



## Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Project

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Finding of No Significant Impact  
Errata Sheets  
Public Comments and Responses  
September 2007



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**United States Department of the Interior**  
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

Yosemite National Park  
P. O. Box 577  
Yosemite, California 95389

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
H3823 (YOSE-PM)

**AUG 30 2007**

Dear Friends of Yosemite National Park:

We are pleased to provide you with a copy of the Finding of No Significant Impact for the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement project. This document records the decision of the National Park Service to construct a duplex and upgrade a water disinfection system, as described under Alternative 2 in the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Environmental Assessment (EA)*.

This packet also contains Errata and the Summary of Public Comments and Response for the EA.

The National Park has determined that implementation of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement project will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

We thank you for your comments regarding the project. Public participation is a key element in the environmental review process at Yosemite National Park. Your participation helps to ensure that the National Park Service fully understands and considers your values and concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Tollefson  
Superintendent

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# **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

## **HODGDON MEADOW HOUSING AREA TRAILER REPLACEMENT AND UTILITIES IMPROVEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

### **YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

**AUGUST 2007**

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the decision of the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt a plan to: 1) replace a trailer that was used for employee housing by constructing a duplex, and 2) upgrade the well water disinfection system in the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. Through completion of the Environmental Assessment (EA) it has been determined that adoption and implementation of the selected alternative would have no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment.

The purpose of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement project is to maintain housing in Mather Ranger District and to upgrade the well water disinfection system. This will help the park maintain the minimum operational presence necessary to respond to emergencies related to public safety, resource protection, and facilities maintenance and to house employees who otherwise face unreasonable commutes to their duty stations. The project will also fulfill a secondary purpose of bringing Yosemite National Park closer to the overall target of meeting NPS housing standards. The project is consistent with the 1980 General Management Plan (GMP), which approved Hodgdon Meadow as an appropriate area for residential and administrative facilities development. The GMP recommended retaining existing housing and constructing an additional 10 apartment units and 20 seasonal housing units in Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area.

The project is needed to replace a 3-bedroom trailer that was in poor condition, and did not meet current NPS housing standards, with a duplex containing two 2-bedroom units. The trailer posed serious health and safety risks with electrical, plumbing, and heating deficiencies. Consequently, the trailer was removed from the park in 1997, and is no longer in use. Construction of the duplex will help maintain suitable employee housing in Yosemite National Park. The need for this project stems from the shortage of housing in the Mather Ranger District and the need to fulfill housing directives contained in a number of relevant NPS sources. This includes meeting housing condition standards, replacing temporary structures, such as trailers, with permanent structures, and providing employee housing where no suitable private market for housing exists. The specific documentary sources are addressed in the *Policy and Planning Context* section of the EA.

This project is also needed to provide a permanent solution for addressing drinking water quality concerns in the Hodgdon Meadow Area, as directed by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS). Currently, the water at Hodgdon Meadow is aggressive and low in pH, causing the copper from piping in the residences to leach into the water. Copper levels in the drinking water in the Hodgdon Meadow housing area and Hodgdon Meadow Campground exceed the CDHS-mandated action levels. As a result, CDHS has required a corrosion control

study and a permanent solution to reduce these contaminants to acceptable levels. Installation of a new well water disinfection system will be a permanent solution for bringing water quality to within CDHS requirements. The new system will increase the pH of the well water to prevent corrosion of the copper piping that delivers water to the housing units. This project is also needed to improve chlorination and potability of the drinking water.

## **ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED**

The NPS analyzed four alternatives in the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement EA*. These were Alternative 1: No Action Alternative; Alternative 2: Construct one-story duplex on previously disturbed trailer site; Alternative 3: Construct one-story duplex on previously disturbed volleyball court; and Alternative 4: Construct one-story duplex on previously undisturbed lot north of the maintenance compound. Based on this analysis, the NPS has identified Alternative 2 as the Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative and has selected this alternative for implementation. A complete description of the proposal and its environmental consequences are contained in the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement EA*.

### **ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

The No Action Alternative would continue the existing operation and maintenance of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area and its associated water disinfection facility. Under the No Action Alternative, the duplex at Hodgdon Meadow would not be constructed. Yosemite National Park would continue to face a housing shortage in the Mather Ranger District. Some employees would be unable to live near their duty stations in the Mather Ranger District. These employees would face lengthy commutes to reach their workplace because of the limited private market for housing in the area outside of the park along Hwy 120. If emergency personnel were among those unable to be housed in Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area, then the availability of personnel to respond to emergencies would be reduced. The No Action Alternative provides a baseline from which to compare the Action Alternatives, to evaluate the magnitude of proposed changes, and to measure the environmental effects of those changes.

### **SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**

The Selected Alternative will include construction of a single level duplex (two 2-bedroom units) that incorporates a developed and previously impacted trailer site. The design will use the *NPS Prototype Design Catalog for Trailer Replacement*, (Plan Number 4: Seasonal 2-plex). The exterior appearance will be modified to conform to the character of the overall Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. This will include Wosky brown (NPS brown) rough sawn plywood vertical siding with vertical batten strips and Wosky brown standing seam metal roof. Each unit will have a laundry/storage area.

The duplex will be orientated perpendicular to the road, so that there is a northern and southern unit. This configuration fits best on the compact building site. The new construction will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Architectural Barriers Act guidelines. This will include construction of an oversized, wheelchair accessible parking space leading to wheelchair accessible ramps to the porch, entryway, and laundry/storage room of the southern unit. Seven additional parking spaces will be provided for residents (or guests). One of these spaces will be on the north side of Meadow View Lane next to the duplex, and the remaining six spaces will be on the south side of the road. The six spaces will be added by extending the existing parking area to the east.

To accommodate the footings and stem walls, approximately 358 cubic yards of soil will be excavated. Of this, approximately 227 cubic yards of fill will be reincorporated into the building site to achieve the desired grading around the new structure. Excess fill will be incorporated into the area immediately surrounding the building site. The total disturbed area will be approximately 8,236 square feet. Approximately 1,500 square feet will be permanently occupied by the duplex. No sugar pine trees will be removed by this alternative. However, one red cedar approximately 18 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) and approximately 15 saplings less than 2 inches dbh will be removed from the construction site. In addition, three other trees may need to be removed. These include a large ponderosa pine that is being assessed for removal by the park forester for hazard abatement. Removal of the other two trees will depend on the final construction management plan.

Utility connections that were previously used to provide water, sewer, telephone, and electricity to the trailer will be used to provide utilities to the new duplex. If the  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch water line is found to be deteriorated, it will be replaced within the same trench. Under these circumstances, the trench will need to be reopened by cutting across the exiting asphalt road in order to connect the new line to the trunk line. New electrical hookups and telephone connections will be tied to existing overhead electrical and telephone lines that are within 20 feet of the project area. The condition of the existing sewer line will also be evaluated; if needed, it will be replaced with 4 inch line in the current trench. No trenching across the asphalt road will be required to replace the sewer line. Energy efficiency measures will include the installation of Energy Star Rated appliances, propane heaters and lighting fixtures.

