

# CHAPTER 1

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## Introduction and List of Commenters

### 1.1 Purpose of this Document

This Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) document includes all agency and public comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR, SCH # 2019029073) for the Yosemite Under Canvas Project. Written comments were received by the County of Tuolumne during the Draft EIR's public comment period from June 5, 2020 through July 20, 2020. This document includes written responses to each comment received on the Draft EIR. The responses correct, clarify, and amplify text in the Draft EIR, as appropriate.

This Final EIR document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and will be considered for certification by the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors and used to inform their decisions on the Project.

### 1.2 Summary of Proposed Project

The Project would provide for development of a 99-unit tent campground and supporting facilities such as a mobile kitchen, dining and reception tent, laundry facility, and bathrooms. On-site infrastructure would include access internal roads and pathways, potable water wells, and wastewater leach fields. Principal Project elements would consist of the following:

- **Guest Tents:** The Project proposes a total of 99 guest tents with 77 suite tents with an in-suite washbasin, shower, and toilet, and twenty-two safari tents with access to a communal bathroom. Four of the suite tents would be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. The approximate tent footprints would range from 200 to 400 square feet. Tents would be made from fire-retardant-treated canvas mounted on non-permanent wooden decks. Decks would typically be mounted on moveable above-ground concrete footings. The tents would be removed at the end of each season in October, with the decks remaining in place.
- **Bathroom Facilities:** To serve the safari tents without in-suite bathroom facilities, two communal bathroom facilities would be provided, which would be manufactured off-site and contain six stalls, with each stall consisting of a toilet, sink, and shower. The units would be prefabricated and mounted on wheels, and would be non-permanent in nature, but would likely remain on-site during the off season, though they could be transported off-site for use at other Under Canvas facilities.
- **Reception/Dining Tent and Support Facilities:** One reception/dining tent would be provided, as well as an adjacent commercial kitchen trailer and a number of support (housekeeping and maintenance) portable storage containers. The Project's commercial kitchen would prepare and serve single-service meals to guests staying at the camp. As with the guest tents

described previously, the reception/dining tent would be disassembled at the end of each season and stored in an on-site shipping container. The commercial kitchen trailer would be prefabricated and mounted on wheels, and would be non-permanent in nature, but would likely remain on-site during the off season, though it could be transported off-site for use at other Under Canvas facilities. The remaining housekeeping and maintenance support containers would also likely remain on-site during the off-season.

- The Project would provide up to three traditional, communal campfire pits interspersed around the Project site. The Project would provide heating within the guest tents on an as-needed basis through the use of EPA-certified wood heating stoves.
- Internal Circulation: Internal circulation would be provided by a main internal access road (Under Canvas Way) and internal cart paths and footpaths. The proposed Under Canvas Way would begin from Hardin Flat Road at a point approximately 500 feet south from the intersection of SR-120 and Hardin Flat Road. A secondary point of access would be provided for emergency purposes on the northwest side of the site via an existing unimproved roadway that connects to Forest Service Road 1S09.
- Transit Accessibility: A bus stop for the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) is proposed on the west side of Hardin Flat Road at the entrance to the Yosemite Under Canvas facility, approximately 800 feet south of the Hardin Flat Road/SR-120 intersection.
- Potable Water Supply: Drinking and potable water at the camp would be provided by groundwater source wells. The source would be developed as a Public Water System, and classified as a Transient Non-Community water system, as defined in California Health and Safety Code Section 116275. Water distribution would include storage cisterns, small diameter distribution lines, re-pressure pumps, source development, and services to the laundry, lobby tent, bath units, and deluxe/suite tents.
- Wastewater Management: Wastewater would be treated on-site through the use of two separated systems. Sewer mains would be constructed to convey the wastewater to the two systems, which would be located near the southeastern area of the site. Wastewater System #1 would be a domestic strength wastewater system which would receive primary treatment from code compliant septic tanks, and would be delivered to gravel filled leach trenches via pressure dosing. Wastewater System #2 would manage the high strength food facility wastewater, and the domestic strength wastewater from the laundry facilities.
- Electricity and Lighting: Electric power for the camp would be provided by a local utility company, but most electricity demand would be met using low voltage solar systems. Lighting for the lobby tent, common areas, and guest tents would be low voltage solar lighting. All light fixtures and the use thereof would be International Dark Sky Association (IDA) compliant, while still providing safety and guidance for guests. To provide electric power to the site during power outages, a 70 kW propane-powered standby generator would be installed. The generator would be placed inside its own enclosure for protection against the elements and for noise abatement purposes.
- Solid Waste Management: Trash from the guest tents would be collected daily as part of normal housekeeping activities. All solid waste produced at the site, particularly food waste, would be stored in locking wildlife-resistant containers and then removed from the site by a commercial hauler for disposal at a permitted landfill.

