



IN REPLY REFER TO:
L7615(YOSE-PM)

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

Memorandum

To: Louis Summerfield

From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Subject: NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2010-086 Wapama Falls Bridge and Rancheria Falls Bridge Rehabilitation (34139)

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

- Will not be any effect on threatened, endangered, or rare species and/or their critical habitat.
- Will not be any effect on historical, cultural, or archeological resources.
- 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 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:

- Ensure that a site visit with the park Geologist or Hydrologist occurs prior to beginning work.

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 34139.

\\Don L. 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: 2010-086 Wapama Falls Bridge and Rancheria Falls Bridge Rehabilitation

PEPC Project Number: 34139

Project Description:

This project will repair both the Wapama Falls bridge and the Rancheria Falls bridge. The Wapama bridge requires reconstruction of the 70 foot western-most span of the bridge near Hetch Hetchy Reservoir which was washed away in a high water event October 25, 2010. Work will include the replacement of the stringers, decking, and railings. The Rancheria Falls Bridge was moderately damaged in the same event. Rehabilitation of this bridge would require the replacement in kind of 50 feet of decking and guard rails.

Bridge beams and all other materials would be brought to the remote site of these bridges by helicopter. All salvaged and damaged bridge components will be flown out in multiple flights.

Neither of these bridges are historic as both were constructed after the 1997 flood. All work will be performed in consultation with the park hydrologist.

Project Locations:

Tuolumne County, CA

Mitigation:

- Ensure that a site visit with the park Geologist or Hydrologist occurs prior to beginning work.

Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

C.3 Routine maintenance and repairs to non-historic structures, facilities, utilities, grounds and trails.

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 1/25/11

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



ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

DO-12 APPENDIX 1

Date Form Initiated: 01/19/2011

Updated May 2007 - per 2004 Departmental Manual revisions and proposed Director's Order 12 changes

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite National Park
Project Title: 2010-086 Wapama Falls Bridge and Rancheria Falls Bridge Rehabilitation
PEPC Project Number: 34139
Project Type: Facility Rehabilitation (FR)
Project Location: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Louis Summerfield

Is project a hot topic (controversial or sensitive issues that should be brought to attention of Regional Director)? No

B. RESOURCE EFFECTS TO CONSIDER:

| Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources | No Effect | Negligible Effects | Minor Effects | Exceeds Minor Effects | Data Needed to Determine/Notes |
|--|-----------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Geologic resources – soils, bedrock, streambeds, etc. | | Negligible | | | |
| 2. From geohazards | No | | | | |
| 3. Air quality | | Negligible | | | Air emissions will be emitted from generators used for the project. |
| 4. Soundscapes | | Negligible | | | Construction noises will be temporarily present during the bridge rehabilitation. |
| 5. Water quality or quantity | No | | | | |

| Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources | No Effect | Negligible Effects | Minor Effects | Exceeds Minor Effects | Data Needed to Determine/Notes |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 6. Streamflow characteristics | No | | | | |
| 7. Marine or estuarine resources | No | | | | |
| 8. Floodplains or wetlands | No | | | | |
| 9. Land use, including occupancy, income, values, ownership, type of use | No | | | | |
| 10. Rare or unusual vegetation – old growth timber, riparian, alpine | No | | | | |
| 11. Species of special concern (plant or animal; state or federal listed or proposed for listing) or their habitat | No | | | | |
| 12. Unique ecosystems, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Sites | No | | | | Yosemite National Park is a World Heritage Site. |
| 13. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat | No | | | | |
| 14. Unique or important fish or fish habitat | No | | | | |
| 15. Introduce or promote non-native species (plant or animal) | No | | | | |
| 16. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc. | No | | | | |
| 17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources | | Negligible | | | There will be a temporary trail closure during the rehabilitation. |

| Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources | No Effect | Negligible Effects | Minor Effects | Exceeds Minor Effects | Data Needed to Determine/Notes |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 18. Archeological resources | No | | | | |
| 19. Prehistoric/historic structure | No | | | | |
| 20. Cultural landscapes | No | | | | |
| 21. Ethnographic resources | No | | | | |
| 22. Museum collections (objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections) | No | | | | |
| 23. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure | No | | | | |
| 24. Minority and low income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc. | No | | | | |
| 25. Energy resources | No | | | | |
| 26. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies | No | | | | |
| 27. Resource, including energy, conservation potential, sustainability | No | | | | |
| 28. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc. | No | | | | |
| 29. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity | No | | | | |

| Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources | No Effect | Negligible Effects | Minor Effects | Exceeds Minor Effects | Data Needed to Determine/Notes |
|---|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 30. Other important environment resources (e.g. geothermal, paleontological resources)? | No | | | | |