The drinking water disinfection system will be replaced with a new water treatment facility. A 135 square foot building, with a 70 square foot covered area for a generator, will be constructed to accommodate the new system. The new building will be built directly adjacent to the existing treatment facility (60 square feet) on previously disturbed fill adjacent. The building will have a 6-inch thick concrete slab that is 10.75-feet by 21.25-feet. Base rock will be placed under the slab, as required by an engineer, where depth is limited to the previously disturbed stratum. The facility will include corrosion control equipment, electrical controls, and a temporary generator. The treatment system will connect at the same above ground connection from the well as the existing treatment system, and will consist of new piping from the well to the new facility, appurtenances, chemicals, chemical mixing and a chemical injection point. There will be no surface disturbing activities outside of the existing road prism or in the meadow. The existing well and well pump will remain the same. As with the duplex, the new treatment facility will meet the scheme of the existing buildings, including NPS brown rough sawn plywood vertical siding with vertical batten strips and NPS brown standing seam metal roof. The existing facility will be removed following construction.

No modifications are included in the Selected Alternative as a result of comments received on the EA.

### **ALTERNATIVE 3: CONSTRUCT ONE-STORY DUPLEX ON PREVIOUSLY DISTURBED VOLLEYBALL COURT**

Alternative 3 would include upgrading the water disinfection system as described in the Selected Alternative. The duplex construction and parking configuration would also be the same as described in the Selected Alternative. The difference in impacts between alternatives would result in the siting of the duplex.

In Alternative 3, the duplex would be constructed on a previously disturbed site that is currently used as a volleyball court. Approximately 260 cubic yards of soil would be excavated to



accommodate the footings and stem walls. Approximately 492 cubic yards of fill would be needed to achieve the desired grading around the new structure. Additional fill would be obtained from commercial sources located outside the park. The contractor would be required to ensure the fill did not contain any deleterious materials, including invasive weed seeds, and the fill source would have to be approved by NPS prior to importation into the park. The total disturbed area would be approximately 8,152 square feet. Approximately 1,500 square feet would be permanently occupied by the duplex. One 8 inch dbh ponderosa pine and as many as four red cedars may need to be removed as a result of this alternative. Installation of utilities to the duplex (i.e., water, power, sewer, electricity and telephone) would require new trenching and overhead hookups. Water connection would require approximately 60 feet of trenching through a wooded area and sewer would require 80 feet of trenching through a mostly wooded area. Electricity and telephone lines would require 120 feet of trenching. The volleyball court would not be moved to a new location and residents would lose this recreational facility.

#### **ALTERNATIVE 4: CONSTRUCT ONE-STORY DUPLEX ON PREVIOUSLY UNDISTURBED LOT NORTH OF THE MAINTENANCE COMPOUND**

Alternative 4 would include upgrading the water disinfection system as described in the Selected Alternative. The duplex construction would also be the same as described in the Selected Alternative and would be orientated along an east-west axis parallel to Meadow View Lane. The difference in impacts between alternatives would result in the siting of the duplex.

In Alternative 4, the duplex would be constructed on a previously undisturbed wooded site that is within the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area development envelope. Approximately 468 cubic yards of soil would be excavated to accommodate the footings and stem walls. Approximately 494 cubic yards of fill would be needed to achieve the desired grading around the new structure. Additional fill would be obtained from commercial sources located outside the park. The contractor would be required to ensure the fill did not contain any deleterious materials, including invasive weed seeds, and the fill source would have to be approved by NPS prior to importation into the park. The total disturbed area would be approximately 11,264 square feet. Approximately 1,500 square feet would be permanently occupied by the duplex. As many as 110 white fir, ponderosa pine, red and incense cedar would be removed as a result of this alternative. Installation of utilities to the duplex (i.e., water, power, sewer, electricity and telephone) would require new trenching and overhead hookups. Installation of the water line would require approximately 130 feet of trenching through a wooded area and across the main asphalt road, where it would connect to the trunk line. Electricity and telephone would require approximately 165 feet of trench through a wooded area. Installation of sewer would require 160 feet of trench through a mostly wooded area and across the asphalt road to the trunk line.

#### **DECISION RATIONALE**

Action is warranted at this time because of the need to maintain adequate housing for park staff in Yosemite National Park. The shortage is most acute in the Mather Ranger District, which includes Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. No suitable private market for housing exists within a reasonable commuting distance (less-than 60 minutes). The duplex needs to be constructed to provide park staff in the Mather Ranger District with adequate housing, to provide timely response to park protection needs, to ensure reasonable deterrence to prevent threats to resources, and to protect health and safety of visitors and employees. The action will be funded by the NPS Housing Initiative which aides parks in meeting NPS housing standards by replacing temporary structures such as trailers with permanent structures. The trailer was removed from the park because it was in poor condition and did not meet acceptable housing standards. The



duplex will provide four bedrooms for up to eight seasonal employees or two 2-bedroom units for permanent employees.

Action is also warranted at this time because of drinking water quality issues. The well water at Hodgdon Meadow is low in pH, causing the copper from piping to leach into the water supply. CDHS has required NPS to conduct a corrosive study and implement a permanent solution to address water quality issues. The new water disinfection system will increase the pH, thereby reducing corrosiveness and leaching of copper piping. The new system will also improve chlorination and increase potability of the drinking water.

Through the EA, NPS determined that the Selected Alternative will have the fewest impacts to natural, cultural and social resources. The duplex will be sited in a location that has been used for housing in the past and is already disturbed. Because utility hookups are already available at the site, no new trenching will be required for installation. This reduces impacts to soils and contributes to the Selected Alternative having no effect on archeological resources or museum collections. This alternative will also result in little disturbance of vegetation requiring the removal of four or fewer trees and a few saplings.

The Selected Alternative will result in the construction of the duplex within the 1,500-foot buffer zone established for the protection of great gray owls. However, the duplex will fit closely within existing development and is screened by topography and forest cover from Hodgdon Meadow. Mitigation measures are also integrated into the Selected Alternative to ensure that construction activities do not affect great gray owls and willow flycatchers that may use the meadow for nesting or foraging. In terms of architectural design, the Project Manager has worked closely with the Resources Management and Science Division, History, Architecture and Landscapes Branch to ensure that the exterior of the duplex fits with the Mission 66 Period character of the housing area.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DISMISSED**

The NPS also considered one alternative that was dismissed from further consideration. This action was considered and dismissed because it did not fully satisfy the objectives of this planning effort. The action was dismissed for the following reasons:

- The action would cause unacceptable environmental damage and impact.
- The action would cause unacceptable safety, social, or visual impacts.

The following section describes the dismissed alternatives.

### **DUPLEX CONSTRUCTION ON LOWER HOUSING LOOP**

Several potential construction sites exist on the lower housing loop adjacent to the four single-family structures built in 1959.

The National Park Service dismissed this alternative because:

- The other four structures are single-family homes, and constructing a multiple-unit structure was felt to detract from the architectural unity of this cul-de-sac.
- Park Policy is to avoid impacts to sensitive and important resources such as the Hodgdon Meadow whenever possible. Building additional housing adjacent to the meadow would increase impacts to visual resources and nightscapes and cause a greater

disturbance to sensitive species such as great gray owl and willow flycatcher that may use the meadow for breeding or foraging.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE**

The Environmentally Preferred Alternative is determined by applying criteria identified in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) to each alternative. In accordance with NEPA, the Environmentally Preferred Alternative will best: (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The NPS has considered all alternatives in this analysis in accordance with NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1505.2) and has determined that the Selected Alternative: Construction of a one-story duplex on the previously disturbed trailer site, is the Environmentally Preferred Alternative. After review of potential impacts, and developing mitigation measures, the Selected Alternative achieves the greatest balance between (1) providing a high level of protection of natural and cultural resources while concurrently attaining the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation; (2) reducing risks to public health and safety; and (3) providing aesthetically pleasing surroundings.

