



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: Bret Meldrum

From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Subject: NEPA and Section 106 Clearance: 2008-064 Half Dome Cables Visitor Use Study (22157)

The Management Team has reviewed the proposed project 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 Section 106 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.

//R. Kevin Cann// acting  
Michael J. Tollefson

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

## Categorical Exclusion Form

**Project:** 2008-064 Half Dome Cables Visitor Use Study

**PIN:** 22157

**Date:** June 24, 2008

**Project Description:** The project will combine two social science studies: Computer-based simulation use modeling and survey research. The modeling component will be applied to understand visitor use conditions from the Happy Isles Trailhead to the summit of Half Dome. A second component involving survey research will be used to gauge visitor exposure to information, awareness of safety issues, crowding, perceptions of risk, and other factors that influence a safe and enjoyable visitor experience.

1. Computer Simulation Use Modeling

Understanding the connection between visitor use levels and the amount of time spent on the cables is a primary objective of the study. Delay times will be collected on the sub-dome, the ascent and descent on the cables, and the time spent on the summit. With this data collection, the model will be able to project people per viewscape (PPV) and people at one time (PAOT) based on correlated levels of crowding/congestion. Identifying visitation levels on the trail and cables will be an important product of this study. The ability to project what visitor use on the cables would be based on arrivals at the Happy Isles Trailhead is a valuable product of this study. Dr. Steve Lawson from Virginia Tech University will be developing the simulation model.

2. Visitor Use Survey Research

Survey research will be applied to determine information including: exposure to Half Dome safety messages, perceptions of risk, social preferences towards crowding, evaluation of current conditions, attitudes towards potential management actions, and other items to be determined in cooperation with park staff. This portion of the project will be developed by Dr. Peter Newman from Colorado State University. OMB and YOSE research permit applications for both studies have been initiated. Data collection will take place by both observation and interviews throughout the sampling period. Interviews and visitor participation is voluntary and a random sampling strategy will be applied. Results will be used to better understand use conditions within the area. This study has been initiated with Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) funds exclusive of park planning directions. Results may be applied to future planning directions for the Yosemite Wilderness, Merced River Plan, and/or a General Management Plan.

**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.6. Non-destructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities (this is also a Departmental CE).

**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.**

//R. Kevin Cann// acting

07/03/2008

**Park Superintendent**

**Date**

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the Environmental Planning and Compliance  
Office in Yosemite National Park.*



# National Park Service

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF) DO-12 APPENDIX 1

Updated May 2007 - per 2004 DM revisions and proposed DO-12 changes

Today's Date: **June 24, 2008**

Date Form Initiated: **06/24/2008**

### A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: **Yosemite NP**

Project Title: **Half Dome Cables Visitor Use Study**

PEPC Project Number: **22157**

Project Type: **Permit - Research (RP)**

Project Location: County, State: **Mariposa County, California**

District, Section: **Wilderness, Half Dome**

Project Leader: **Bret Meldrum**

### B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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with Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) funds exclusive of park planning directions. Results may be applied to future planning directions for the Yosemite Wilderness, Merced River Plan, and/or a General Management Plan.

Preliminary drawings attached? **No**

Background information attached? **Yes**

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

**C. RESOURCE EFFECTS TO CONSIDER:**

<b>Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources</b>	<b>No Effect</b>	<b>Negligible Effects</b>	<b>Minor Effects</b>	<b>Exceeds Minor Effects</b>	<b>Data Needed to Determine/Notes</b>
1. Geologic resources – soils, bedrock, streambeds, etc.	X				
2. From geohazards	X				
3. Air quality	X				
4. Soundscapes	X				
5. Water quality or quantity	X				
6. Streamflow characteristics	X				
7. Marine or estuarine resources	X				
8. Floodplains or wetlands	X				
9. Land use, including occupancy, income, values, ownership, type of use	X				
10. Rare or unusual vegetation – old growth timber, riparian, alpine	X				
11. Species of special concern (plant or animal; state or federal listed or proposed for listing) or their habitat	X				
12. Unique ecosystems, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Sites	X				Yosemite National Park is a World Heritage site; no historic properties would be adversely affected by implementing this project.
13. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat	X				
14. Unique or important fish or fish habitat	X				

