



## Conservation Volunteers International Program

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[www.conservationvip.org](http://www.conservationvip.org)

A Non-Profit 501c3 Tax Exempt Organization CST 2089890-40

### Volunteer Project Trip Report

Yosemite National Park

September 14-18, 2011



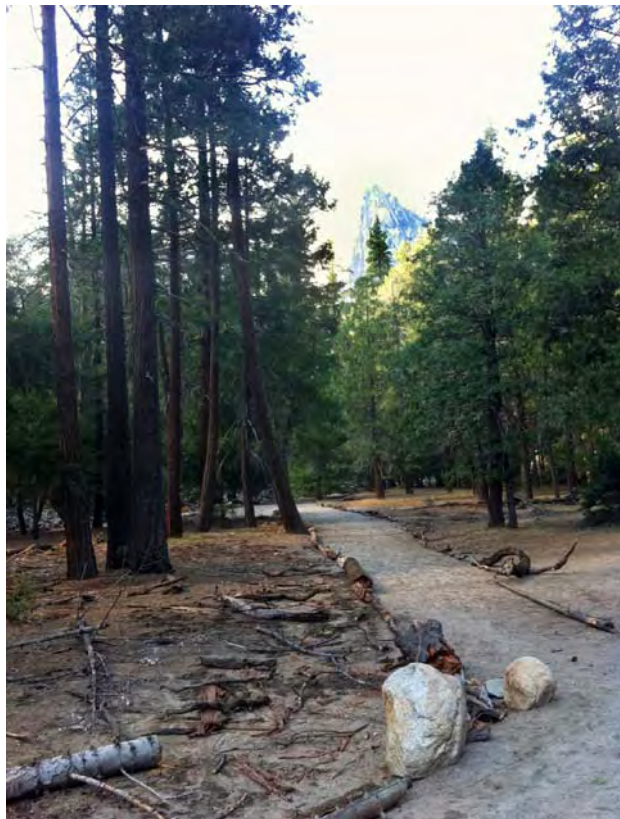
Conservation Volunteers International Program, in cooperation with Yosemite National Park and REI Adventures, led a volunteer project to Yosemite Valley September 14-18, 2011. Volunteers completed two projects identified by the park. A restoration project focused on closing numerous social trails and restoring areas to a natural-looking appearance in the upper Yosemite Valley near the trailhead to the John Muir Trail and Upper Pines Campground. The second project maintained

the popular Upper Yosemite Falls Trail. A new segment of trail to connect the Upper Yosemite Falls Trailhead to the main trail was also constructed. Thirty-nine volunteers worked alongside Conservation VIP trip leaders and National Park Service trail crewmembers. Volunteers contributed 984 hours of labor. The projects were authorized by the National Park Service, under the direction of Dave Kari, Yosemite National Park Program Manager for Trail Operations. Trip leaders were Celia Dunlap, Martha Payne, Darren Payne, and Rich Tobin.

**Restoration Project.** The eastern portion of Yosemite Valley receives some of the highest concentrated use in the park. Popular visitor destinations in this area include the John Muir, Vernal Falls-Nevada Falls and Half Dome trailheads, Happy Isles Trail Center, Upper Pines Campground, Wilderness Trail parking, and Curry Village. Numerous social trails (unplanned trails created by visitors) zigzagged through the forest, trammeling vegetation, compacting soils, and creating an unnatural appearance within a highly sensitive viewshed.



Volunteers completed restoration work including: blocking entrances to social trails with large fallen trees and brush, often requiring the use of cable-grip mechanical winches; scarifying the compacted soil with pickmatics and shovels to allow moisture penetration and encourage new plant growth; scattering woody debris to reduce erosion and create a natural-appearing landscape; narrowing the width of authorized trails to create the proper pedestrian scale within the forest setting; marking established trails with native materials to encourage visitors to remain on designated routes; and removing debris from under boardwalk bridges and culverts to prevent high water during winter rains from washing away trails and roads. Approximately 10 acres and over two miles of trail/river were restored.



