



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: Sue Beatty, Project Manager, Yosemite National Park

From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Subject: NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2012-002 El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadow Conifer Removal (40279)

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 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.

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 40279.

//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.*



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yosemite National Park
Date: 05/08/2012

Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: 2012-002 El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadow Conifer Removal

PEPC Project Number: 40279

Project Description:

This project proposes to re-establish native vegetation, improve meadow habitat, and maintain the cultural landscape in El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadows by removing conifer seedlings from meadow borders. It has been estimated that 50-60% of meadow area in Yosemite has been lost since the arrival of European Americans. Scientists hypothesize that this rapid conversion from meadow to forest in Yosemite Valley stems from several origins including fire suppression, impacts to natural hydrologic flows (lowered water tables), and past agricultural practices that disturbed land and created conditions favorable for conifer germination. This encroachment has changed the essential character of Yosemite's cultural landscape by forcing out or reducing the types and patterns of vegetation, as well as affecting overall biological diversity and meadow integrity in the Valley. The 1994 Yosemite Valley Cultural Landscape Report states that the Park will "retain and maintain current meadow areas." Research also indicates that meadow soils rapidly assume forest soil characteristics as trees establish, which can favor continued conifer establishment (Griffith et al. 2005).

This project will mitigate this rapid conifer encroachment and reduce fuel loads, similar to the conifer removal that occurs annually in other parts of the Valley as part of fuels reduction in the Wildland Urban Interface. Utilizing volunteers from the Upper Merced Watershed Council, Yosemite Conservancy, NatureBridge, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other groups, small ponderosa pines & incense cedars (up to 10 inches dbh) will be manually removed using hand saws. Material will be staged in no more than three parking spaces, loaded into pickup trucks and hauled throughout each work day to the Yosemite Valley woodlot. If material remains at the end of a work day, it will be removed in less than 48 hours and not left over a weekend. Work will be coordinated by the Vegetation & Ecological Restoration Branch and the Resources Management and Science, Volunteer Office. Placement of material in the woodlot will be coordinated with park Fire and Forestry staff.

Project Locations:

Mariposa County, CA

Mitigations:

- No mitigations identified.

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):

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.

//Don L Neubacher//
Don L. Neubacher

//5/23/12//
Date

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yosemite National Park
Date: 05/08/2012

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

DO-12 APPENDIX 1

Date Form Initiated: 05/08/2012

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: 2012-002 El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadow Conifer Removal
PEPC Project Number: 40279
Project Type: Meadow Restoration (OTHER)
Project Location:
County, State: Mariposa, California
Project Leader: Sue Beatty

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.	No				
2. From geohazards	No				
3. Air quality	No				
4. Soundscapes	No				
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				

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
16. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc.	No				
17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources	No				
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	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
resources					
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				
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		No		

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Comment or Data Needed to Determine
Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?				
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 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		No		

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Comment or Data Needed to Determine
(Executive Order 12898)?				
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
- 1.A. Did personnel conduct a site visit? No
2. Is the project in an approved plan such as a General Management Plan or an Implementation Plan with an accompanying NEPA document? No
3. Are there any interested or affected agencies or parties? No
4. Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? N/A
5. Are there any connected, cumulative, or similar actions as part of the proposed action? (*e.g., other development projects in area or identified in GMP, adequate/available utilities to accomplish project*) No

E. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SIGNATORIES

<u>Interdisciplinary Team</u>	<u>Field of Expertise</u>
Don L. Neubacher	Superintendent
Michael Gauthier	Chief of Staff
Kathleen Morse	Chief of Planning
Randy Fong	Chief of Project Management
Teri Austin	Chief of Administration Management
Ed Walls	Chief of Facilities Management
Linda C. Mazzu	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
Sue Beatty	Project Leader
Madelyn Ruffner	Acting Environmental Planning and Compliance Program Manager
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>//5/9/12//</u>
<u>//Madelyn Ruffner//</u> Acting Compliance Program Manager – Madelyn Ruffner	<u>//5/12/12//</u>
<u>//Randy Fong//</u> Chief, Project Management – Randy Fong	<u>//5-22-12//</u>

Approved:

Superintendent	Date
<u>//Don L. Neubacher//</u> Don L. Neubacher	<u>//5/23/12//</u>

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PARK ESF ADDENDUM

Today's Date: May 8, 2012

PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite National Park
Project Title: 2012-002 El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadow Conifer Removal
PEPC Project Number:

Project Type: Meadow Restoration (OTHER)
Project Location:
County, State: Mariposa, California
Project Leader: Sue Beatty