15. Introduce or promote non-native species (plant or animal)	X				
16. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc.		X			Results will be used to better understand the use conditions within the Half Dome area and be applied to future planning efforts.
17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources	X				The study results will enhance the visitor experience by assessing information to provide a safe and enjoyable experience.
18. Archeological resources	X				
19. Prehistoric/historic structure	X				
20. Cultural landscapes	X				
21. Ethnographic resources	X				
22. Museum collections (objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections)	X				
23. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure	X				
24. Minority and low income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc.	X				
25. Energy resources	X				
26. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies	X				
27. Resource, including energy, conservation potential, sustainability	X				
28. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc.	X				
29. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity	X				This project will provide information to protect the long-term management of resources.
30. Other important environment resources (e.g. geothermal, paleontological resources)?	X				

Comments:

**D. MANDATORY CRITERIA**

<b>Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment or Data Needed to Determine</b>
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?		X		
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?		X		
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?		X		
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		X		
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?		X		
F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		X		
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?		X		
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?		X		
I. Violate a federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		X		
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority		X		

populations (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)?		X		
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)?		X		

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.

**E. OTHER INFORMATION**

Are personnel preparing this form familiar with the site? **Yes**

Did personnel conduct a site visit? **No**

Is the project in an approved plan such as a General Management Plan or an Implementation Plan with an accompanying NEPA document? **No**

Are there any interested or affected agencies or parties? **No**

Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? **No**

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**

**F. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SIGNATORIES**

<u>Interdisciplinary Team</u>	<u>Field of Expertise</u>
Michael Tollefson	Superintendent
Kevin Cann	Deputy Superintendent
Linda Dahl	Chief of Planning
Bill Delaney	Chief of Project Management
Larry Harris	Chief of Administration Management
Dennis Mattiuzzi	Chief of Maintenance
Niki Nicholas	Chief of Resources Management & Science
Marty Nielson	Chief of Business and Revenue Management
Chris Stein	Chief of Interpretation and Education
Steve Shackelton	Chief Ranger
Bret Meldrum	Project Leader
Mark Butler	Environmental Planning and Compliance
	Program Manager
Jeannette Simons	NHPA Specialist
Renea Kennec	NEPA Specialist

**H. 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:

<b>Compliance Specialist</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>          //Renea Kennec//          </u> Compliance Specialist – Renea Kennec	<u>          06/24/2008          </u>
<u>          //Mark A. Butler//          </u> Compliance Program Manager – Mark Butler	<u>          06/24/2008          </u>
<u>          //Bill Delaney//          </u> Chief, Project Management – Bill Delaney	<u>          06/30/2008          </u>

Approved:

<b>Superintendent</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>          //R. Kevin Cann// acting          </u> Michael Tollefson	<u>          07/03/2008          </u>

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

## PARK ESF ADDENDUM QUESTIONS ANSWERS PRINT FORM

Today's Date: **June 24, 2008**

### PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite NP

Project/Pin Number: 22157

Project Type: Permit - Research (RP)

Project Location: County, State: Mariposa County, California      District, Section:  
Wilderness, Half Dome

Project Originator/Coordinator: Bret Meldrum

Project Title: Half Dome Cables Visitor Use Study

### PARK ESF ADDENDUM QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ESF Addendum Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
1.SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES CHECKLIST		X		
2. Listed or proposed threatened or endangered species (Federal or State)?		X		
3. Species of special concern (Federal or State)?		X		
4. Park rare plants or vegetation?		X		
5. Potential habitat for any special-status species listed above?				
6.NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT CHECKLIST				
7. Entail ground disturbance?		X		
8. Are any archeological or ethnographic sites located within the area of potential effect?		X		
9. Entail alteration of a historic structure or cultural landscape?		X		
10. Has a National Register form been completed?		X		
11. Are there any structures on the park's List of Classified Structures in the area of potential effect?		X		
12.WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT CHECKLIST				
13. Fall within a wild and scenic river corridor? (Name the river corridor)		X		
14. Fall within the bed and banks AND will effect the free-flow of the river?		X		
15. Have the possibility of affecting water quality of the		X		

area?				
16. Remain consistent with its river segment classification?		X		
17. Protect and enhance river ORVs?		X		
18. Fall within the River Protection Overlay?		X		
19. If Yes, remain consistent with conditions of the River Protection Overlay?		X		
20. Remain consistent with the areas Management Zoning?		X		
21. Fall on a tributary of a Wild and Scenic River?		X		
22. Will the project encroach or intrude upon the Wild and Scenic River corridor?		X		
23. Will the project unreasonably diminish scenic, recreational, or fish and wildlife values?		X		
100. WILDERNESS ACT CHECKLIST				
101. Within designated Wilderness?	X			Wilderness Minimum Requirement Analysis attached.
102. Within a Potential Wilderness Addition?		X		