- **Timber Management and Wildfire Prevention:** Development on the site would be preceded by fuel reduction operation to remove standing and dead trees that pose a threat to users. Fuel treatment would involve mastication of standing dead snags and surface fuels. The Project development plan would also involve conversion of greater than three acres of timberland. Both the fuel reduction efforts and conversion activities would meet the definition of timber operations as defined in the Forest Practice Act and will require development of a Timber Harvest Plan (THP). The THP would be subject to approval by CAL FIRE. In addition to the fuels reduction and road construction that would be undertaken as part of the THP, the site would be subject to ongoing fuel and vegetation management treatments as prescribed in the Project's Wildfire Mitigation Plan. The plan would be subject to review and approval by the Tuolumne County Fire Department (TCFD) in cooperation with CAL FIRE.
- **Operations:** The operational season for the site would generally be from mid-March to mid-October, depending on weather conditions. The average occupancy at existing Under Canvas facilities is approximately 2.5 guests per tent.

A complete description of the Project, the Project Applicant's objectives, and requested approvals can be found in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR.

### **1.3 Public Participation and Review**

The County previously circulated a Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Project (State Clearinghouse No. 2019029073). The Draft IS/MND public review and comment period was February 14, 2019 through April 2, 2019. Based on responses and comments received on the IS/MND, the County decided to prepare an EIR for the Project. The Draft IS/MND and the comments received on the document were included in Appendix A of the Draft EIR.

On June 18, 2019, the County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR to governmental agencies and organizations and persons interested in the Project (the NOP was included in Appendix B of the Draft EIR). The NOP public review and comment period was June 19, 2019 through July 18, 2019. The County sent the NOP to agencies with statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project with the request for input on the scope and content of the environmental information that should be addressed in the Draft EIR. The County held a scoping meeting on Thursday, June 27, 2019, at the Groveland Community Hall. Public agencies, organizations, and interested members of the public were invited to attend this meeting and present verbal or written comments on the Project. In addition to the comments made at the public scoping meeting, the County received 29 written comment letters regarding the NOP (see Appendix B of the Draft EIR), including five comment letters from public agencies, six comment letters from organizations, and eighteen comment letters from individuals or businesses.

A Notice of Completion for the Draft EIR was issued by the County on June 5, 2020 and the Draft EIR was released for public circulation and comment. The public comment period began on June 5, 2020 and ended on July 20, 2020.

## 1.4 Contents and Organization of the Final EIR

This Final EIR incorporates by reference the 2019 Initial Study and the Draft EIR. To the extent that there are any differences between the Project as described in the Initial Study and as described in the Draft EIR, the Draft EIR represents the controlling description.

These documents can be found at the following locations:

- At the CEQAnet Web Portal at: <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/Project/2019029073>
- At the County’s website at <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1204/Under-CanvasHarding-Flat-LLC>
- At the Tuolumne County Community Resources Agency, 2 South Green Street Sonora, CA 95370

This Final EIR includes a list of those who commented on the Draft EIR, comments received and responses to those comments, necessary changes to the Draft EIR, and the proposed Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. The Final EIR is organized as follows:

**Chapter 1 – Introduction and List of Commenters:** This chapter summarizes the Project under consideration and describes the contents of the Final EIR. This chapter also contains a list of all of the agencies, organizations, and individuals that submitted comments on the Draft EIR during the public review period.

**Chapter 2 – Comments and Responses:** This chapter contains the comment letters received on the Draft EIR, followed by responses to individual comments. Letters are grouped by agencies and organizations/individuals, but are otherwise presented alphabetically by last name. Each comment letter is presented with brackets indicating how the letter has been divided into individual comments. Each comment is given a binomial with the letter number appearing first, followed by the comment number. For example, comments in Letter 1 are numbered 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, and so on. Immediately following the letter are responses, each with binomials that correspond to the bracketed comments.