C. MANDATORY CRITERIA

| Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal: | Yes | No | N/A | Comment or Data Needed to Determine |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 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 | | |

| Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal: | Yes | No | N/A | Comment or Data Needed to Determine |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 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 law, or a 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 (Executive Order 12898)? | | No | | |
| K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)? | | 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 | | |

For the purpose of interpreting these procedures within the NPS, any action that has the potential to violate the NPS Organic Act by impairing park resources or values would constitute an action that triggers the DOI exception for actions that threaten to violate a federal law for protection of the environment.

D. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Are personnel preparing this form familiar with the site? Yes
2. Did personnel conduct a site visit? No
3. Is the project in an approved plan such as a General Management Plan or an Implementation Plan with an accompanying NEPA document? No
4. Are there any interested or affected agencies or parties? No
5. Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? Yes
6. Are there any connected, cumulative, or similar actions as part of the proposed action? Yes

E. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SIGNATORIES

| <u>Interdisciplinary Team</u> | <u>Field of Expertise</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Don L. Neubacher | Superintendent |
| Kathleen Morse | Chief of Planning |
| Mark Butler | Chief of Project Management |
| Katariina Tuovinen | Chief of Administration Management |
| Ed Walls | Chief of Facilities Management |
| Joe Meyer | Acting Chief of Resources Management & Science |
| Marty Nielson | Chief of Business and Revenue Management |
| Tom Medema | Chief of Interpretation and Education |
| Charles Cuvelier | Chief of Visitor and Resource Protection |
| Louis Summerfield | Project Leader |
| Elexis Mayer | Environmental Planning and Compliance Program Manager |
| Elexis Mayer | Acting Historic Preservation Officer |
| Renea Kennec | NEPA Specialist |

F. SUPERVISORY SIGNATORY

Based on the environmental impact information contained in the statutory compliance file and in this environmental screening form, environmental documentation for this stage of the subject project is complete.

Recommended:

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Compliance Specialists | Date |
| <u>//Renea Kennec//</u> Compliance Specialist – Renea Kennec | <u>1/20/2011</u> |
| <u>//Elexis Mayer//</u> Compliance Program Manager – Elexis Mayer | <u>1/20/2011</u> |
| <u>//Mark A Butler//</u> Chief, Project Management – Mark Butler | <u>1/24/2011</u> |

Approved:

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Superintendent | Date |
| <u>//Don L. Neubacher//</u> Don L. Neubacher | <u>1/25/2011</u> |

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



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yosemite National Park
Date: 01/19/2011

PARK ESF ADDENDUM

Today's Date: January 19, 2011

PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite National Park
Project Title: 2010-086 Wapama Falls Bridge and Rancheria Falls Bridge Rehabilitation
PEPC Project Number: 34139
Project Type: Facility Rehabilitation (FR)
Project Location: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Louis Summerfield

PARK ESF ADDENDUM QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

| ESF Addendum Questions | Yes | No | N/A | Data Needed to Determine/Notes |
|---|-----|----|-----|--------------------------------|
| SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES CHECKLIST | | | | |
| Listed or proposed threatened or endangered species (Federal or State)? | | No | | |
| Species of special concern (Federal or State)? | | No | | |
| Park rare plants or vegetation? | | No | | |
| Potential habitat for any special-status species listed above? | | No | | |
| NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT CHECKLIST | | | | |
| Entail ground disturbance? | | No | | |
| Are any archeological or ethnographic sites located within the area of potential effect? | | No | | |
| Entail alteration of a historic structure or cultural landscape? | | No | | |
| Has a National Register form been completed? | | | N/A | |
| Are there any structures on the park's List of Classified Structures in the area of potential effect? | | No | | |

| WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT CHECKLIST | | | | |
|---|-----|----|-----|---|
| Fall within a wild and scenic river corridor? (Name the river corridor) | | No | | |
| Fall within the bed and banks AND will affect the free-flow of the river? | | | N/A | |
| Have the possibility of affecting water quality of the area? | | | N/A | |
| Remain consistent with its river segment classification? | | | N/A | |
| Fall on a tributary of a Wild and Scenic River? | Yes | | | Wapama and Rancheria Creek. |
| Will the project encroach or intrude upon the Wild and Scenic River corridor? | | No | | |
| Will the project unreasonably diminish scenic, recreational, or fish and wildlife values? | | No | | |
| Consistent with the provisions in the Merced River Plan Settlement Agreement? | Yes | | | |
| WILDERNESS ACT CHECKLIST | | | | |
| Within designated Wilderness? | Yes | | | Minimum Requirement Analysis is attached. |
| Within a Potential Wilderness Addition? | | | N/A | |



1.10.2008 Bridge - Washed Out





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yosemite National Park
Date: 01/19/2011

ASSESSMENT OF ACTIONS HAVING AN EFFECT ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERTAKING

1. **Park:** Yosemite National Park

2. **Project Description:**

Project Name: 2010-086 Wapama Falls Bridge and Rancheria Falls Bridge Rehabilitation

Date: January 19, 2011

PEPC Project Number: 34139

3. **Has the area of potential effects been surveyed to identify cultural resources?**

☐ No

☒ Yes

Source or reference:

Check here if no known cultural resources will be affected. (If this is because area has been disturbed, please explain or attach additional information to show the disturbance was so

☒ extensive as to preclude intact cultural deposits.)

4. **Potentially Affected Resource:**

None

5. **The proposed action will:**

☐ No Destroy, remove, or alter features/elements from a historic structure

☐ No Replace historic features/elements in kind

☐ No Add non-historic features/elements to a historic structure

☐ No Alter or remove features/elements of a historic setting or environment (inc. terrain)

☐ No Add non-historic features/elements (inc. visual, audible, or atmospheric) to a historic setting or cultural landscape

☐ No Disturb, destroy, or make archeological resources inaccessible

☐ No Disturb, destroy, or make ethnographic resources inaccessible

☐ No Potentially affect presently unidentified cultural resources

No 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:

Prepared by: Renea Kennec **Date Prepared:** 01/19/2011 **Telephone:** 209-379-1038

B. REVIEWS BY CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALISTS

The park Acting Historic Preservation Officer requested review by the park's cultural resource specialist/advisors as indicated by check-off boxes or as follows:

[X] Archeologist

Name: Laura Kirn

Date: 01/06/2011

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance [X]

Assessment of Effect: X No Historic Properties Affected No Adverse Effect Adverse
Effect Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

Doc Method: No Potential to Cause Effects [800.3(a)(1)]

[X] Historical Architect

Name: Gabrielle Harlan

Date: 01/19/2011

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []

Assessment of Effect: X No Historic Properties Affected No Adverse Effect Adverse
Effect Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

Doc Method: No Potential to Cause Effects [800.3(a)(1)]

[X] Anthropologist

Name: Jennifer Hardin

Date: 01/18/2011

Comments: No ethnographic resources or TCPs affected.

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []

Assessment of Effect: X No Historic Properties Affected No Adverse Effect Adverse
Effect Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

Doc Method: No Potential to Cause Effects [800.3(a)(1)]

[X] Historical Landscape Architect
Name: David Humphrey
Date: 01/19/2011

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []

Assessment of Effect: X No Historic Properties Affected No Adverse Effect Adverse Effect
 Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

Doc Method: No Potential to Cause Effects [800.3(a)(1)]

No Reviews From: Curator, Historian, 106 Advisor, Other Advisor

C. PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment of Effect:

X 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.
Specify: 1999 Programmatic Agreement

[] 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

☒ F. No Potential to Cause Effects [800.3(a)(1)]

☐ G. Memo to SHPO/THPO

☐ H. Memo to ACHP

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. 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.

Signature of Acting Historic Preservation Officer \\Elexis Mayer\\

Date: 1/20/2011

Signature of Superintendent \\Don L. Neubacher\\

Date: 1/25/2011

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

Yosemite National Park

Minimum Requirement Decision Process for Administrative Actions in Wilderness

Project: Restore bridge spans #78, #79 at Wapama Falls (Falls Creek) and restore the decking and rails of bridge #73, over Rancheria Creek in Hetch Hetchy area.

