



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: Dave R. Kari, Project Manager, Yosemite National Park
From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
Subject: NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2016-013 Happy Isles John Muir Trail Improvements (65193)

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

- There will not be any effect on threatened, endangered, or rare species and/or their critical habitat.
- There will be no adverse effect on historical, cultural, or archeological resources.
- There will not be serious or long-term undesirable environmental or visual effects.

The subject proposed project, therefore, is now cleared for all NEPA and NHPA compliance requirements as presented above. Project plans and specifications are approved and construction and/or project implementation can commence.

For the proposed project actions to be within compliance requirements during construction and/or project implementation, the following mitigations must be adhered to:

- Should unanticipated artifacts be uncovered during project operations, the Yosemite Anthropology Branch will be informed and will document the discoveries.
- Retain current/historic granite curbstones in place at bridges. Build Stay-Lock surface up to curbstones, leaving top surface of curbstone visible.

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 65193.

// 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: 2016-013 Happy Isles John Muir Trail Improvements

PEPC Project Number: 65193

Description of Action (Project Description):

This project will define and improve the pathway between Happy Isles shuttle bus stop 16 and the John Muir trailhead. Every year thousands of visitors travel to Happy Isles to begin their hike on the John Muir/Mist Trail, but once they depart from the bus it's not very clear which direction to go. This busy section of road is used by hikers, bikers, buses, stock trains, vehicles with handicap placards, and authorized concessionaire and NPS vehicles. The trails staff will formalize the pathways on both sides of the road, reduce erosion, define pedestrian and stock paths of travel, and reduce vehicle/pedestrian/stock conflicts.

This project will:

- Define pathways on either side of the Happy Isles Road to create a safe walking space for visitors. Pathways will be a consistent 8 feet wide.
- Reset granite curbing to align with the pathway and ramp the path up to bridge to meet accessibility requirements.
- Move current fencing back to allow for the 8 foot pathway.
- Install 260 feet of new pierced post fence along the whole project area. Ground disturbance for these posts would be 6" x 6" x 12".
- Build retaining walls the length of the project area to support the road and pathway. The walls will be varying height, maximum of 4 feet high and match the current walls around the culvert.
- Build all pathways with Staylok instead of pavement and eliminate social trails.

Project Locations:

Mariposa County, CA

Mitigation(s):

- Should unanticipated artifacts be uncovered during project operations, the Yosemite Anthropology Branch will be informed and will document the discoveries.
- Retain current/historic granite curbstones in place at the bridge. Build Stay-Lock surface up to curbstones, leaving top surface of curbstone visible.

CE Citation: C.11 Minor trail relocation, development of compatible trail networks on logging roads or other established routes, and trail maintenance and repair.

Explanation:

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

Superintendent: // Don L. Neubacher //

Don L. Neubacher

Date: 9/14/2016

Categorical Exclusion Form - Happy Isles John Muir Trail Improvements - PEPC ID: 65193

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Extraordinary Circumstances:

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



ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

Updated Sept 2015 per NPS NEPA Handbook

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: 2016-013 Happy Isles John Muir Trail Improvements
PEPC Project Number: 65193
Project Type: Repair/Rehabilitation (REHAB)
Project Location: Mariposa County, CA
Project Leader: Dave Kari

B. RESOURCE IMPACTS TO CONSIDER:

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
Air Air Quality	Potential	Temporary construction related dust and exhaust from digging and machinery is possible.
Biological Nonnative or Exotic Species	None	
Biological Species of Special Concern or Their Habitat	None	
Biological Vegetation	None	
Biological Wildlife and/or Wildlife Habitat including terrestrial and aquatic species	None	
Cultural Archeological Resources	None	
Cultural Cultural Landscapes	None	
Cultural Ethnographic Resources	None	
Cultural Museum Collections	None	
Cultural Prehistoric/historic	None	

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
structures		
Geological Geologic Features	Potential	There will be some ground disturbance to build retaining walls as well as some excavation and fill used to prepare the trail bed. Ground disturbance will be no more than 12 inches deep for retaining walls and 5 inches maximum for trail bed preparation.
Geological Geologic Processes	None	
Lightscapes Lightscapes	None	
Other Human Health and Safety	None	
Other Operational	Potential	One shoulder of the road at a time will be closed for construction to allow continued access to the trailhead.
Other Other	Potential	The construction equipment used requires fuel; there will be a spill kit on site.
Socioeconomic Land Use	None	
Socioeconomic Minority and low-income populations, size, migration patterns, etc.	None	
Socioeconomic Socioeconomic	None	
Soundscapes Soundscapes	Potential	Construction equipment used will cause temporary increase in noise during working hours.
Viewsheds Viewsheds	None	
Visitor Use and Experience Recreation Resources	Potential	One shoulder of the road will be closed at a time during construction to reconstruct the trails while still allowing trail access to visitors.
Visitor Use and Experience Visitor Use and Experience	Potential	This project will improve conditions and make wayfinding easier for visitors.
Water Floodplains	None	
Water Marine or Estuarine Resources	None	
Water Water Quality or Quantity	None	
Water	None	