Some comments that were submitted to the County do not pertain to CEQA environmental issues or do not address the adequacy of the analysis contained in the Draft EIR. When a comment does not directly pertain to environmental issues analyzed in the Draft EIR, does not ask a question about the adequacy of the analysis contained in the Draft EIR, expresses an opinion related to the merits of the Project, or does not question an element of or conclusion of the Draft EIR, the response notes the comment and may provide additional information where appropriate. The intent is to acknowledge the comment. While CEQA does not require that such comments be responded to, they are included in the Final EIR for informational purposes.

**Chapter 3 – Revisions to the Draft EIR:** This chapter summarizes refinements and text changes made to the Draft EIR in response to comments made on the Draft EIR and/or staff-initiated text changes. Changes to the text of the Draft EIR are shown by either a line through the text that has been deleted, or is underlined where new text has been inserted. The revisions contain

clarification, amplification, and corrections that have been identified since publication of the Draft EIR. The text revisions do not result in a change in the analysis and conclusions presented in the Draft EIR.

**Chapter 4 – Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program:** This chapter contains the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) to aid the County in its implementation and monitoring of measures adopted in the EIR, and to comply with the requirements of Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a). The MMRP contains applicable mitigation measures from both the IS/MND and the Draft EIR.

**Appendices:** This Final EIR contains additional material for inclusion in the record. These appendices are as follows, and provide supplemental information to the record. This supplemental information does not result in a change in the analysis and conclusions presented in the Draft EIR.

- **Appendix A1:** *Tent Flame Resistance Certificates and Test Results*
- **Appendix A2:** *Stove Specifications*
- **Appendix B1:** *Draft EIR Hydrogeology Response Memorandum.* Prepared by Water Resources Associates. September 18, 2020.
- **Appendix B2:** *Hydrogeology Cumulative Impacts Memorandum.* Prepared by Water Resources Associates. September 17, 2020.
- **Appendix C1:** *Yosemite Under Canvas Sight Distance Analysis Memorandum.* Prepared by Wood Rodgers. August 5, 2020.
- **Appendix C2:** *Yosemite Under Canvas VMT Analysis Memorandum.* Prepared by Wood Rodgers. September 9, 2020.
- **Appendix C3:** *Draft Tuolumne County SB 743 VMT Thresholds, Tuolumne County SB 743 VMT Study Phase 2.* Prepared by Wood Rodgers. September 9, 2020.
- **Appendix D:** *Resumes and Qualifications of the Project's Cultural Resources Staff.*

## 1.5 List of Commenters

The County received 89 comment letters and emails during the comment period on the Draft EIR for the proposed Project. The table below indicates the numerical designation for each comment letter, the author of the comment letter, and the date of the comment letter. Letters are grouped by agencies and organizations/individuals, but are otherwise presented alphabetically by last name.

**COMMENT LETTERS CONCERNING THE DRAFT EIR**

<b>Letter #</b>	<b>Entity</b>	<b>Author(s) of Comment Letter/e-mail</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
<b>Agencies</b>			
1	Stanislaus National Forest, Groveland Ranger District	Jim Junette, District Ranger	July 16, 2020
2	California Department of Transportation	Kevin Schroder, Interim Chief	July 17, 2020
3	Central Valley Water Quality Control Board	Nicholas White, Water Resource Control Engineer	July 20, 2020
4	Groveland Community Services District	Peter Kampa, General Manager	July 17, 2020
5	Groveland Community Services District	Peter Kampa, General Manager	July 20, 2020
<b>Organizations &amp; Individuals</b>			
6	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	John Buckley	July 10, 2020
7	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	John Buckley	July 15, 2020
8	Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club	Kevin Rice, Conservation Chair	July 13, 2020
9	Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club	Kevin Rice, Conservation Chair	July 19, 2020
10	Tuolumne River Trust	Cindy Charles, Board Member	July 10, 2020
11	Tuolumne River Trust	Cindy Charles, Board Member	July 20, 2020
12		Michael Allen	July 17, 2020
13		Robert Asquith	July 20, 2020
14		Dennis Brewer	July 20, 2020
15		Kathy & Donald Brown	July 19, 2020
16		Mary Beth Campbell	July 20, 2020
17		L. Canotas	July 20, 2020
18		Matthew Chapman	July 11, 2020
19		Matthew Chapman	July 17, 2020
20		Matthew Chapman	July 17, 2020
21		Matthew Chapman	July 20, 2020
22		Suzanne Ctibor	July 17, 2020
23		Shawn Conlan	July 20, 2020
24		Nancy Constantino	July 12, 2020
25		Nancy Constantino	July 19, 2020
26		Sharon Coolidge	July 21, 2020
27		Tom Coolidge	July 24, 2020
28		Dan Courtney	July 10, 2020
29		Dan Courtney	July 20, 2020
30		Dan Courtney	July 20, 2020
31		Dan Courtney	July 21, 2020
32		Dan Courtney	July 21, 2020
33		Dan Courtney	July 21, 2020
34		Patricia Elliott	July 17, 2020