## Upper Yosemite Falls Trail Maintenance and Construction Project.

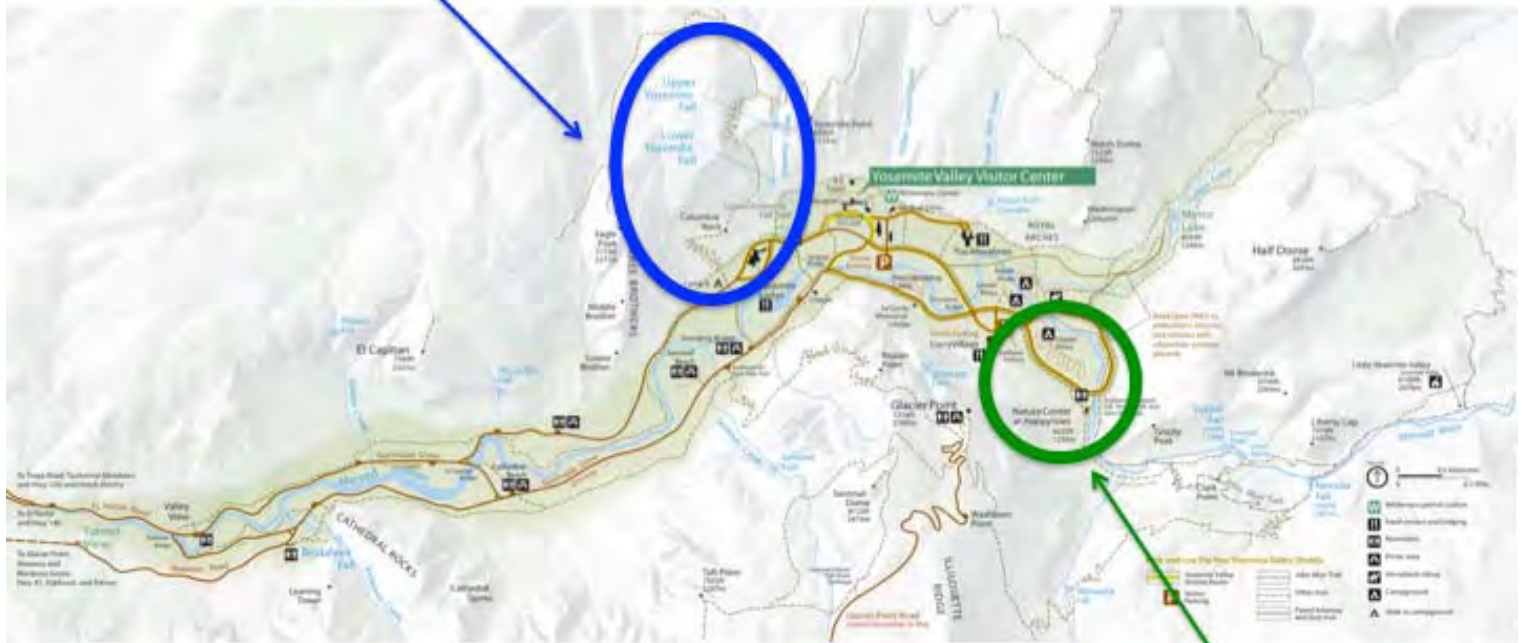
Arguably one of the most popular trails in the park, the trail to Upper Yosemite Falls required maintenance because of high visitor use and soil erosion caused by heavy spring snowmelt and summer rainfall. Teams of volunteers were assigned to different portions of the trail, including one group that began their maintenance efforts from the top of Yosemite Falls. Maintenance included cleaning water diversion devices (water bars and dips) to ensure proper function, and re-contouring trail tread to eliminate erosion channels and improve shedding of water. In addition, water bars were reconstructed or repaired as needed. Although the Upper Yosemite Falls Trail from the Valley Loop Trail was well established, no existing trail connected the Yosemite Lodge-Camp Four Trailhead to the existing trail. Most visitors wishing to hike to the top of Yosemite Falls wandered through the campground and forest looking for the beginning of the ascent to the waterfall. Soils had been compacted over a wide area, the natural appearance of the forest had been lost, and visitor safety compromised.



Volunteers were assigned the unique opportunity to construct a new trail segment in Yosemite Valley connecting the principal trailhead to the main trail. Work included: moving approximately 200 boulders (from hand carried stones to rocks exceeding 1,000 pounds each) and fallen trees with cable-grip mechanical winches to delineate trail corridors or create steps, drains and walls; digging holes or trenches to properly place boulders in order to create a more natural appearance; constructing two major water bars and a rolling dip for proper drainage and erosion control; scarification of soils compacted by visitor use to improve water penetration and natural revegetation; and scattering woody debris to reduce erosion and create a natural-appearing landscape. Approximately 600 feet of new trail was constructed and two acres were restored.



Upper Yosemite Falls Trail  
Maintenance and Construction Project



Yosemite Valley  
Yosemite National Park  
September 2011

John Muir Trail  
Trailhead Restoration Project