

# Chapter 1: Purpose and Need

## Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) is considering the rehabilitation of the Badger Pass Ski Lodge, located at the Badger Pass Ski Area, on Glacier Point Road within Yosemite National Park, California (Figure 1-1). The ski lodge is in need of rehabilitation and repair in order to assure visitor safety, maintain ski-area visitor services, and to continue to contribute to the significance of the Badger Pass Ski Area historic site within the Glacier Point Road Historic District.



Figure 1-1 Yosemite National Park, California.

## Project Background

Badger Pass Ski Lodge is located at an elevation of 7,200 feet at the Badger Pass Ski Area, midway between Wawona and Yosemite Valley in Yosemite National Park. The ski lodge is situated in Monroe Meadow on the south side of Glacier Point Road, approximately 5.1 miles east of Chinquapin, and is accessible year round via Glacier Point Road.

Since its construction in 1935, Badger Pass Ski Lodge has supported winter recreation at the Badger Pass Ski Area, a site that is historically significant as one California's earliest developed downhill ski areas. Badger Pass Ski Area is inextricably linked to the history of cross country and

downhill skiing in the United States and is associated with the development of recreation and winter sports in Yosemite National Park. The ski area was the setting for professional and amateur downhill competitions and the Badger Pass Ski School was a leader in ski instruction until the 1950s.

With vertical half-log siding, wood frame multi-light windows, a front gable, and an asymmetrical roof with wide overhanging eaves, the original ski lodge building is characteristic of NPS Rustic architecture with Swiss chalet influences. From 1936 through the 1990s, the original building underwent multiple expansions and modifications to meet the changing needs of the ski industry. Some of the changes implemented after 1953 were not compatible with the original NPS Rustic architecture of the 1935 building. For example, more modern clerestory construction with vertical wood siding was added in 1954. As visitor demand increased, further additions were constructed at the ski area to provide expanded services, including ski rentals and merchandise sales.



**Figure 1-2** Badger Pass Ski Lodge, view to north from slopes, 2008.

*Photo courtesy Page & Turnbull*

More recently, temporary structures have been added to the main lodge to support recreational use at Badger Pass Ski Area. The Nordic rental building was added to the east side of the lodge in 1986 and was subsequently relocated to its current site in 2001 to be closer to cross-country trailheads and to reduce congestion at the main lodge. The downhill (Alpine) ski rental building, constructed in 1968, was condemned and removed in 2005, and was replaced with a temporary building on the east side of the ski lodge in 2006.

Although the current appearance of the building reflects the many additions and alterations since its construction, the overall character, use, and function of the ski lodge within the historic site remains clearly evident. The Badger Pass Ski Lodge is an important contributing feature of the Badger Pass Ski Area historic site (Page & Turnbull 2009e).

Currently, the Badger Pass Ski Lodge encompasses approximately 21,500 square feet and has both steel and wood frame structural members. The building continues to function as an active ski

lodge, and also serves as a summer base camp for the National Park Service-administered Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program. Over time, a combination of environmental stress, heavy use, and inadequate drainage has led to the deterioration of the building's structural integrity. In addition, the building does not fully meet current building code standards.

## Policy and Planning Context

Several established policies and plans provide direction for management of visitor facilities and historic properties at Yosemite National Park.

### Regulations and Policies

#### **National Park Service Organic Act**

In 1916, the Organic Act established the National Park Service in order to “promote and regulate the use of parks. . .” The stated purpose of national parks is “to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” The Organic Act establishes the management responsibilities of the National Park Service. While Congress has given the National Park Service the management discretion to allow certain impacts within parks, that discretion is limited by the statutory requirement that park resources and values be left unimpaired. It ensures that park resources and values will continue to exist in a condition that allows future generations to enjoy them. NPS Management Policies provide additional guidance on impairment of park resources and values (NPS 2006).

#### **1970 National Park Service General Authorities Act (as amended in 1978—Redwood amendment)**

This act prohibits the National Park Service from allowing any activities that would cause derogation of the values and purposes for which the parks have been established (except as directly and specifically provided by Congress in the enabling legislation for the parks). Parks also adhere to other applicable federal laws and regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wilderness Act, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. To articulate its responsibilities under these laws and regulations, the National Park Service has established management policies for all units under its stewardship.

#### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (1969) (42 USC 4341 et seq.)**

NEPA requires the identification and documentation of the environmental consequences of federal actions. Regulations implementing NEPA are set by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). CEQ regulations establish the requirements and process for agencies to fulfill their obligations under the act. In compliance with NEPA, this environmental assessment will evaluate potential project impacts on the human environment. Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (see below) is integrated into the NEPA compliance process, using NHPA criteria for the analysis of impacts on cultural resources. The NEPA process is also used to coordinate compliance with other federal laws and regulations applicable to this environmental assessment, including but not limited to

- Clean Water Act (33 USC 1241 et seq.)
- Clean Air Act (as amended) (42 USC 7401 et seq.)

- Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531 et seq.)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (42 USC 12101 et seq.)
- Executive Order 11593: Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment
- Executive Order 11990: Protection of Wetlands
- Executive Order 13514: Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance

### **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (1966 as amended) (16 USC 470)**

Section 106 of the NHPA directs federal agencies to take into account the effect of any undertaking (a federally funded or assisted project) on historic properties. A “historic property” is any district, building, structure, site, or object, including resources that are considered by American Indians to have cultural and religious significance, that is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because the property is significant at the national, state, or local level in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture. Section 106 also provides the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) an opportunity to comment on assessment of effects by the undertaking. Yosemite National Park’s Section 106 review process is governed by the *1999 Programmatic Agreement Among the National Park Service at Yosemite, the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation regarding Planning, Design, Construction, Operations and Maintenance, Yosemite National Park, California* (1999 Programmatic Agreement [NPS 1999]) developed in consultation with associated American Indian tribes and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, this environmental assessment will evaluate potential project effects on historic properties.

### **The Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) (16 USC 470aa-470ll)**

ARPA prohibits unauthorized excavation of archeological sites on federal land, as well as other acts involving cultural resources, and implements a permitting process for excavation of archeological sites on federal or Indian lands (see regulations at 43 CFR 7). ARPA also provides civil and criminal penalties for removal of, or damage to, archeological and cultural resources. There are no known archeological resources present in the project area.

### **The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) (25 USC 3001 et seq.; see regulations at 43 CFR 10)**

NAGPRA provides for the protection and repatriation of Native American human remains and cultural items and requires notification of the relevant Native American tribe upon accidental discovery of cultural items. No cultural resources covered by NAGPRA are present within the project area.

### **The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1979 (AIRFA) (42 USC 1996)**

AIRFA preserves for American Indians and other indigenous groups the right to express traditional religious practices, including access to sites under federal jurisdiction. Regulatory guidance for AIRFA is lacking, although most land-managing federal agencies have developed internal procedures to comply with AIRFA. Access to American Indian traditional religious practice sites is not relevant to the proposed project alternatives.

## **Executive Order No. 13007: Indian Sacred Sites**

Executive Order 13007 directs federal agencies with statutory or administrative responsibility for the management of federal lands, to the extent practicable, permitted by law to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by American Indian religious practitioners and avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. No American Indian sacred sites are present within the project area.

## **2006 National Park Service Management Policies**

*Management Policies 2006* is the basic service-wide policy document of the National Park Service. The following sections of the Management Policies specifically pertain to the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Project. NPS Management Policies state that,

*The National Park Service will provide visitor and administrative facilities that are necessary, appropriate, and consistent with the conservation of park resources and values. Facilities will be harmonious with park resources, compatible with natural processes, esthetically pleasing, functional, energy and water efficient, cost-effective, universally designed, and as welcoming as possible to all segments of the population. NPS facilities and operations will demonstrate environmental leadership by incorporating sustainable practices to the maximum extent practicable in planning, design, siting, construction, and maintenance (NPS 2006, Chapter 9).*

*Through the use of concession contracts or commercial use authorizations, the National Park Service will provide commercial visitor services that are necessary and appropriate for public use and enjoyment. Concession operations will be consistent to the highest practicable degree with the preservation and conservation of resources and values of the park unit. Concession operations will demonstrate sound environmental management and stewardship (NPS 2006, Chapter 10).*

## **National Park Service Director's Orders**

*Director's Order 28 (DO-28)* regarding cultural resources management and the accompanying *Cultural Resource Management Guideline (NPS-28)*—Chapter 8 of the guideline discusses management of historic structures, including their identification, documentation, stewardship, and use, and states:

*According to both federal law and NPS Management Policies, all historic structures in which the Service has a legal interest are to be managed as cultural resources. Regardless of type, level of significance, or current function, every structure is to receive full consideration for its historical values whenever a decision is made that might affect its integrity. Historic structures that are central to the legislated purposes of parks, especially those that are to be interpreted, may be subjects of additional, specialized efforts appropriate to their functions and significance (NPS 1998).*