**COMMENT LETTERS CONCERNING THE DRAFT EIR**

<b>Letter #</b>	<b>Entity</b>	<b>Author(s) of Comment Letter/e-mail</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
35		Elizabeth Erickson	July 20, 2020
36		Peter Erickson	July 20, 2020
37		Bill Flannery	July 20, 2020
38		Sam Flannery	July 14, 2020
39		Sam & Helen Flannery	July 14, 2020
40		Ben Gardella	July 20, 2020
41		David George	July 19, 2020
42		Laura George	July 19, 2020
43		Rosalina George	July 20, 2020
44		Kathleen Haff, Supervisor-Elect	July 19, 2020
45		Mary Beth Hollander	July 20, 2020
46		Tim Hutchins	July 11, 2020
47		Tim Hutchins	July 15, 2020
48		Tim Hutchins	July 20, 2020
49		Linda King	July 18, 2020
50		Charles Kraft	July 19, 2020
51		Christina Craft	July 18, 2020
52		Denise Kraft	July 18, 2020
53		Denise Kraft	July 20, 2020
54		Dennis Kraft	July 20, 2020
55		Beth Martin	July 18, 2020
56		Keith Martin	July 20, 2020
57		Bill McMahon	July 20, 2020
58		Bill McMahon	July 20, 2020
59		Matthew Moore	July 14, 2020
60		Ronald Morgan	July 20, 2020
61		Adelene Newcomb	July 14, 2020
62		Andy Nickell	July 20, 2020
63		Bill Nickell	July 20, 2020
64		Lauren & Bill Nickell	July 20, 2020
65		Angelene Norquist	July 16, 2020
66		Bill Norquist	July 16, 2020
67		Charlene & Paul Norquist	July 20, 2020
68		Gary Norquist	July 20, 2020
69		Missy Norquist	July 20, 2020
70		Ellie Owen	July 15, 2020
71		Thomas Parrington	July 20, 2020
72		Gene Pfeiffer	July 18, 2020
73		Jenny Pfeiffer	July 20, 2020

**COMMENT LETTERS CONCERNING THE DRAFT EIR**

<b>Letter #</b>	<b>Entity</b>	<b>Author(s) of Comment Letter/e-mail</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
74		Patrick & Jill Pfeiffer	July 18, 2020
75		Mary Porges	July 20, 2020
76		Louis Rivara	July 20, 2020
77		Margrene Rivara	July 20, 2020
78	Fitzgerald, Yap, & Kreditor	Deborah Rosenthal	July 16, 2020
79	Fitzgerald, Yap, & Kreditor	Deborah Rosenthal	July 21, 2020
80	Kenneth D. Schmidt & Associates	Michael Scott	July 16, 2020
81		Kathy Seaton	July 7, 2020
82		John Stanfield	July 20, 2020
83		Sarah Sutton	July 20, 2020
84		Steve Vrionis	July 20, 2020
85		Samantha Wiedemann	July 19, 2020
86		Zachary Weidemann	July 20, 2020
87		John Wilbur	July 20, 2020
88	Evergreen & Rush Creek Lodge	Lee Zimmerman	July 17, 2020
89		Keith Martin	August 1, 2020

## 1.6 Intended Uses of the Final EIR

Once complete and certified, the Final EIR will provide the CEQA compliance documentation upon which the County of Tuolumne’s consideration of, and action on, all applicable land use permits and other approvals (collectively, “approvals”) for the proposed Project or an alternative may be based.

The Final EIR will also provide the CEQA compliance or the basis for NEPA compliance, if applicable, which would be relied upon by Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies in considering and acting upon other Project approvals.