Alternative 3: Construction of a one-story duplex on the previously disturbed volleyball court would provide similar reduction in risks to public health and safety but this alternative would result in the construction of the duplex within view of the Hodgdon Meadow. Thus, Alternative 3 would not offer the same level of protection for natural and cultural resources, nor would it provide similar aesthetically pleasing surroundings compared to the Selected Alternative.

Alternative 4: Construction of a one-story duplex on the previously undisturbed lot north of the maintenance compound would provide similar reduction in risks to public health and safety but this alternative would result in the construction of the duplex in a currently wooded area. Thus, Alternative 4 would not offer the same level of protection for natural and cultural resources, nor would it provide similar aesthetically pleasing surroundings compared to the Selected Alternative.

The No Action Alternative would not provide a high level of protection for natural and cultural resources and would perpetuate risks to public health and safety.

## **ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)**

Federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure their actions will not jeopardize the continued existence of any federally listed or proposed threatened or endangered species, or adversely modify designated or proposed critical habitat (ESA Section 7 (a) (2)). If listed species or their critical habitat are present, the federal agency must determine if the action will have "no effect," "may effect, not likely to adversely affect," or "may effect, likely to adversely affect" those species. The NPS made the determination of effect for the Selected Alternative following guidance outlined in the 1998 U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service *Endangered Species Act Consultation Handbook: Procedures for Conducting Section 7 Consultations and Conference*. NPS determined that the Selected Alternative will have “no effect” on any federally listed, candidate or proposed species or their designated or proposed critical habitat.

## **NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT (NHPA)**

The NPS made the determination of effect of the Selected Alternative on historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA in accordance with *the 1999 Park Programmatic Agreement Among the National Park Service at Yosemite, the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Planning, Design, Construction, Operations and Maintenance, Yosemite National Park, California* (1999 PA). For the purpose of NEPA and NPS policy, an impact to a historic property that is eligible or listed under the National Register of Historic Places would be considered significant if an adverse effect could not be resolved in agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), American Indian tribal governments, or other consulting and interested parties and the public. NPS has determined that implementation of the Selected Alternative will have “no effect” on archeological or traditional cultural properties and “no adverse effect” on historic sites, structures, and landscapes (36 CFR 800.5). Therefore, the Selected Alternative will not have a significant effect on historic properties.

## **WHY THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

The Selected Alternative will minimize visual, cultural, social and natural resource impacts to the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area, while maintaining housing and improving health and safety for park employees and visitors. Beneficial impacts will include local, long-term, negligible, beneficial impacts on geohazards and local, long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on water quality and land use. The Selected Alternative will have no effect on special status species. Adverse impacts will include local, long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on soils, wetlands, wildlife and night sky; local, short-term negligible, adverse impacts to wastewater treatment, vegetation and air quality; and local, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts to noise and natural soundscapes.

### **HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Implementation of the Selected Alternative will have no effect on archeological or traditional cultural properties and no adverse effect on historic sites, structures, and landscapes.

### **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Significant cumulative impacts were not identified for any impact topic. Also, no highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, or elements of precedence have been identified. Implementing the Selected Alternative will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental laws.

### **NON-IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES**

Pursuant to the 1916 Organic Act, the NPS has a management responsibility “*to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of future generations.*” Therefore, the NPS cannot take an action that will “impair” park resources or values.

Based on the analysis provided in the EA, the NPS concludes that implementation of the Selected Alternative will have no major adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of Yosemite National Park; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of Yosemite National Park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or (3) identified as a goal in the park's 1980 General Management Plan or other relevant NPS planning documents. Consequently, implementation of the Selected Alternative will not violate the NPS Organic Act.

## MITIGATION

The following mitigation measures have been, or will be, incorporated into the project to avoid or reduce impacts to park resources.

Mitigation Matrix	Impact Topic Mitigation Measures	Responsibility	Critical Milestones
A construction work schedule shall be prepared by the Construction Contractor for the project that minimizes effects on wildlife in adjacent habitats, peaks in visitation, and noise levels near residential housing and visitor lodging areas. The work schedule shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.	<b>Construction</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to project activities
The park shall develop a Communications Strategy Plan to alert necessary park and concessionaire employees, residents, and visitors to pertinent elements of the construction work schedule.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to project activities
Supervisory construction personnel shall attend an Environmental Protection briefing provided by the park prior to working onsite. This briefing is designed to familiarize workers with statutory and contractual environmental requirements and protection measures for archeological sites, sensitive habitats, water resources, and wildlife habitats.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to project activities
Protective barriers shall be placed around areas adjacent to the project area that require special attention as identified by the park, such as specified staging areas, trees, plants, root zones, river edges, aquatic habitats, wetlands, sensitive wildlife habitats, cultural resource features, and infrastructure. Barriers shall be installed prior to construction and field inspected by natural and cultural resource personnel, to verify proper placement.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager, Contractor	Prior to project activities
Contractor shall ensure that any imported soils, fills, or aggregates are free of deleterious materials. Sources of imported materials shall be compiled by Contractor and submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager;	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
All tools, equipment, barricades, signs, surplus materials, debris, and rubbish shall be removed by the Construction Contractor from the project work limits upon project completion.		Contractor	Upon completion of project activities
The Construction Contractor shall implement and comply with the Exotic Species Management Plan prepared by the park for the project.	<b>Vegetation</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to, concurrent with, and following project activities
All construction tools and equipment entering the park shall be cleaned by means of pressure washing and/or steam cleaning to arrive onsite free of mud or seed-bearing material. Each piece of equipment shall undergo inspections immediately prior to entry of the park.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
Clearing of vegetation and ground disturbance shall be minimized to the greatest extent possible.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities

Mitigation Matrix	Impact Topic Mitigation Measures	Responsibility	Critical Milestones
Vegetation salvage, seed collection and revegetation shall be implemented as defined in the Revegetation Plan.	<b>Vegetation</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to and concurrent with and upon completion of project activities
Topsoil shall be salvaged, segregated during storage, and reused in the proper location and depth. Stockpiles of soils infected with fungal pathogens (root rot) must not be moved and reused in non-infected areas of the park. Equipment buckets, tires, and hand tools used in areas containing root rot shall be cleaned prior to removal.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Soil and stump treatment prescriptions shall be executed according to the park's Root Rot Management Guidelines and the park's Forester. All stumps from excavations shall be disposed of in a legal manner outside of the Yosemite National Park boundary.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
The park will monitor the success of revegetation efforts. Plant materials used for revegetation shall remain alive and in a healthy, vigorous condition for a period of one year after final acceptance of planting. The project site shall be monitored by qualified park personnel in accordance with the Exotic Plant Management Plan and Revegetation Plan. All plants determined to be in unhealthy condition shall be replaced.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Upon completion of project activities
The park will monitor and remove invasive species from the project area for a period of four years post construction in accordance with the Exotic Plant Management Plan and Revegetation Plan.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
If construction activities are to occur between March 15 and July 15, surveys shall be conducted by park resource staff in the spring (beginning on March 15) to determine if great gray owls are in the vicinity of the project. If owls are present, construction will be delayed until surveys confirm that owls are not breeding (March 15 through July 15). If owls are nesting within ¼ mile of the project area, the impact of the proposed project and site should be assessed in relation to the proximity to the nest site. Park resource staff will determine if construction activities may continue or will be delayed until after nestlings have fledged (September 1).	<b>Special-Status Species</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to project activities
If construction activities are to occur between May 1 and August 31, surveys shall be conducted by park resource staff in the late spring (beginning on May 1) to determine if willow flycatchers are present. If willow flycatchers are present, construction will be delayed until surveys confirm that the birds are not breeding (May 1 through August 31). If willow flycatchers are nesting within the meadow, the impact of the proposed project and site should be assessed in relation to the proximity to the nest site. If it is determined that willow flycatcher are nesting within the vicinity of the project, no construction activities shall occur before 11 a.m. during nesting season (May 1 through August 31).		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Concurrent with project activities
Lockable, bear proof dumpsters and food storage containers shall be delivered to the construction site by the park for construction crew use.	<b>Wildlife</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to project activities