Overall objective: On 10/25/2010 an unusual high water event completely destroyed two spans of the Wapama Falls Bridge system, #78, #79 (Falls Creek) and damaged the structural integrity (decking and rails) of the Rancheria Falls Creek Bridge, #73. The overall objective for this Minimum Requirement request is to restore (replace in kind) the stringers (beams), decks, and railings of the two spans of the Wapama Falls Bridge system and restore the deck and railing on the Rancheria Falls Creek Bridge.

Wilderness bridge repair and replacement is deemed appropriate in Yosemite's 1989 Wilderness Management Plan:

Page 14: *Facilities in Yosemite Wilderness will be limited to those currently present or specifically proposed in this plan. They include safety railing; food storage devices; designated camping sites with food lockers, toilets, and agency constructed fire rings; drift fences; hitching racks; trails; patrol cabins; trails bridges; hydro meteorological devices; and radio antenna.*

Page 33: *It is also the goal of the Division to limit any new facilities in wilderness, and to contain facility impacts by repair and maintenance of facilities in existing impacted locations rather than by relocation.*

Page 34: *Bridges will be inspected biannually for condition. Bridge replacement will occur only where long tradition and high hazards to wilderness visitors safety requires them. Bridges will be of wood design and packed in. Other bridges will not be replaced after damage or washout. Structures and beams of damaged or obsolete bridges will be removed or obliterated or camouflaged. Wilderness trail bridges are listed in Appendix D. of which the Wapama and Rancheria bridges are listed.*

Additionally bridge repair and replacement is allowed under the 2009-2013 Programmatic Parkwide Trail Routine Maintenance and Repair Categorical Exclusion (CE), which states:

Bridge/Boardwalk Repairs and Rehabilitation:

Work ranges from minor repairs to individual pieces of decking and railing, to complete replacement of stringers, decking and railings. This work also includes repairs to log and masonry bridge approaches, abutments piers, and footings. Per historic preservation stipulations, work involving approach, abutment, pier, or stringer repairs/replacement will be reviewed by the park Historical Architect and Facility Management Historic Preservation leader before repairs begin and will be performed in consultation with the aforementioned RMS and historic preservation staff. New construction is not covered by this categorical exclusion.

Objective: With helicopter support, transport five loads consisting of three steel stringers (1500 lbs each), decking, rails and supplies from the O'Shaughnessy Dam/Hetch Hetchy Reservoir parking area to Wapama Falls Bridge site and back haul (to the parking area) five destroyed steel stringers that are scattered from the bridge site towards the reservoir's shore in the unstable talus slope. Transport (helicopter) one load from the parking area, consisting of decking, rails and supplies to the Rancheria Falls Creek site.

No avoid disturbance to Peregrine falcons this project will need to be completed before the annual Peregrine closure for nesting from March 1 to August 1, which is stated in the 2010 Superintendent's Compendium and includes Kolana Rock and Wapama Cliff, immediately west of the Wapama Falls.

Summary: This proposal outlines the pros and cons of using a helicopter to transport the loads into the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir area. The air support option of transporting the loads to the bridge sites presents less impact to the wilderness than the stock support option. Stock use can result in trail and soil erosion damage during the wet winter conditions. Air support can be accomplished in approximately three hours in one day prior to the Peregrine falcon closer and presents limited noise and visual impact to the wilderness. Also, the NPS stock is currently in winter pasture, all stable facilities are closed for the winter, all pack equipment, stock trailers and trucks are stored for the winter.

Step 1

Determine whether the proposed action takes place in designated Wilderness or in a Potential Wilderness Addition.

The proposed actions occur in a designated Wilderness Area.

Step 2

Determine whether the proposed action is required for the administration of the Yosemite Wilderness.

Written in the Department of Interior guidelines, Assistant Secretary Nathaniel P. Reed, (Secretarial Order No. 2920) introduced the concept of the "minimum tool" for uses necessary for the health and safety of wilderness travelers or protection of wilderness area. The manager must use the minimum tool, equipment, or structure necessary to successfully, safely, and economically accomplish the objective, with economics considered the least important of the three criteria.

In special or emergency cases involving the health and safety of wilderness users or the protection of wilderness values, aircraft, motorboats, and motorized vehicles may be used.

