



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: Monica Buhler, Project Manager, Yosemite National Park

From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Subject: NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2012-022 Tuolumne Meadows Informal Trail Removal (41787)

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:

- Pothole Dome social trail removal is not approved at this time. The work in this area would redirect foot traffic directly through an archeological site and next to a pounding rock feature. This portion of the project is on hold until a better solution is developed for traffic that would be diverted from the existing social trail.
- Project Manager is working with the American Indian Liaison and associated tribes and groups to ensure that impacts to traditional cultural resources are avoided or minimized. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. Any plans for work in the area should be developed in consultation with park associated tribes and groups. No work should be conducted in the Soda Springs area until a tribal site visit has been conducted and recommendations received from associated tribal groups about preferred approaches. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. It is recommended that no actions be implemented in this area during the FY12 field season.

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 41787.

//Don L. Neubacher// //7/26/12//

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: 2012-022 Tuolumne Meadows Informal Trail Removal

PEPC Project Number: 41787

Project Description:

Tuolumne Meadows represents some of the most extensive subalpine meadow and riparian habitat in the Sierra Nevada. While productivity of these riparian and meadow areas remains high, recent studies document changes in the ecological integrity, particularly in parts of Tuolumne Meadows, that are exemplified by expanding areas of barren ground, atypical plant species, conifer encroachment, and diminished willow vegetation along riverbanks. This project proposes to protect the meadow through restoring trampled areas of the meadow, removing informal trails and delineating trails and trailheads using logs, rocks, or fencing. Cultural resources will be documented for future restoration projects. The following actions for 2012 are proposed:

- Remove informal trails in Tuolumne Meadows (the section from the Tuolumne Store and Grill to the bridge/Soda Springs area will not be removed) to restore hydrologic conditions and native plant communities
- Close sections of Tuolumne Meadows to protect restoration areas and prevent additional informal trail.
- Delineate trails with logs or rocks around the Soda Springs area to reduce meadow fragmentation and damage to rare plant habitat
- Delineate trail and parking at the Soda Springs trailhead with logs, rocks or fencing
- Conduct site visits with subject matter experts of several divisions [Resources Management and Science, Facilities (Trails), Interpretation, and Protection] to prioritize, identify data gaps and develop methods for future work
- Develop interpretive materials to inform visitors of the project and the importance of protecting meadow habitat
- Conduct preliminary vegetation, wildlife, hydrology and visitor use monitoring to measure efficacy of proposed future restoration actions

There are approximately two miles of informal trails through Tuolumne Meadows averaging 12-24 inches wide and comprising approximately one acre. Most of the project area lies outside of wilderness. Well-tested ecological restoration methods for removing informal trails (particularly rutted trails in meadows) include the following:

- De-compact soils
- Salvage any plants growing in the ruts or on the edges of the trail/ruts for later replanting
- Re-contour topography by filling the trail ruts with loose soil generated from small mammals, soil from de-compacting the old trail bed, or local native soil to promote sheet flow
- Replant salvaged plants (focusing on reducing any linear features)

- Scatter locally gathered seed and organic materials to facilitate new plant growth
- Fill (with native soil) any deep head-cuts caused by informal trails and recontour to more natural meadow topography
- Place "Closed for Restoration" signs or other effective signage to protect the newly restored area
- Construct fence (only in non-wilderness) if needed to protect restoration area

Cultural resources staff are also funded by this project and will conduct documentation and survey. Cultural resources documented in the Tuolumne Meadows Historic District and Tuolumne Meadows Soda Springs Historic District, both of which were certified by the State Historic Preservation Office in 2007, will be preserved and protected. Collaboration with the park historical landscape architect to ensure avoidance of significant cultural resources will be ongoing during this and future phases of restoration work. Local native soil may be used to fill ruts or headcuts and will be, along with any tools or equipment, cleaned to remove soils or any invasive plant material to limit spread and/or introduction of non-native plants. Only non-mechanized tools will be used (hand tools, tarps, wheelbarrows) and the majority of the work will be completed by volunteers lead by ecological restoration staff. A Minimum Requirement Analysis will be completed for work in wilderness areas.

Project Locations:

Tuolumne County, CA

Mitigations:

- Pothole Dome social trail removal is not approved at this time. The work in this area would redirect foot traffic directly through an archeological site and next to a pounding rock feature. This portion of the project is on hold until a better solution is developed for traffic that would be diverted from the existing social trail.
- Project Manager is working with the American Indian Liaison and associated tribes and groups to ensure that impacts to traditional cultural resources are avoided or minimized. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. Any plans for work in the area should be developed in consultation with park associated tribes and groups. No work should be conducted in the Soda Springs area until a tribal site visit has been conducted and recommendations received from associated tribal groups about preferred approaches. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. It is recommended that no actions be implemented in this area during the FY12 field season.