<b>Mitigation Matrix</b>	<b>Impact Topic Mitigation Measures</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Critical Milestones</b>
Excavation sites must be monitored or covered to avoid trapping wildlife and routes of escape should be maintained. The construction site shall be inspected daily for appropriate covering and flagging of excavation sites. Each morning the project area shall be inspected for wildlife trapped in excavation pits. A qualified biologist will be available to inspect all excavations before refilling occurs.	<b>Wildlife</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
The architectural character of the new building shall be consistent with the Mission 66 houses and apartment building and will feature dark stained board-and-batten exterior siding.	<b>Historic Properties</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Prior to and concurrent with project activities
In the unexpected event previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during excavations, all work in the area of discovery will stop. The area of discovery will be protected from further activity until the find can be assessed by a professional archeologist (and, as necessary, a Native American Representative) and appropriate treatment has been identified. Work will resume only when any required treatment has been implemented and the NPS clears the area for completion.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager	Concurrent with project activities
Site watering and slow truck speeds shall be managed as appropriate to control dust. When hauling dry materials, truck beds will be securely covered to prevent blowing dust or loss of debris.	<b>Dust Abatement</b>	Contractor	Concurrent to project activities
Hazardous or flammable chemicals shall be prohibited from storage in the staging area, except for those substances identified in the Oil and Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan. Hazardous waste materials shall be immediately removed from project site in approved containers.	<b>Hazardous Materials</b>	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Machinery and equipment shall be parked over containment pads designed to trap any leaking oil, fuel or hydraulic fluids and inspected daily.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Secondary containment shall be required for all fuel storage. Routine oiling, lubrication, and refueling shall be conducted with secondary containment and is prohibited in the River Protection Overlay, water courses or wetlands at any time.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Spill response materials including absorbent pads, booms, and other materials to contain hazardous material spills shall be maintained on the project site to ensure rapid response to spills.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
The Park Project Manager shall be immediately notified of all spills or releases of hazardous materials. Any spill release shall be digitally photographed or videotaped as part of response activities.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Stationary noise sources shall be located as far as possible from residential housing and visitor lodging and camping areas. Construction equipment shall not be left running while standing by. All onsite work that generates noise levels above 76db at the site boundary in the vicinity of residential housing and visitor lodging and camping areas shall be done between 8am and 5pm.	<b>Noise Abatement</b>	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Submit a construction work plan/schedule that minimizes construction-related noise in noise-sensitive areas to the park for review/approval prior to commencement of construction activities.		Contractor	Prior to project activities
An Oil and Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan shall be prepared by the Construction Contractor for the project to address hazardous materials storage, spill prevention and response. The Plan shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.	<b>Spill Prevention and Response</b>	Contractor	Prior to project activities

Mitigation Matrix	Impact Topic Mitigation Measures	Responsibility	Critical Milestones
The Construction Contractor shall implement and comply with all requirements of the Oil and Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan prepared and approved for the project.	<b>Spill Prevention and Response</b>	Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) shall be prepared by the Construction Contractor and implemented for construction activities to control surface runoff, reduce erosion, and prevent sedimentation from entering water bodies during construction. The SWPPP shall be submitted for park review and approval prior to construction.	<b>Stormwater Pollution Prevention</b>	Contractor	Prior to project activities
The Construction Contractor shall implement and comply with all operational compliance required by the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) issued for the project.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Wastewater contaminated with silt, grout, or other by-products from construction activities shall be contained in a holding or settling tank to prevent contaminated material from entering watercourses or wetlands.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
Appropriate signage shall be located and sequenced during construction activities to ensure safe and efficient traffic and pedestrian circulation. Information about traffic detours and recreational closures shall be provided to visitors as they enter the park at each entrance station.	<b>Traffic Control and Visitor Protection</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager & Contractor	Concurrent with project activities
The Underground Services Alert (USA) shall be informed by construction personnel 72 hours prior to any ground disturbance to enable Utilities staff to verify the on site location and depth (elevation) of all existing utilities and services through field survey (potholing).	<b>Utility</b>	Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Prior to project activities
Disruption of utility service will require advanced notification to the park, concessionaire, and residents prior to scheduled disruptions. Unexpected interruptions due to construction activities shall promptly be reconnected.		Yosemite National Park, Project Manager; Contractor	Concurrent with and following project activities
Construction waste shall be separated into recyclable materials, green waste, and other debris that shall be placed in refuse containers daily and disposed of weekly. Recycled, toxic-free, and environmentally sensitive materials, equipment, and products shall be utilized whenever possible. Burning or burying of waste is strictly prohibited.	<b>Waste Management</b>	Contractor	Concurrent with and following project activities
A Construction Contractor representative shall be designated to monitor the worksite daily for proper disposal of waste, wrappers, and food packaging.		Contractor	Concurrent with project activities

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

### PUBLIC SCOPING

NPS accepted scoping comments for the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement Project EA* from March 15, 2006, through April 14, 2006. A press release announcing the 30-day public scoping period was issued on March 8, 2006, and was published in the *Mariposa Gazette*. Electronic outreach to the public regarding the scoping period included an announcement in



the *Yosemite Daily Report*, which reaches approximately 260 persons in addition to all Yosemite National Park employees. The NPS also posted a project fact sheet and letter announcing public scoping for the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement project on the park's website. Invitations to an open house were extended through the press release and electronic announcements.

On March 24, 2006, the NPS held an open house at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Auditorium. This was followed by three NPS hosted site visits; one on April 25, 2006, for Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area residents, one on March 17, 2006, for the Yosemite Chapter of the Sierra Club, and one on May 23, 2007, for the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians.

Written public scoping comments were received by E-mail, U.S. mail, and direct digital submission to the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system. The park planning team received correspondence from eight individuals and two organizations. A total of 36 separate comments were identified in these 10 correspondences. The park planning team analyzed these comments and generated 14 general concern statements, which were categorized and considered for incorporation into the Action Alternatives.