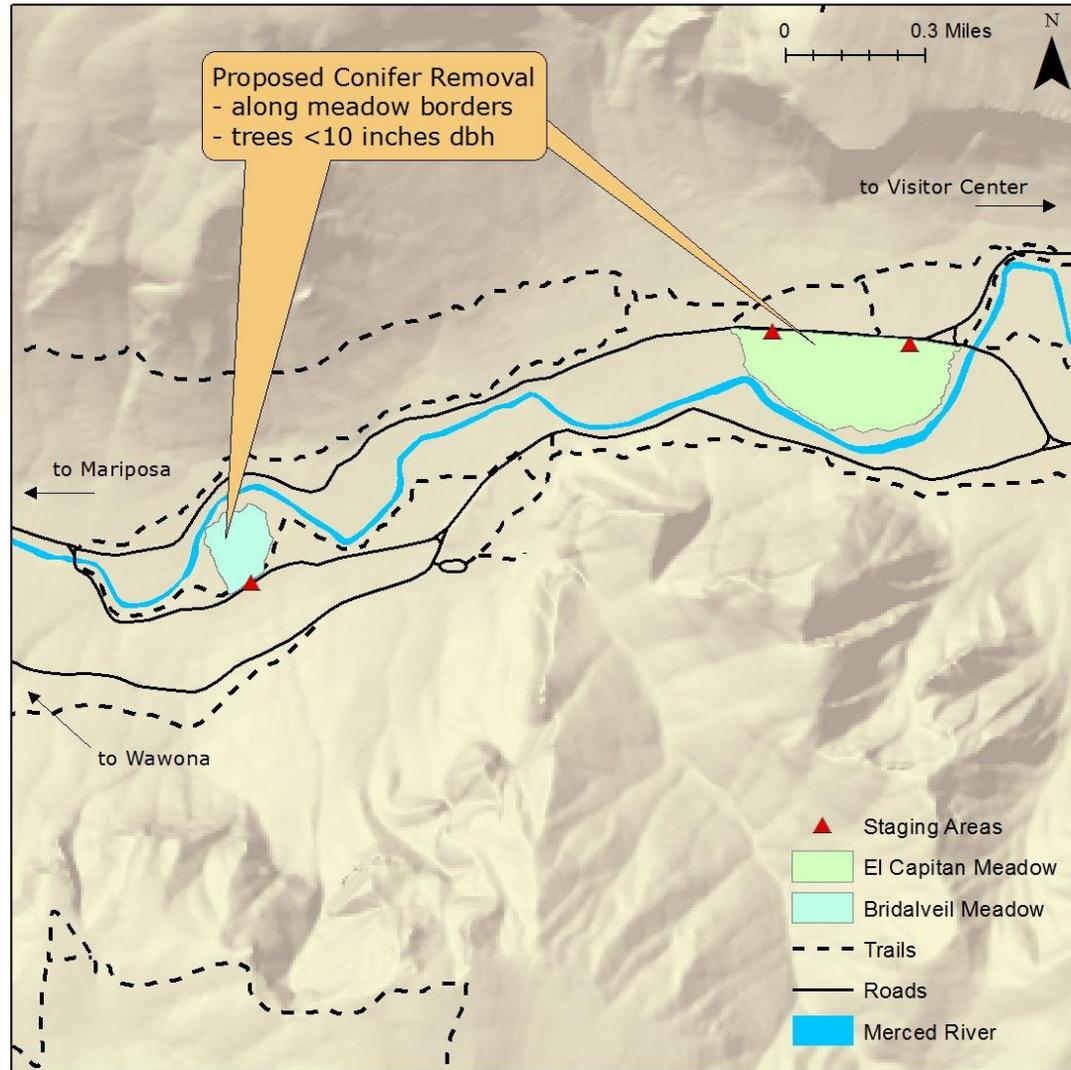
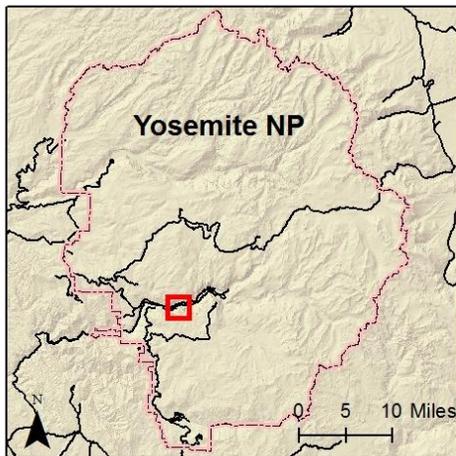
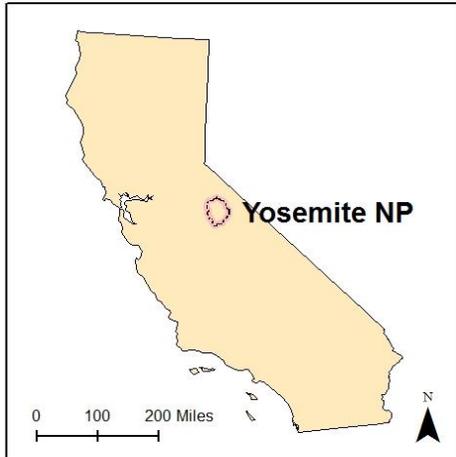
PARK ESF ADDENDUM QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