Resource	Potential for Impact	Potential Issues & Impacts
Wetlands		
Water Wild and Scenic River	Potential	This project takes place within the Merced River Corridor.
Wilderness Wilderness	None	

Recommended:

Compliance Specialists	Date
<u>// Kristin Anderson //</u> Compliance Specialist – Kristin Anderson	<u>9/7/2016</u>
<u>// Erin Davenport // (acting for Madelyn Ruffner)</u> Compliance Program Manager – Erin Davenport	<u>9/8/2016</u>
<u>// Madelyn Ruffner // (acting for Randy Fong)</u> Chief, Project Management – Madelyn Ruffner	<u>9/9/2016</u>

Approved:

Superintendent	Date
<u>// Don L. Neubacher //</u> Don L. Neubacher	<u>9/14/2016</u>

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ASSESSMENT OF ACTIONS HAVING AN EFFECT ON HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERTAKING

1. **Park:** Yosemite National Park

2. **Project Description:**

Project Name: 2016-013 Happy Isles John Muir Trail Improvements

Prepared by: Kristin Anderson **Date Prepared:** 09/6/2016 **Telephone:** (209) 379-1308

PEPC Project Number: 65193

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

Yosemite Valley Archeological District Yosemite Valley Historic District Yosemite Valley Bridges Historic District

3. **Has the area of potential effects been surveyed to identify historic properties?**

 No

 X Yes

Source or reference:

4. **Potentially Affected Resource(s):**

Archeological resources affected:

Name and number(s): Yosemite Valley Archeological District

NR status: 1 - Listed in Register and documented

Historical Structures/Resources Affected:

Name and number(s): Yosemite Valley Bridges Historic District

NR status: 1 - Listed in Register and documented

Name and number(s): Yosemite Valley Historic District

NR status: 1 - Listed in Register and documented

Historical Structures/Resources Notes: Happy Isles Bridge

5. **The proposed action will: (check as many as apply)**

 Yes Destroy, remove, or alter features/elements from a historic structure

 No Replace historic features/elements in kind

 Yes Add non-historic features/elements to a historic structure

 Yes Alter or remove features/elements of a historic setting or environment (inc. terrain)

 Yes 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
Begin or contribute to deterioration of historic features, terrain, setting, landscape elements,
No 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:

☒ 106 Advisor

Name: Kimball Koch

Date: 09/06/2016

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance ☐

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☒ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

☒ Anthropologist

Name: Eirik Thorsgard

Date: 07/05/2016

Comments: No Ethnographic sites identified within project area. Tribal consultation sent via Tribal Spreadsheet June 24, 2016.

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance ☐

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☒ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

☒ Archeologist

Name: Sara Dolan

Date: 07/15/2016

Comments: No archeological monitoring is required.

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance ☐

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☒ No Historic Properties Affected ☐ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations: Should unanticipated artifacts be uncovered during project operations, the Yosemite Anthropology Branch will be informed and will document the discoveries.

☒ Historian

Name: Cooper Norman

Date: 09/06/2016

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☒ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

[X] Historical Architect

Name: Scott Carpenter

Date: 08/31/2016

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☒ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations: Retain current/historic granite curbstones in place at bridges.
Build Stay-Lock surface up to curbstones, leaving top surface of curbstone visible.

[X] Historical Landscape Architect

Name: Kimball Koch

Date: 06/29/2016

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance []

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☒ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

No Reviews From: Curator, Other Advisor

C. PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment of Effect:

☐ No Potential to Cause Effects
☐ 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
(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:

[X] 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.

1999 PA as amended in 2016

[] 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

[] G. Memo to SHPO/THPO

[] H. Memo to ACHP

SHPO/THPO Notes: The project was sent out for review in June 2016

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.)

- Assessment of Effect - Archeology - Should unanticipated artifacts be uncovered during project operations, the Yosemite Anthropology Branch will be informed and will document the discoveries.
- Assessment of Effect –Retain current/historic granite curbstones in place at bridges. Build Staylok surface up to curbstones, leaving top surface of curbstone visible.