Comments and issues provided by NPS staff, other consulting agencies, and in public scoping informed the alternatives development process and the analysis of potential project effects. Substantive issues raised during public scoping include:

- The potential for adverse effects on wildlife species, including great gray owls and willow flycatchers.
- The potential for adverse effects on vegetation, including the need to remove large-diameter trees from the construction site.
- The potential for adverse effects on soils at the construction site.
- The potential for adverse effects to historic properties and impacts to other socio-cultural resources
- The capacity of the Hodgdon area utility infrastructure to handle the additional housing unit.
- The need to use sustainable building practices and energy efficiency in the new housing unit.
- The need to improve treatment of drinking water to meet California Department of Health Services mandatory requirements.

Concerns regarding the potential impacts to great gray owls, removal of large-diameter trees from the construction site, and potential adverse effects on soil were also raised during the 1991 public review period for the *Construct Housing at Hodgdon Meadow Development Area EA* (1991 EA). These issues continue to be a focus of concern to park stakeholders and were addressed by NPS in the 1991 EA and in this EA.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement EA* was released for a 30-day public review period from July 16 to August 15, 2007. Advance notice for the project was provided in *Yosemite National Park Planning Updates* beginning in January 2007, and included contact mail-back request for the EA and the park's website address. Review period dates were published in articles in the *Mariposa Gazette* on July 12 and July 19, 2007 and

in the *Union Democrat* on July 16, 2007. Electronic notification of the review dates included publication in the July 16, 2007, *Yosemite National Park E-Newsletter* which is sent to approximately 7,150 individuals; in the July 17, 2007 *YubaNetNews* (YubaNet.com) and in the *Yosemite National Park Daily Report* beginning on July 12, 2007. The NPS held regular open houses during 2007 to disseminate information and collect informal written comments on the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement* and other projects. Invitations to the July 25, 2007 open house in Yosemite Valley were extended in the public review and comment announcements for the EA.

The National Park Service distributed a total of 99 copies of the EA to individuals and organizations, including the California State Library, the City of San Francisco Public Library, the Salazar Library at Sonoma State University, the University of Minnesota Forestry Library, and the Columbia College Library. The National Park Service published the EA to the park's website on July 18, 2007. Comments received during the formal public comment period consisted of six letters and emails from four individuals and one organization. One individual submitted two comment letters. The letters included 25 comments representing 14 concerns.

Two comments focused on the project's purpose and need. These issues were either adequately addressed in the EA or were further clarified in the *Errata for the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement EA*.

- The need to clarify which trailer was removed.
- The need to clarify when the trailer was removed.

Additional comments focused on the range of alternatives, expressed a preference for an alternative, or suggested changes to the Preferred (Selected) Alternative. These comments were either discussed in the EA, were addressed by the Selected Alternative, were not reasonable alternatives, or were expressions of personal opinion:

- The need to replace the well water disinfection system.
- The opinion that NPS should select the Preferred Alternative.
- The opinion that NPS should not select the Preferred Alternative.
- The need to consider an alternative site that is currently occupied by a trailer owned by a soon-to-retire NPS employee.
- The need to consider an alternative site that would construct a two or three story eight to twelve bedroom structure.
- The need to consider alternatives that would include construction of single-occupant bedrooms.
- The need to improve drinking water quality.

Comments that were outside the scope of the current project included the following:

- The need to ensure that all Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area trailers meet housing standards.
- The need to provide better maintenance for existing trailers.
- The need to keep residents notified of water quality concerns.

- The need to remove all trailers in Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area.

None of the comments received introduced substantive new information or raised any substantive issues not fully considered in the EA. No modifications are included in the Selected Alternative as a result of comments. A complete Summary of Public Comment and Response Report are available at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning).

## **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

Yosemite National Park consults with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office pursuant to Section 7 (a) (2) of the Endangered Species Act (U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). A species list for *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement* project was obtained from this office on September 5, 2006. This list, data from the California Fish and Game Wildlife Habitat Relationships Model, and NPS data and professional knowledge and judgment were used to determine the effect of the Selected Alternative on special status species. Based on this information, NPS determined that this project will have “no effect” on federally listed, candidate or proposed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat. Thus, no further consultation is required (50 CFR 402.14). A follow-up conversation with the USFWS biologist on July 3, 2007, completed the informal consultation for this project.

### **CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER/ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

In accordance with the 1999 PA among Yosemite National Park, the California SHPO, and the ACHP, professional staff from Yosemite National Park have determined that implementation of the Selected Alternative will have “no effect” on archeological or traditional cultural properties and “no adverse effect” on historic sites, structures, and landscapes (36 CFR 800.5). Thus, consultation with SHPO and ACHP is not required per Stipulation VII.C.2 of the 1999 PA.

Standards for developing EAs to comply with Section 106 of the NHPA include the requirement that the issuing agency provide an opportunity for the SHPO and other interested parties to review and comment on the EA. The EA was sent to the SHPO and interested American Indian Tribal governments on July 16, 2007. Comments on the EA were accepted through August 15, 2007. These organizations will also be sent a copy of this FONSI.

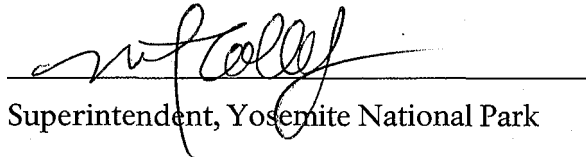
### **AMERICAN INDIAN CONSULTATION**

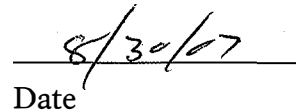
Yosemite National Park is consulting with American Indian tribes having cultural association with the Hodgdon Meadow Area, including Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, and the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc. (Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation), on proposed actions under Hodgdon Meadow Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement project. Consultation was initiated in February, 2006. Site visits were made with the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk in May, 2007. The EA was sent to the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians and the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc on July 16, 2007. Comments on the EA were accepted through August 15, 2007. These organizations will also be sent a copy of this FONSI. No Traditional or Contemporary Cultural and Religious Practices or Traditional Cultural Properties will be affected by implementation of this project.

**CONCLUSION**

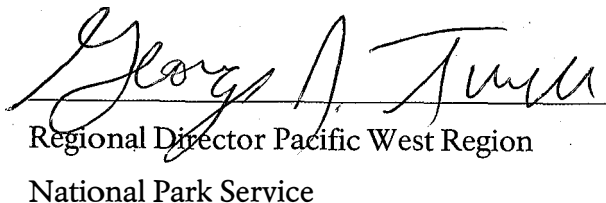
Based on information contained in *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Environmental Assessment* as summarized above, the nature of comments received from affected agencies and the public, and the incorporation of the mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, it is the determination of the NPS that the Selected Alternative is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. The Selected Alternative as detailed in this *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Finding of No Significant Impact* may be implemented as soon as practicable.

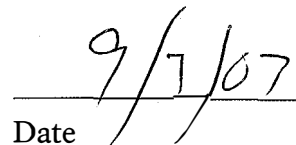
**RECOMMENDED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPROVED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director Pacific West Region  
National Park Service

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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# **ERRATA FOR THE HODGDON MEADOW HOUSING AREA TRAILER REPLACEMENT AND UTILITIES IMPROVEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

## **YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

**AUGUST 2007**

This section provides a catalog of the corrections and changes made to the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Environmental Assessment* since its original release for comment. Revised or new language is underlined. Deleted text is marked by strikethrough.

Where a change is made as part of a response to a comment on the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Environmental Assessment*, the comment number is noted in brackets at the end of the text change; see the Summary of Public Comment and Response Report (NPS 2007).