The use of the helicopter is necessary to replace the bridge without damaging the trails or stream banks which would likely happen if ground based methods of transport were used to transport new bridge material to the site or removed damaged material from the site.

Step 3

Determine if the objectives of the proposed action can be met with actions outside of wilderness or potential wilderness

The objective of the proposed action cannot be met with actions outside of wilderness. The bridges that need to be restored and repaired are located in a designated wilderness.

Step 4

Develop a list of alternatives to meet the objective of the proposed action. Included are ways to reduce or mitigate the impacts of each alternative.

Alternative 1 – Transport by helicopter all loads to both bridges and haul back damaged Wapama stringers within one weekday.

Alternative 2 – Transport all loads to both bridges by boat and multiple strings of mules over several days.

Alternative 3 – no action.

Step 5

Determine the effect of each alternative on wilderness health and character. Cumulative effects are included.

Alternative 1 – Transport by helicopter all loads to both bridges and haul back damaged Wapama stringers within one weekday: Increased noise, visual and mechanical intrusion for approximately two to three hours.

Alternative 2 – Transport all loads to both bridges by boat and multiple strings of mules over several days: Stock use would result in erosion impact in the wet winter conditions of the trails. Stock is not able to pull 1500 pound steel beams, so multiple rigging anchor (pins) holes would have to be drilled in large boulders that currently are not drilled. High potential exists of scaring and scraping boulders in the process of pulling 1500 pound beams from the reservoir shore upslope to the bridge site. Using smaller sized material, more easily transported by mules, would require additional instream foundation structures that would make the bridge less durable and result in a greater footprint.

Alternative 3 – no action: Without the bridges at Wapama Falls, visitors may create new “use trails” to cross the sites of the destroyed bridges and potentially cause degradation of the environments of the creek and its banks. An extreme safety hazard exists during high water for visitors attempting to access the wilderness past the Wapama Falls area. Although structures in wilderness are generally not placed strictly for ease of access and/or visitor safety, the decision to not replace this bridge would significantly alter both the historical access and the potential safety of visitors using this trail. A decision to drastically change this use and to alter the “replacement in kind” strategy for wilderness bridges is needed and should be addressed in either an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement – as would occur in a Wilderness Management Plan.

Additionally, there are sections of damaged bridge that are now lodged in the downstream channel and would remain there without this project.

The Rancheria Creek Bridge is damaged, leaving an unsafe NPS structure in the wilderness that would act as an attraction for hikers wanting to cross the creek. Without the restoration and repairs, the bridge structure may fail resulting in a deep ravine, swift-water crossing for visitors accessing the wilderness and the potential exists for sections of the bridge to flow into the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, bringing up the same drastic change to use patterns as in the Wapama Falls Bridge in the previous paragraph.

Step 6

Determine the management concerns of each alternative.

Alternative 1 –Transport by helicopter all loads to both bridges and haul back damaged Wapama stringers within one weekday: Mechanized intrusion for approximately two to three hours on that one day.

Alternative 2 –Transport all loads to both bridges by boat and multiple strings of stock over several days: Stock not capable of pulling 1500 pound steel beams. Stock use would result in substantial trail and soil erosion impact in the wet winter conditions of the trails. All the NPS stock is currently in winter pasture, all stable facilities are closed for the winter, all pack equipment, stock trailers and trucks are stored for the winter.

Alternative 3 – no action: Drastic change in historical use patterns without a NEPA process and safety concerns for visitors.

Step 7

Choose an alternative

Alternative 1 –Transport by helicopter all loads to both bridges and haul back damaged Wapama stringers within one weekday: Is a proposed temporary one time request which is the alternates with the least impact to the designated wilderness area. The impact on the wilderness will occur over shorter time duration and does not present the physical trail and soil erosion impact potential using mules on wet winter trail conditions. Use of the helicopter represents short-term adverse impact not compromising the overall long-term wilderness character and quality.

A no action will result in possible impacts by new use trails and compromised safety to visitors and employees accessing the wilderness past the Wapama Falls crossing.

Submitted By:


Parkwide Trails Supervisor

1/18/2011
Date

Reviewed By:

McMull 1/18/2011
Wilderness Manager Date
(Attach any comments and conditions)

Approved By:

Charles Curot 1/18/2011
Chief Ranger Date
(Attach any comments and conditions)

D J Newbark
Superintendent Date
(Attach any comments and conditions) 1/18/11