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//
//7/26/12//

Don L. Neubacher

Date

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: 07/19/2012

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF) DO-12 APPENDIX 1

Date Form Initiated: 06/21/2012

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: 2012-022 Tuolumne Meadows Informal Trail Removal
PEPC Project Number: 41787
Project Type: Resource Management Plan/Site Plan (RMP)
Project Location:
County, State: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Monica Buhler

Is this 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			Restoration work includes filling and recontouring headcuts, decompacting soils, and recontouring the topography around the trails.
2. From geohazards	No				
3. Air quality		Negligible			This project will create temporary dust.
4. Soundscapes	No				
5. Water quality or quantity	No				
6. Streamflow characteristics	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
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				

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
17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources		Negligible			This project will remove informal trails around Tuolumne Meadows; visitors will not have access to all areas. This project focuses on the ecological integrity of the meadows.
18. Archeological resources	No				Tuolumne Meadows Archeological District; project manager is working with an archeologist to ensure known sites are avoided during project implementation, and address any inadvertent discovery of previously undocumented resources.
19. Prehistoric/historic structure	No				
20. Cultural landscapes	No				Tuolumne Meadows Historic District; Soda Springs Complex Historic District.
21. Ethnographic resources	No				Project Manager is working with the American Indian Liaison and associated tribes and groups to ensure that impacts traditional cultural resources are avoided or minimized. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. Any plans for work in the area should be developed in consultation with park associated tribes and groups.
22. Museum collections (objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections)	No				
23. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure	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
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				
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;		No		

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

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

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? Yes
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
Woody Smeck	Deputy 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
Tara Riggs	Acting Chief of Business and Revenue Management
Tom Medema	Chief of Interpretation and Education
Charles Cuvelier	Chief of Visitor and Resource Protection
Monica Buhler	Project Leader
Ann Roberts	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>//7/26/12//</u>
<u>//Ann Roberts//</u> Acting Compliance Program Manager – Ann Roberts	<u>//7/26/12//</u>
<u>//Randy Fong//</u> Chief, Project Management – Randy Fong	<u>//7-26-12//</u>

Approved:

Superintendent	Date
<u>//Don L. Neubacher//</u> Don L. Neubacher	<u>//7/26/12//</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: 07/19/2012

PARK ESF ADDENDUM

Today's Date: July 19, 2012

PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite National Park
Project Title: 2012-022 Tuolumne Meadows Informal Trail Removal
PEPC Project Number: 41787

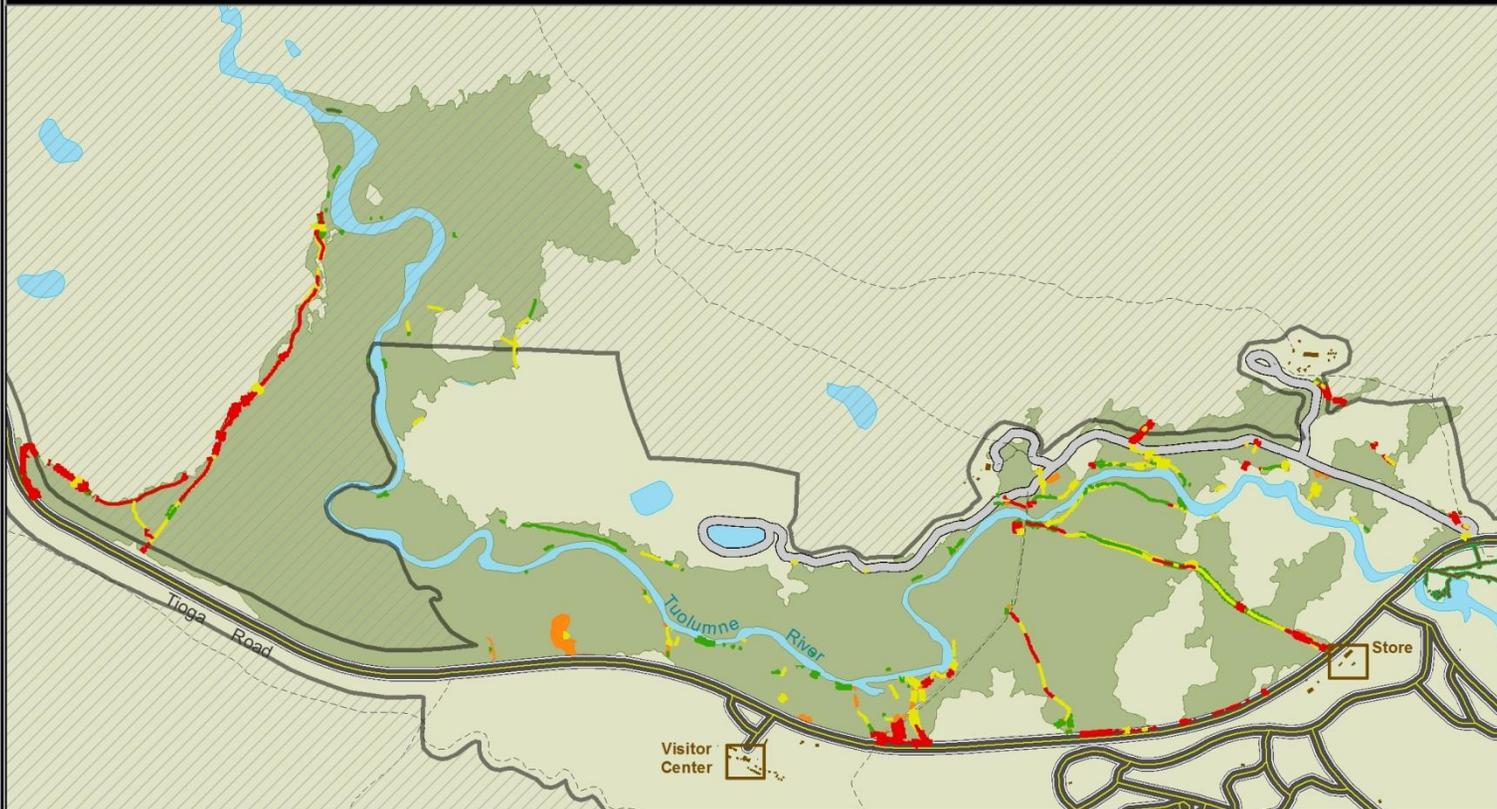
Project Type: Resource Management Plan/Site Plan (RMP)
Project Location:
County, State: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Monica Buhler