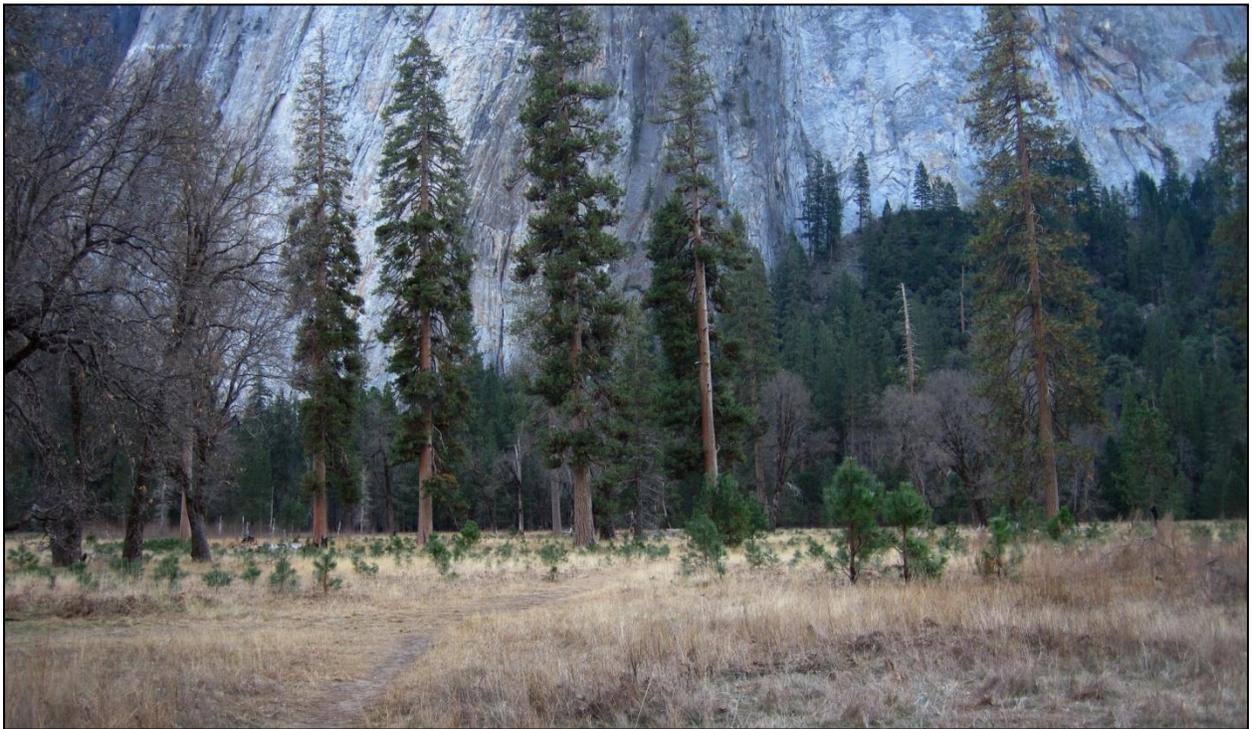
ESF Addendum Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES CHECKLIST				
Listed or proposed threatened or endangered species (Federal or State)?		No		
Species of special concern (Federal or State)?		No		
Park rare plants or vegetation?		No		
Potential habitat for any special-status 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?	Yes			
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				

ESF Addendum Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
Fall within a wild and scenic river corridor?	Yes			Merced River
Fall within the bed and banks AND will affect the free-flow of the river?		No		
Have the possibility of affecting water quality of the area?		No		
Remain consistent with its river segment classification?	Yes			
Fall on a tributary of a Wild and Scenic River?		No		
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?		No		
Within a Potential Wilderness Addition?		No		

Conifer Removal in El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadows

Yosemite National Park, CA
U. S. Department of the Interior





Conifer Removal in El Capitan & Bridalveil Meadows



ASSESSMENT OF ACTIONS HAVING AN EFFECT ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERTAKING

1. **Park:** Yosemite National Park

2. Project Description:

Project Name: 2012-002 El Capitan and Bridalveil Meadow Conifer Removal
Prepared by: Renea Kennec **Date Prepared:** 05/08/2012 **Telephone:** 209-379-1038
PEPC Project Number: 40279

Area of potential effects (as defined in 36 CFR 800.16[d])

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

No
 Yes

Source or reference: Yosemite Valley Archeological District; Yosemite Valley Historic District

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(s):

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 Involvement in 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:

Archeologist
Name: Laura Kirn
Date: 02/01/2012

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []
Assessment of Effect: 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)]

Anthropologist
Name: Jennifer Hardin
Date: 05/07/2012

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []
Assessment of Effect: No Historic Properties Affected No Adverse Effect Adverse Effect Streamlined Review
Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:
Doc Method: Park Specific Programmatic Agreement

Historical Landscape Architect
Name: David Humphrey
Date: 02/10/2012
Comments: None.

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []
Assessment of Effect: No Historic Properties Affected No Adverse Effect Adverse Effect Streamlined Review
Recommendations for conditions or stipulations: None.
Doc Method: Park Specific Programmatic Agreement

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

C. PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment of Effect:

<u> </u> No Historic Properties Affected	<u> X </u> No Adverse Effect	<u> </u> Adverse Effect
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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

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:

Acting Historic Preservation Officer

//Kimball E. Koch//

Kimball Koch

Date: //5-18-2012//

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//

Don L. Neubacher

Date: //5/23/2012//

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Yosemite National Park.*