D. RECOMMENDED BY PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR:

Historic Preservation Officer

Kimball Koch // Kimball Koch // **Date:** 9/7/2016

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 // **Date:** 9/14/2016
Don L. Neubacher

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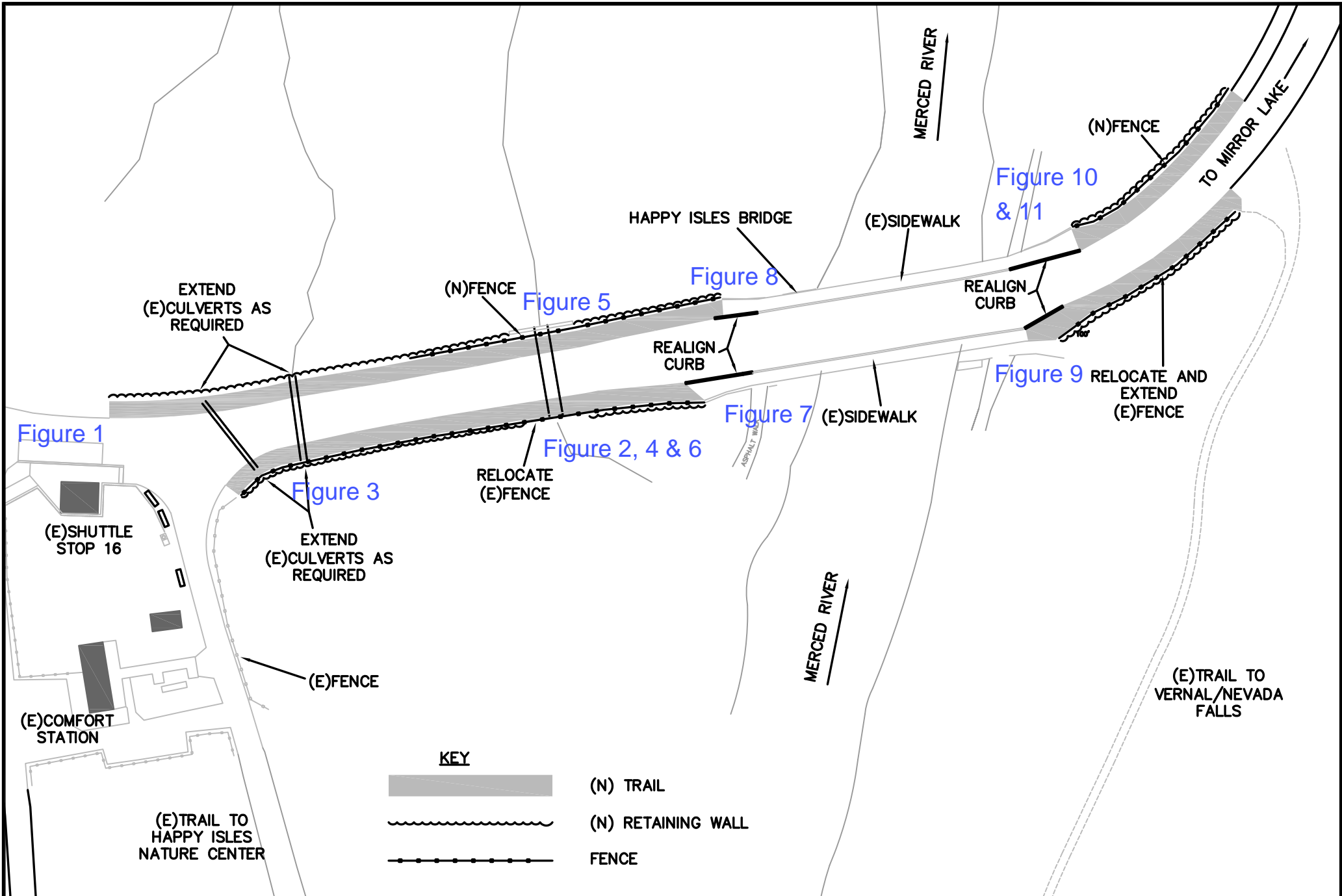




Figure 1. Looking east from Shuttle Stop 16, towards the Happy Isles Vehicle Bridge.



Figure 2. Looking west towards Shuttle Stop 16.



Figure 3. The edge of the proposed path would be built up and the fence moved closer to the edge.



Figure 4. Ample distance to the existing rock culvert. The post and split rail fence would be moved closer to the edge.



Figure 5. Existing rock culvert on the other side of the road.



Figure 6. View of the culvert from below.



Figure 7. The shoulder of the road connects to Happy Isles Vehicle Bridge. This project includes making a continuous line from the stone curb on the bridge to the proposed formalized path.



Figure 8. The shoulder-bridge connection on the other side of the road is severely eroded by stock use.



Figure 9. The current trailhead is already slated to be moved further east. Zig-zag fencing would be replaced with post and split rail fencing for consistency.



Figure 10. Across from the trailhead - post and split rail fencing would be added as needed.



Figure 11. Logs placed to discourage social trails and trampling may be less necessary with formal pathways and fencing.