## **Planning Context**

Planning in Yosemite National Park takes two forms: programmatic planning and implementation planning. General management plans are programmatic plans that are required for national parks by the National Park and Recreation Act of 1978. The purpose of general management plans is to set a “clearly defined direction for resource preservation and visitor use” (NPS 2006), provide general directions and policies, and guide planning and management in the park. The 1980 *General Management Plan* is the overall planning document for Yosemite National Park. Implementation plans, which tier off of programmatic plans (like the *General Management Plan*) focus on “how to

implement an activity or project needed to achieve a long-term goal” (NPS 2006). Implementation plans may direct specific projects as well as ongoing management activities or programs. They provide a more extensive level of detail and analysis than do general management plans. The Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment is an implementation plan tiered from the *General Management Plan*. The following plans pertain to the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Project:

### **1980 Yosemite National Park General Management Plan**

The goals for the Badger Pass area described in the *General Management Plan* all relate to visitor use: to provide opportunities for family-oriented downhill skiing and other forms of winter recreation with existing facilities and capacities, to alleviate congestion and overflow parking during winter, to promote increased summer use of the area, and to interpret activities and resources along Glacier Point Road. The *General Management Plan* calls for the following eight specific actions at Badger Pass:

- Retain existing facilities and enforce a safe [ski] slope capacity
- Provide ski equipment rental and sales
- Retain first-aid station
- Provide storage and repair facilities for snowshoes
- Retain 600-car parking area
- Continue winter bus service from Yosemite Valley and Wawona
- Retain lodge for fast-food service, rest rooms, and gift and clothing sales
- Provide seasonally changing interpretive exhibits in the lodge

### **1992 Concession Services Plan**

The *Concession Services Plan/SEIS* presented guidance for management of concession services in Yosemite National Park to meet *General Management Plan* goals. The *Concession Services Plan* amended the *General Management Plan*. The *Concession Services Plan* is consistent with the *General Management Plan* regarding actions at Badger Pass, with the following additions:

- Under the *Concession Services Plan*, use of the Badger Pass area for downhill and cross-country skiing would continue, as called for in the *General Management Plan*, however, skiing operations would be reviewed periodically to determine if activities should continue or be modified as use, environmental considerations, and economics might dictate.
- The *General Management Plan* called for ski rental and sales to be provided. These services were added since the *General Management Plan*. The *Concession Services Plan* calls for these services to be retained.
- Child care at Badger Pass Ski Area is not mentioned in the *General Management Plan*. Under the *Concession Services Plan* it is to be retained.

### **1999 Programmatic Agreement**

Under this agreement, the park has the responsibility to review most undertakings without further review by the SHPO or the ACHP, provided the stipulations of the agreement have been fulfilled. The agreement stipulates required consultation with SHPO, ACHP, Indian tribes, and interested

persons: when an undertaking may affect a National Historic Landmark, properties of national significance listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or a human burial; when an undertaking may adversely affect a traditional cultural property; or when an undertaking generates significant public controversy or involves a disagreement among the park, the SHPO, any Indian Tribe, or any Interested Persons regarding proposed use of standard mitigating measures. The agreement applies to undertakings performed by NPS lessees, permittees, concessioners, cooperators and park partners. It also requires Yosemite to “make every reasonable effort to avoid adverse effects to Historic Properties identified . . . through project design, facilities’ location or other means” and to document avoidance alternatives through the NEPA process (NPS 1999).

## Purpose of and Need for the Project

### Purpose of the Project

The Badger Pass Ski Lodge is a National Park Service-owned facility that is operated by a park concessioner to provide commercial visitor services. The purpose of this project is to meet the policy goals stated in the NPS Management Policies above by correcting structural and design deficiencies that are contributing to the deterioration of the Badger Pass Ski Lodge and/or are affecting visitor services, and to support the park management goals for Badger Pass, as identified in the Yosemite *General Management Plan*, by maintaining opportunities for family-oriented downhill skiing and other forms of winter recreation at Badger Pass. More specifically, this plan identifies actions needed to:

- Assure visitor and employee safety
- Maintain and protect the integrity of Badger Pass Ski Lodge, a contributing element of the Badger Pass Ski Area historic site
- Maintain and protect natural resources
- Maintain ski lodge operations and service functions
- Protect the winter recreation visitor experience at Badger Pass Ski Area

