak Flat Road
- Construct a small staff parking area (gravel) along Tuolumne Grove Road for 10 cars (estimated)
- No change to YARTS bus stops, no change to commercial bus management proposed by this project



Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action Alternative:

Option for a water tank and access road, for potential installation at a later date



- ~250,000 gallon water tank
- Could provide increased volume for fire protection activities (**existing plans meet all fire protection code requirements**)
- Construct an access road to the water tank from the welcome center
- An option for construction at a later time, should the park want to augment the fire suppression system

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Summary of the Proposed Action Alternative:

- Unify services into one welcome center building and construct a plaza
- Construct an adequately sized comfort station (public restroom)
- Improve parking lot, add safe crossing, and construct a small staff lot
- Install a sewer line to convey sewage to the Hodgdon septic system
- Option to install a water tank & access road at a later date





Public Comment:

Your ideas, concerns, and suggestions are important to us!

- Please share your written comments by **December 20, 2018**, via one of the following methods:

- Online through the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website (preferred method) at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BigOakFlatEntrance>

- Mail your comments to:

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Attn: Big Oak Flat Welcome Center EA

P.O. Box 577,

Yosemite, CA 95389

Replace Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Project & Environmental Assessment



Commenting online through PEPC:

1. Click “Open for Comment” on the left side

The screenshot shows the National Park Service website with the URL <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=79620>. The page title is "National Park Service" and the subtitle is "PEPC Planning, Environment & Public Comment". The left sidebar contains a "PROJECT LINKS" section with the following items: Project Home, Plan Process, Meeting Notices, Links, Document List, and Open For Comment (1). The "Open For Comment (1)" link is highlighted with a yellow box. Below the sidebar, the main content area displays the title "Replace the Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Complex" and a brief description of the project. A comment period notice states: "A comment period for this project closes Dec 20, 2018: 16 Days, 7 Hours, 41 Min."

2. Select the link to the Replace the Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Complex Environmental Assessment

The screenshot shows the National Park Service website with the URL <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?projectID=79620>. The page title is "National Park Service" and the subtitle is "PEPC Planning, Environment & Public Comment". The left sidebar contains a "PROJECT LINKS" section with the following items: Project Home, Plan Process, Meeting Notices, Links, Document List, and Open For Comment (1). The "Document List" link is highlighted with a yellow box. Below the sidebar, the main content area displays the title "Document List" and a list of documents. The document "Replace the Big Oak Flat Welcome Center Complex Environmental Assessment" is highlighted with a yellow box. Other documents listed include "Big Oak Flat Public Scoping Materials" and "Factsheet".

3. Click the green “comment now” button on the left side of the screen and submit your comment!

The screenshot shows a green button with the text "Comment Now »". Below the button, the text reads: "Comment period closes Dec 20, 2018".



Schedule and Next Steps:

- Public Comment Period Closes: December 20, 2018
- Decision Document: January 2019
- Construction anticipated to start: October 2019
 - Welcome Center Complex closure for up to two visitor seasons
 - Temporary re-location of visitor services; interim restrooms
 - Issuance of wilderness permits from an interim location
 - Limited impacts to traffic along Tuolumne Grove road
 - Temporary relocation of Law Enforcement Office ~ 5 years
- Aiming for project completion by Spring 2021
- Possible installation of a water tank and access road at a later date
- Future project building a law enforcement/emergency services facility



Questions?

Email: yose_planning@nps.gov

Submit comments by December 20, 2018:

- Online (preferred) at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BigOakFlatEntrance>
- Mail your comments (postmarked by 12/20/18) to:
Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
Attn: Big Oak Flat Welcome Center EA
P.O. Box 577,
Yosemite, CA 95389