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**Cc:** [Scott Carpenter](#); [Madelyn Ruffner](#); [Greg Stock](#)  
**Subject:** Notification of Meetings for the Sugar Pine Bridge Hydrological Study in Yosemite National Park  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 23, 2016 3:08:55 PM

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Dear Merced River Plan Section 106 Programmatic Agreement Consulting Partners:

I wanted to provide you with an update and clarify some issues regarding the park's initiation of a hydrological study in the vicinity of the Sugar Pine Bridge in Yosemite Valley. Consultation on this project is called for in the Merced River Plan Programmatic Agreement, Stipulation XIV: Additional Provisions Unique to this PA. Sub-stipulation C states the following:

*"C. Hydrological Study for Sugar Pine Bridge: The Merced River Plan undertaking retains all historic bridges for the immediate future. To address the localized impacts that have been attributed to Sugar Pine Bridge, the NPS will initiate a study to assess the merits of various long-term bridge management strategies. The NPS will consult with the signatory and concurring parties to this agreement with regard to the content and structure of the study, including the development of the criteria for success in mitigating hydrologic impacts and the array of alternative mitigation techniques to be tested."*

In December 2015, the park sent out notification of a scoping workshop for the proposed hydrological study. In this correspondence, we said that you would be contacted by Juliana Birkhoff of the Center for Collaborative Policy from California State University, Sacramento. Ms. Birkhoff is assisting the researchers who will be conducting the study of Sugar Pine Bridge in soliciting stakeholder input before the study begins.

During Ms. Birkhoff's conversations with the Section 106 consulting parties, some noted that the MRP contains conflicting statements related to actions associated with the Sugar Pine Bridge. The NPS wants to assure you that the language in the Section 106 PA supersedes the conflicting language that was identified in the Floodplain Statement of Findings.

The proposed hydrological study is meant to ensure that the park has sufficient information with which to make informed decisions regarding the river hydrology in the vicinity of Sugar Pine Bridge. The research will address remaining information gaps, quantify the hydrologic effects of the bridge, develop criteria for success in improving river hydrology, and evaluate the likelihood of success of various strategies for accomplishing desired improvements. As a first step in accomplishing the proposed hydrologic study of eastern Yosemite Valley, the NPS solicited study proposals and used a review committee that included scientists outside of Yosemite and the NPS to evaluate the proposals received. The NPS ultimately selected researchers at the University of California, Santa Barbara, based on the scientific merits of their proposal and their robust plan for stakeholder involvement. Documents related to this selection and contracting process are available upon request. The park understands the sensitivity of the issues associated with discussions of hydrology in this area and wants to assure you of its commitment to follow a transparent process for the hydrological research in this area as stipulated in the MRP PA.

As part of the scoping process for the hydrological study, the park is requesting your participation in two events that are being scheduled for the same day for participant convenience. The first is a stakeholder workshop being facilitated by Ms. Birkhoff. The purpose of this workshop is to introduce key stakeholders to the UCSB researchers, present a brief overview of the issues and information gaps, provide a sense of the research being considered, and solicit input on the study. This would be a morning workshop and attendance would be focused on those members of the public who have indicated previous interest in the study through the MRP process. Section 106 consulting parties are encouraged to attend this workshop preceding the Section 106 consultation in the afternoon.

The afternoon meeting would be attended by the Section 106 consulting parties to the MRP PA. The consultation would focus on identifying issues of concern to the consulting parties and developing strategies that ensure that the park explores all options for avoiding adverse effects to the Sugar Pine Bridge and archeological resources within the study area. At a

minimum, we anticipate that consultation would include:

- Review of issues/data gaps identified to date that the study should address
- Review the array of alternative techniques proposed for addressing the hydrologic effects of Sugar Pine Bridge
- Develop the criteria for success in evaluating these mitigations
- Review proposed timeline for the hydrological study
- Identify future consultation steps (e.g., meetings)

Those being invited to this afternoon consultation workshop include the Section 106 consulting parties to the MRP PA including the SHPO, ACHP, National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Historic Bridge Foundation and designated representatives from the park's seven traditionally associated American Indian Tribes and Groups.

You will be emailed shortly requesting your participation in a Doodle Poll to establish a date for the proposed consultation workshop. Our hope is that this meeting can occur in late April before snowmelt runoff begins in earnest. We will be hosting the meeting in Yosemite Valley, which will allow a site visit to the bridge. You will also have the option to participate electronically by webinar for those not able to travel to the park.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Thank you

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