This rehabilitation project would repair and stabilize deteriorated structural and exterior elements to prevent further damage, and contribute to full rehabilitation of the ski lodge and associated support facilities. Major work elements could include:

- Replacement of the ski lodge roof and decks, and correction of structural and design deficiencies to prevent further damage due to water infiltration
- Removal of temporary buildings and installation of permanent, compatible structure(s) to house current programs at Badger Pass Ski Area
- Address deficiencies in seismic, accessibility, fire, and building codes; eliminate water intrusion; reduce snow load build-ups; and correct design deficiencies for more efficient operations
- Replacement or relocation of kitchen and dining facilities to better handle visitor needs and meet health code requirements
- Restoration and/or repair of ski lodge elements to preserve and enhance the historic character of the ski area, combined with possible renovation or replacement of non-historic elements in a manner that is compatible with the historic character of the ski area

- Other site modifications or improvements deemed necessary to support current ski lodge operations and programs, contribute to attainment of NPS sustainability goals, and allow for continued use of the ski lodge while maintaining the cultural landscape and protecting natural resources

Certain ancillary facilities at the Badger Pass Ski Area that extend beyond the immediate build area of the ski lodge, retail shop, and Alpine and Nordic rental buildings are not included in the ski lodge rehabilitation scope. Such facilities, including the potable water production wells, storage tank, and primary distribution pipeline; the wastewater treatment system septic tanks, leach fields, and sanitary sewer lines; the high voltage electrical service to the ski area; and the non-contributing NPS Ranger Station (A-frame) and ski area maintenance building, extend, or lie entirely, outside the built area of the ski lodge and rental/retail shops, and are not concessioner operated. The National Park Service maintains the site infrastructure and Ranger Station facilities, and would complete NEPA and NHPA compliance for these facilities as discrete projects as rehabilitation or upgrade needs arise.

## **Need for the Project**

Badger Pass Ski Lodge is suffering from structural degradation and design deficiencies, and is in need of repairs to ensure that the facility can support winter recreation for generations to come. In addition, the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and safety systems need to be upgraded. The current layout of facilities contributes to congestion and other inefficiencies. Employee facilities are insufficient. Finally, some past additions to the ski lodge are incompatible with the historic character of the original lodge building and ski area, and temporary structures detract from the cultural landscape of the Badger Pass Ski Area historic site and the Glacier Point Road Historic District.

The ski lodge has sustained damage associated with the climatic extremes of its location at 7,200 feet, including those relating to heavy snow loads, a shallow water table, and siting at the lower end of a bowl-shaped meadow where runoff and snow melt from surrounding uplands collect. Roof and deck runoff is conveyed through the building by corroded and leaking pipes, and collects at downspouts near the building foundation. Runoff from surrounding areas also converges on the building, and inadequate perimeter drains allow runoff to infiltrate the basement and weaken building foundations. During periods of elevated water table, groundwater also infiltrates into ski lodge sewer piping upstream from the onsite wastewater treatment system. There is a critical need to repair current damage caused by water infiltrating the Badger Pass Ski Lodge structure, and to make changes that will prevent future damage. Site grading and drainage control corrections are required to intercept and divert runoff away from the building. A structural conditions assessment was completed for the lodge and is included in the draft Badger Pass Ski Lodge Historic Structure Report (Page & Turnbull 2009f).

Structural degradation in parts of the building envelope, due to water damage and dry rot, also has occurred and must be corrected. Most of the ski lodge windows and doors need repair, and in some cases, entire window walls need replacement.



*Photos courtesy Page & Turnbull (2009f, Appendix F, B1010-03 and C1012-02)*

**Figure 1-3** Examples of deteriorated floor beam and wood decay at structural members of the north wall and ceiling, basement level.

Mechanical and electrical systems throughout the building are obsolete and need to be repaired, upgraded, or replaced. All plumbing and heating systems, other than the recently installed sidewalk heating system at the front entryway, are outdated and have exceeded their expected service lifetimes. The automatic fire suppression sprinkler system in the lodge is in need of major upgrades or replacement (Page & Turnbull 2009f, Appendix G). In addition, the utility infrastructure for water production, storage, and treatment, and wastewater conveyance to the onsite wastewater treatment system is in need of repair or replacement to improve efficiency and restore integrity.