**1. In the Title Page several words were omitted from the title. The title should read as follows:**

*Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Project.*

**2. In the Abstract, paragraph 3 has been revised to clarify water quality issues. Paragraph 3 should read as follows:**

NPS is also considering replacing the well water disinfection system. Low pH values in the drinking water are causing copper piping and lead solder to leach into the drinking water. Consequently, drinking water is above California Department of Health Services (CDHS) mandated action levels for copper. The new system would increase pH values, thereby reducing corrosiveness of the well water and improving drinking water to within CDHS standards.

**3. Page ES-1, paragraph 3, should be revised as follows:**

This project is needed because of a shortage of employee housing in the Mather Ranger District, where the project would be implemented, and because of the need to fulfill National Park Service (NPS) housing policies. These include meeting housing conditions standards; replacing temporary structures, such as trailers, with permanent structures; and providing government employee housing where no suitable private market for housing exists. This project is also needed to provide a permanent solution to address drinking water quality issues. Low pH values in the well water at Hodgdon Meadow are causing copper piping and lead solder to leach into the drinking water. Consequently, the lead and copper levels have exceeded mandated action levels for drinking water set by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS). CDHS has required NPS to conduct a corrosion study and implement a permanent solution to address the water quality issues. The new system would increase pH values, thereby reducing corrosiveness of the well water, and would improve improving drinking water to meet CDHS standards. .

**4. One commenter requested clarification regarding when the three-bedroom trailer was removed from the Selected Alternative's site. The following revision to page I-1, paragraph 1, clarifies this issue:**

The National Park Service is considering the construction of a duplex consisting of two 2-bedroom units in the Mather Ranger District of Yosemite National Park, California (Figure 1). The duplex would replace a three-bedroom trailer that was in poor condition and did not meet acceptable housing standards. It posed serious health and safety risks with electrical, plumbing, and heating deficiencies. Consequently, the trailer was removed from the park in 1997 [comment #1-1] and is no longer in use. The project would be funded under the NPS Housing Initiative, also known as the Trailer Replacement Fund. The new duplex would help to maintain suitable employee housing in Yosemite National Park. The shortage is most acute in the Mather District, which includes Hodgdon Meadow housing area. The park identified Hodgdon Meadow as an appropriate area for residential and administrative facilities development in the 1980 General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP recommended retaining existing housing, and constructing an additional 10 apartment units and 20 seasonal housing units in Hodgdon Meadow housing area.

**5. Page I-2, paragraph 2, should be revised as follows:**

The park is also considering replacing the well water disinfection system. Low pH values in the drinking water are causing copper piping ~~and lead solder~~ to leach into the drinking water. Consequently, copper levels in the drinking water ~~is~~ are above CDHS mandated action levels. The new system would increase pH values, thereby reducing corrosiveness of the well water and improving drinking water to within CDHS standards. The new treatment facility will also include a chlorine mixing tank to increase contact time between drinking water and chlorine.

**6. Page I-4, paragraph 3, should be revised as follows:**

Two problems make the well water marginal as a potable water source without in-home filtering or treatment. First, the water produced by the Hodgdon well has a low pH. This "aggressive water" has caused pitting and corrosion of the Hodgdon area water pipes, resulting in ~~lead and~~ copper levels that exceed the action levels for drinking water set by the State of California. ~~The lead action level is >0.015 mg/L at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile and the copper action level is >1.3mg/L at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile<sup>1</sup>. The 90<sup>th</sup> percentile reported in November 2006 for Hodgdon Meadow drinking water was ~~0.0039 mg/L lead and~~ 4.15 mg/L for copper.~~ A second problem is that the short distance, and therefore low water volume, of the distribution lines from the pump house to the single 100,000 gallon storage tank are inadequate to maintain chlorine contact in the waterlines long enough to adequately disinfect the well water.

**7. Page I-5, paragraph 2, should be revised as follows:**

This project is also needed to meet CDHS drinking water standards within the Hodgdon Meadow Area. Currently, the water at Hodgdon Meadow is aggressive and low in pH, causing the copper piping ~~and lead solder~~ in the residences to leach into the water. Copper ~~and lead~~ levels for drinking water in the Hodgdon Meadow housing area and Hodgdon Meadow Campground exceed the CDHS mandated action levels. As a result, CDHS has required a corrosion control study and a permanent solution to reduce this ~~these~~

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<sup>1</sup> When five samples are collected during a six month monitoring period, the 90th percentile is calculated by averaging the 4th and 5th highest sample values.



contaminants to acceptable levels. Installation of a new well water disinfection system adjacent to the site of the current disinfection system would be a permanent solution for bringing water quality to within CDHS requirements. The new system would reduce the aggressiveness of the water and prevent corrosion of the water lines that deliver water to the housing units. This project is also needed to improve chlorination of drinking water.

**8. Page II-3, paragraph 1, should be revised as follows:**

Architectural details would be consistent with the Mission 66 houses and apartment building. ~~and would feature dark stained board and batten exterior siding.~~ This would include Wosky brown (NPS brown) rough sawn plywood vertical siding with vertical batten strips and Wosky brown standing seam metal roof.

**9. Page III-21, paragraph 2, should be revised as follows:**

Two problems make the drinking water marginal as a potable water source without in-home filtering or treatment. First, the water produced by the Hodgdon well has a low pH. This “aggressive water” has caused pitting and corrosion of the Hodgdon area water pipes, leading to ~~lead and~~ copper levels in the water that exceed maximum contaminate levels (action levels) set by the State of California (~~>0.015 mg/L lead and~~ >1.3mg/L copper). Water quality monitoring results submitted for Hodgdon Meadow in November 2006 reported ~~0.0039 mg/L lead and~~ 4.15 mg/L copper. A second problem is that the short distance, and therefore low water volume, of the distribution lines from the pump house to the single 100,000 gallon storage tank are inadequate to maintain chlorine contact in the waterlines long enough to adequately disinfect the well water.

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# **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES**

## ***HODGDON MEADOW HOUSING AREA TRAILER REPLACEMENT AND UTILITIES IMPROVEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT***

**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

**AUGUST 2007**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to construct a duplex consisting of two 2-bedroom units in the Mather Ranger District of Yosemite National Park, California. The duplex would replace a 3-bedroom trailer that was in poor condition and did not meet acceptable housing standards. It posed serious health and safety risks with electrical, plumbing, and heating deficiencies. Consequently, the trailer was removed from the park in 1997, and is no longer in use. The project would be funded under the NPS Housing Initiative, also known as the Trailer Replacement Fund. The new duplex would help to maintain suitable employee housing in Yosemite National Park. The shortage is most acute in the Mather District, which includes Hodgdon Meadow housing area. The park identified Hodgdon Meadow as an appropriate area for residential and administrative facilities development in the 1980 General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP recommended retaining existing housing and constructing an additional 10 apartment units and 20 seasonal housing units in Hodgdon Meadow housing area.

The park also proposes to replace the well water disinfection system. Low pH values in the drinking water are causing copper to leach from piping into the drinking water. Consequently, copper levels in the drinking water exceed California Department of Health Services (CDHS) mandated action levels. The new system would increase pH values, thereby reducing corrosiveness of the well water and improving drinking water to within CDHS standards. The new treatment facility will also include a chlorine mixing tank to increase contact time between drinking water and chlorine and to improve potability.