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)?	Yes			Sierra Nevada yellow legged frog (candidate species).
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?	Yes			Restoration work includes filling and recontouring headcuts, decompacting soils, and recontouring the topography around the trails.
Are any archeological or ethnographic sites located within the area of potential effect?	Yes			Tuolumne Meadows Archeological

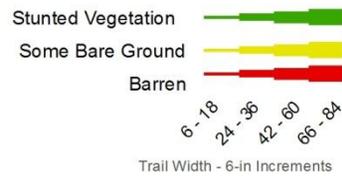
ESF Addendum Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
				District; No Historic Properties Affected.
Entail alteration of a historic structure or cultural landscape?		No		
Has a National Register form been completed?	Yes			All historic districts have been nominated for the National Register.
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?	Yes			Tuolumne 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?	Yes			A Minimum Requirement Analysis is attached.
Within a Potential Wilderness Addition?		No		

Tuolumne Meadows Informal Trail and Disturbed Area Impacts



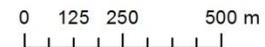
The informal trail across from Tuolumne Store and Grill will not be addressed in this phase of the project

Informal Trail Vegetation Condition Class



- Disturbed Area
- Meadow Area
- River
- Building

- Wilderness
- Formal Trail
- Main Road
- Minor Road



Created by: B. Woiderski



Example of rutted trails



ASSESSMENT OF ACTIONS HAVING AN EFFECT ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERTAKING

1. **Park:** Yosemite National Park

2. Project Description:

Project Name: 2012-022 Tuolumne Meadows Informal Trail Removal

Prepared by: Renea Kennec

Date Prepared: 07/19/2012

Telephone: 209-379-1038

PEPC Project Number: 41787

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: Tuolumne Meadows Historic District; Tuolumne Meadows Archeological 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 Resources:

Ethnographic Resources Affected Notes: Project Manager is working with the American Indian Liaison and associated tribes and groups to ensure that impacts traditional cultural resources are avoided or minimized. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. Any plans for work in the area should be developed in consultation with park associated tribes and groups

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)

- 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
- Yes 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:
 (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:

[X] Historical Landscape Architect
 Name: David Humphrey
 Date: 06/21/2012

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: The project manager will continue to coordinate with the park historical landscape architect in RMS-HAL Branch to ensure sensitive treatment of known cultural landscape elements.

Doc Method: Park Specific Programmatic Agreement

[X] Archeologist
 Name: Laura Kim
 Date: 07/24/2012

Comments: Project manager is working with an archeologist to ensure known sites are protected during project implementation, and address any inadvertent discovery of previously undocumented resources. Work techniques in archeological site areas will be adapted to minimize ground disturbance and potential for disrupting archeological materials.

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: Pothole Dome social trail removal is not cleared at this time. The work in this area would redirect foot traffic directly through an archeological site and next to a pounding rock feature. This portion of the project is on hold until a better solution is developed for traffic that would be diverted from the existing social trail.

Doc Method: Park Specific Programmatic Agreement

Anthropologist
Name: Jennifer Hardin
Date: 07/26/2012

Comments: Project Manager is working with the American Indian Liaison and associated tribes and groups to ensure that impacts traditional cultural resources are avoided or minimized. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. Any plans for work in the area should be developed in consultation with park associated tribes and groups.

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: No work should be conducted in the Soda Springs area until a tribal site visit has been conducted and recommendations received from associated tribal groups about preferred approaches. Soda Springs is an area and resource with high cultural significance for park associated American Indians. It is recommended that no actions be implemented in this area during the FY12 field season.

Doc Method: Stipulations/Conditions

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

C. PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment of Effect:

<input type="checkbox"/> No Historic Properties Affected	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Adverse Effect	<input type="checkbox"/> 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

//7/26/12//
Date

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.

//Don L. Neubacher//
Don L. Neubacher

//7/26/12//
Date

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