As noted above under “Project Background,” a temporary replacement structure was installed at the ski area in 2006, after the downhill ski rental building was condemned and removed in 2005. Another temporary structure northeast of the main lodge houses Nordic ski and snowshoe rental. These temporary structures are incompatible with the historic character of the ski area and should be replaced with permanent buildings in order to maintain visitor services into the future.

Within the main lodge building, access for people with disabilities is limited, and both general and disabled-access restrooms need improvements to meet regulatory requirements. Improvements also are needed to meet code requirements related to periodic overnight use of the ski lodge by NPS and concessioner employees such as slope groomers, snow removal staff, emergency crews, and YCC work crews.

In addition to structural repairs and upgrades to correct code deficiencies, improvements are needed to address building layout and space constraints that contribute to operational inefficiencies and negatively affect visitor experience. These issues include:

- Congestion in queuing, rental shops, and dining areas
- Inadequate indoor dining space
- Inadequate food and garbage storage
- Lack of restrooms in rental buildings
- Inadequate rental equipment inventory due to lack of storage space
- Inadequate employee facilities (break rooms, bunk room, dedicated restrooms)

## Public Scoping Process

Public scoping was initiated for the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment on January 14, 2009, and the National Park Service accepted scoping comments through February 13, 2009. Two public scoping meetings were held during the public scoping period, one each in Yosemite Valley and at Badger Pass. Written public scoping comments were received at public scoping meetings, and by fax, email, U.S. mail, and online through the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. As a result of the public scoping period, the park received comments from 40 individuals and 4 organizations. The analysis of these letters identified almost 200 discrete comments, from which 78 general concern statements were generated. The concern statements were categorized and considered for incorporation in the planning process. The Public Scoping Comment and Response Report prepared for the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Project, as well as copies of the original comments, can be reviewed online at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/badgerlodge.htm>. Internal scoping and consultation with other government agencies and American Indian communities also informed the planning process. See Chapter 4, Consultation and Coordination, for more information on consultation procedures.

### **Issues and Concerns Addressed in this Document**

The following issues were identified during the public scoping process and through input from National Park Service staff, Yosemite National Park concessioner Delaware North Companies, Inc. staff, and American Indian communities:

- Maintain the rustic character of the ski lodge and features of the lodge that contribute to the significance of the historic site
- Improve the ski lodge to accommodate visitor use
- Protect natural and cultural resources

These issues are addressed in the analysis presented in Chapter 3, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.

### **Issues and Concerns Not Addressed in this Document**

Issues and concerns generated through public scoping that, while relevant to the management of Yosemite National Park, will not be affected by this project, were determined to be outside the scope of this project. Issues that are beyond the scope of this project and therefore will not be addressed in the environmental assessment include the following items:

- Interpretive programs and specific visitor services offered by the National Park Service and the concessioner at the ski area
- Ski area facilities other than the ski lodge and rental shops (e.g., the Badger Pass Ranger Station (“A-frame” building), ski lifts, and maintenance buildings)
- Wastewater treatment septic system at the ski area
- Shuttle bus service to the ski area

All comments received during the scoping period have been duly considered and are now part of the administrative record for this project.

# Organization of Environmental Assessment

The proposed action and alternatives for the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Project, and the evaluation of potential impacts of the No Action and three action alternatives, will be referred to collectively as the *Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment*. The contents of this document are as follows:

**Executive Summary** – The Executive Summary succinctly summarizes all pertinent information contained within the document.

**Chapter 1, Purpose and Need** – The first chapter includes a discussion of the project’s purpose and need, planning context, issues and concerns that are and are not addressed in this environmental assessment, and the overall organization of the document.

**Chapter 2, Alternatives** – This chapter discusses the No Action Alternative and three action alternatives under consideration by the National Park Service for the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Project and provides a summary table comparing the alternatives.

**Chapter 3, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences** – This chapter provides an overview of the affected environment and presents an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of each alternative on natural/physical and sociocultural resources in the Badger Pass Ski Lodge Rehabilitation Project area.

**Chapter 4, Consultation and Coordination** – This chapter summarizes how this environmental assessment was prepared and reviewed.

**Chapter 5, List of Preparers** – This chapter lists the names and positions of the persons who are primarily responsible for preparing and reviewing the document.

**Chapter 6, Glossary** – This chapter defines the technical terms and acronyms used in this document.

**Chapter 7, Bibliography** – This chapter lists the references cited in this document.

In addition, Appendices to this document provide supplemental information to that presented in the above sections.

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