This report summarizes public comments submitted on the *Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement Environmental Assessment* (EA). The EA was released for public review on July 16, 2007. The NPS accepted comments through August 15, 2007. Written public comments were received by email and by direct submission at the monthly open house held in Yosemite Valley on July 25, 2007. During the comment period, six public comments letters were received. This report provides (1) a summary of public concerns expressed in the public comments received; and (2) a specific response to each identified concern.

### **COMMENT ANALYSIS PROCESS**

Public comments received during the public comment period were reviewed and analyzed using the park's Comment Analysis and Response Database system. Analysis of public comment letters is performed in a series of stages which require review by staff and members of the Management Team during review and processing. Initially, each letter received is reviewed to determine the discrete points the author is expressing. Each sentence or

paragraph in the letter that conveys a discrete comment is then “coded” in order to associate that comment with a particular resource topic or element of the plan (such as water resources or the plan’s relationship to other projects).

Once all letters have been coded for individual comments, similar comments are grouped together and a “concern statement” is generated. The concern statement captures the main point of the comment and is worded in a way that affords the NPS the opportunity to respond to a requested action. Concern statements are then screened to determine whether or not further clarification is needed in the document, or whether they call for a modification of the proposed action. In the case of the latter, these types of concerns would be brought to park management for deliberation. Lastly, the planning team prepares responses presenting the NPS’s reasoning as to how and why public concerns will be incorporated into the project’s planning process.

## **HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT**

This Response to Public Comments summary is divided into sections based upon the topics identified during coding of comments. Each section includes one or more statements of public concern. The public concerns attempt to present common themes identified from comments in a statement that captures what action the public feels the NPS should undertake. [Note: Because all public concerns are presented, oftentimes these statements may offer contradictory direction.] Each public concern is, in turn, followed by supporting quotes from public comments referenced to original letters.

Each supporting quote is followed by an attribute which identifies the number assigned to the original letter it came from, whether the comment was made by an individual or an organization, a general description of the organization type, and a reference to the letter number and the comment number within the letter. This information appears as a parenthetical clause in the following format: organization or individual, city and state of letter – relevant planning effort – letter number. For example, “(Individual, Merced, CA - #7-3)” is a letter from an individual in Merced, California, and assigned the letter number 7; the supporting quote is from the third coded comment in the letter.

Finally, each public concern statement, and its supporting quote, is followed by the NPS Response. Note that minor technical comments are corrected in the appropriate document or errata sheet and do not receive either a public concern statement or NPS response in this report.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES**

The EA was available for public review and comment for a 30-day period from July 16, 2007 through August 15, 2007. The comments received were screened to determine whether any new issues, reasonable alternatives, potential for significant impacts, or mitigation measures were suggested. The comments received did not identify new issues, alternatives, or mitigation measures, nor did they correct or add substantially to the facts presented in, or increase the level of impact described in, the EA. Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, or comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, are not considered substantive (i.e., they did not challenge the accuracy of the analysis, dispute information accuracy, suggest different viable alternatives, and/or provide new information that makes a change in the proposal). One comment, although not substantive did result in a

minor change to the EA. No modifications to the Preferred Alternative were made as a result of comments.

## **PLANNING PROCESS AND POLICY**

**Public Concern #13:** The NPS should not rely on old planning documents, environmental assessments, or other out-of-date documents for planning purposes.

*"We continue to be concerned that the NPS is relying on plans, EAs, and other documents which are quite old and clearly more irrelevant with every passing year."* (Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #6-2)

**Response:** The 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) is the overall planning document for Yosemite National Park. This plan specifically addressed housing needs and development within the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. Therefore, it is appropriate for this project to tier to the 1980 GMP. This project also follows the 2006 National Park Service Management Policies and the 1998 draft Housing Management Plan. The Housing Management Plan documented a shortage of housing in the Mather Ranger District that to this date has not been addressed. Therefore, the plan is relevant for this project. This project does not rely on any previously published EAs.

**Public Concern #14:** The NPS should ensure that public scoping comments are posted to the NPS website in a timely manner

*"We request that the NPS post all public comments for the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Project EA on the NPS web site in an accessible and timely manner."* (Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #6-2)

**Response:** As a result of the public comment period for the EA, the park received five letters from individuals and one letter from an organization. Letters were coded and 25 individual comments were analyzed using the park's Comment Analysis and Response Database. Fourteen concern statements were generated to summarize the individual comments. The park planning team then formulated responses to these concerns. The Public Comment and Response Report can be viewed on the Park's website at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning), and is also available upon written request.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

**Public Concern #1:** The National Park Service should replace the well water disinfection system.

*"NPS must replace the well water disinfection system."* (Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #1-5)

**Response:** One of the purposes of this project is to replace the well water disinfection system with an upgraded system. This objective was based on the need to provide a permanent solution for addressing drinking water quality concerns in the Hodgdon Meadow Area as directed by the CDHS. The new disinfection system will also improve potability of the drinking water. Replacing the well water disinfection system is an action common to all Action Alternatives including Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, the concern regarding improvement of drinking water quality is adequately addressed in the EA.

**Public Concern #2:** The National Park Service should select Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area and Trailer Replacement project.

*"Alternative 2 is definitely the best site, the area down there is impacted enough as it is - no need to cut down trees or create any more impact than necessary." (Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #3-3)*

**Response:** Alternative 2 has been selected as the Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative. The process used by NPS to make this selection is adequately addressed in the EA. The *Environmental Consequences* section of the EA documents the comparison between alternatives of the impacts to natural, cultural and social resources. NPS used this comparison to select the Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative.

**Public Concern #3: The National Park Service should not select Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area and Trailer Replacement project.**

*"It seems ridiculous to have your neighbors 10 feet away. The housing in most private land areas around Yosemite have much more privacy. To place a duplex in such close proximity would ruin any sense of privacy the residents of the adjacent apartment now enjoy." (Individual, Sonora, CA, Comment #4-2)*

**Response:** Alternative 2 has been selected as the Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative. The process used by NPS to make this selection is adequately addressed in the EA. The *Environmental Consequences* section of the EA documents the comparison between alternatives of the impacts to natural, cultural and social resources. NPS used this comparison to select the Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative. The selected site adjacent to the apartments was previously occupied by a 3-bedroom trailer with a carport. Although, the trailer was removed in 1997, the construction of the duplex in this location would not alter the historic level of privacy for apartment residence.

**Public Concern #4: The National Park Service should consider constructing the duplex on a site adjacent to Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) which is currently occupied by a soon-to-retire employee's trailer.**

*"My in-laws currently have a manufactured house on the pad marked "trailer" just east of the Alternative 2 location. The house was purchased by them and installed in 1987 on NPS land due to the housing shortage at the time. Paul will be retiring later this year, and as part of the agreement, their manufactured house will be moved out of the park. In order to move the house, the site will need to be modified with heavy equipment. Since this site will become available within the next few months, and the land will already be disturbed, it seems logical that this location should be considered as an Alternative. In my opinion, it would be the preferred alternative. I hope the planning team will consider adding this 5th alternative." (Individual, Sonora, CA, Comment #4-1)*

**Response:** This concern calls for the consideration of a new location for siting the duplex. The location proposed in this comment is not currently vacant, and is occupied by a park employee's trailer. Although the individual intends to retire in 2007, NPS cannot rely on the intentions of a private individual to make planning decisions. For example, this individual's circumstances could change and they could decide to continue working for the park for an additional period of time. Such change in plans would impact NPS ability to meet construction deadlines and could result in a loss of funding. Additionally, it is not possible to accurately assess site conditions and determine the amount of site preparation needed to construct the duplex while the site is occupied. Therefore, siting a construction project on a currently occupied site is beyond the scope of this project.

**Public Concern #5: The National Park Service should consider replacing all of the trailers at Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area.**

*"Why not include plans to replace the trailers with this project?"* (Individual, Groveland, CA, Comment #5-5)

**Response:** The primary purpose of this project is to maintain adequate housing in the Mather Ranger District by replacing the previously removed 3-bedroom trailer using funding provided by the NPS Housing Initiative (aka Trailer Replacement Fund). Additional funding is not currently available for replacement of the remaining trailers in the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. Therefore, considering removing all of the trailers from the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area does not meet the purpose and need of this project and is beyond the scope of this project.

**Public Concern #6: The National Park Service should consider constructing a two or three story housing complex with eight to twelve bedrooms.**

*"Why not create 8 or 12 bedrooms by building 2 or 3 stories? Housing demand will rise in the next few years."* (Individual, Groveland, CA, Comment #5-1)

**Response:** This concern calls for the consideration of a two- or three-story housing complex with eight to 12 bedrooms in the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. Construction of multi-story residences would not match the character of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. The existing structures in the housing area are all single-story, and many were built during the Mission 66 Period of the NPS. The Division of Resources Management and Science, History, Architecture, and Landscape Branch at Yosemite has taken an active role in ensuring that construction of the duplex would have no effect on the Mission 66 Period character of the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area. This has included consideration of the building's footprint and exterior design. Additionally, the primary purpose of this project is to maintain adequate housing in the Mather Ranger District by replacing the 3-bedroom trailer, removed in 1997, with the duplex consisting of two 2-bedroom units. Therefore, consideration of this alternative would not meet the purpose and need and would be outside the scope of this project.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

**Public Concern #7: The National Park Service should improve drinking water quality and should notify residents if the water does not meet drinking water standards.**

*"I was not informed by anyone about the poor water quality at Hodgdon Meadows. I'm not surprised, given that the trailer I lived in last year had rusty water. I actually bought a large water jug and got water from the Valley or from Tuolumne because I did not want to drink the water from my trailer, which should be potable. But I was not informed of the low pH values and of the copper and lead leaching into the water that I drink. I'm outraged by this! We should have been informed about the water prior to moving in."* (Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #1-4)

*"Water quality needs to be improved. It is impossible to drink on a regular basis in the seasonal trailer. Tastes like metal."* (Individual, Yosemite Valley, CA, Comment #2-2)

**Response:** One of the purposes of this project is to replace the well water disinfection system with an upgraded system. This objective was based on the need to provide a permanent solution for addressing drinking water quality concerns in the Hodgdon Meadow Area as



directed by the CDHS. The new disinfection system will also improve potability of the drinking water. Replacing the well water disinfection system is an action common to all Action Alternatives including Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, the concern regarding improvement of drinking water quality is adequately addressed in the EA. The Division of Facilities Management, Utilities Branch is responsible for notifying residents when there are concerns regarding drinking water quality. The Project Manager has forwarded this concern to the Utilities Branch to ensure that the individual's concerns are known.

## **EMPLOYEE HOUSING**

**Public Concern #8: The National Park Service should clarify in the Environmental Assessment which trailer was removed and when.**

*"I'm unclear as to which trailer was condemned and removed from the park, and when."*  
(Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #1-1)

**Response:** The location of the previously removed trailer is adequately addressed in the EA. It is referenced in numerous locations in the text describing Alternative 2 and is illustrated in Figures 3 and 7. *The Errata for the Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area Trailer Replacement and Utilities Improvement EA* includes a revision to the text on page I-1, paragraph 1, line 6, adding the date of the trailer removal (1997). The Errata will be included as a supplement to the Finding of No Significant Impact for this project.

**Public Concern #9: The National Park Service should provide better maintenance and make sure all trailers at Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area meet acceptable housing standards.**

*"All the trailers are in pretty poor condition and should not meet acceptable housing standards. Some trailers have horrid smells, some trailers have rusty water, some trailers have gigantic holes that animals crawl into and dig around in the walls."* (Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #1-2)

*"It just seems the maintenance for this seasonal housing has been shoddy and unacceptable."* (Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #1-3)

**Response:** The NPS is interested in improving housing conditions for all employees. Maintenance of in-park housing is the responsibility of the Division of Facilities Management, Buildings and Grounds Branch. The Project Manager has discussed this concern with the Buildings and Grounds Branch to ensure that the individual's concerns are known.

**Public Concern #10: The National Park Service should not include laundry facilities in the new duplex.**

*"The laundry does not seem necessary as there is a communal laundry area available for employees."* (Individual, Yosemite Valley, CA, Comment #2-3)

**Response:** This concern requests NPS not to include laundry facilities in the specifications for the new duplex. A site visit/scoping meeting was held for residents of Hodgdon Meadow Housing Area in April 2006. The individuals who attended this meeting requested that NPS include private laundry facilities in the specifications for each unit. Although there are communal laundry facilities in the housing area, residents felt that the individual laundry facilities would improve living conditions for the new residents. Each unit has the potential to

house up to four seasonal employees. Therefore, individual laundry facilities for up to four employees were not considered to be unnecessary.

**Public Concern #11: The National Park Service should not require employees to share a bedroom.**

*"You should consider single bedrooms - although small, I can guarantee that everyone would prefer their own room over having to share. We're not in college anymore and as adults we do enjoy our privacy."* (Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #3-6)

*"Please do not plan on making these shared bedrooms. Even seasonal employees deserve a certain level of privacy. The park will lose quality, returning seasonals by requiring them to share a bedroom."* (Individual, Groveland, CA, Comment #5-2)

**Response:** The two-person per bedroom count represents the maximum building housing capacity, but NPS management may determine it is appropriate to house fewer individuals in this duplex.

**Public Concern #12: The National Park Service should consider hardwood or tile floors, instillation of a cooling systems, and adequate cabinet space in the specifications for the duplex.**

*"Please be sure to include a cooling system (AC or swamp coolers)."* (Individual, Groveland, CA, Comment #5-3)

*"Tile or hardwood flooring should be considered over carpeting-as brooms and mops are more accessible to seasonals than vacuum cleaners are."* (Individual, Groveland, CA, Comment #5-4)

*"Consider creating enough cabinet space in the kitchen and bathroom for the number of intended occupants to have equal private space."* (Individual, Groveland, CA, Comment #5-7)

**Response:** This concern calls for the consideration of interior specifications and cooling systems for the duplex. NPS does not provide cooling systems in the Mather Ranger District for new residential construction. Therefore, cooling systems will not be included in the specifications for this project. Flooring products allowed by NPS include residential grade sheet vinyl flooring and carpet. These products have been included in the contract specifications and would be installed in the duplex. Lastly, the cabinet and storage space provided in the duplex is sized to accommodate the anticipated maximum capacity (eight tenants) and enhance livability. This criterion is integrated into the plans in the Housing for Trailer Elimination-Prototype Design Catalog. The duplex will be constructed according to Plan #4 from this catalog.