



Inyo National Forest

Reds Meadows Valley Recreation Site Renovation Project Scoping Information



Red Meadows campground: L: Active erosion in campsite; R: Seasonally flooded campsite

Background

Reds Meadow Valley is one of the most popular access points to the John Muir Trail backcountry and can see upwards of 2,500 visitors per day during peak summer season. The Inyo National Forest (INF) is partnering with the JMT Wilderness Conservancy to assess, plan and implement renovations at several recreation facilities in the Reds Meadow Valley. Forest Service recreation facilities in the valley include six campgrounds, an amphitheater, three major trailheads, picnic sites, and several trails. This project will renovate five campgrounds, the amphitheater, and one trailhead parking area. The Conservancy will contribute funding to the project using a combination of private donations and grants awarded by the California Natural Resources Agency.

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

The Reds Meadow Valley recreation sites have grown indeterminately for several decades and are no longer functional in their role of minimizing human impact. The current condition of many recreation sites is negatively impacting both visitor experience and adjacent Riparian Conservation Areas (RCA) of the San Joaquin River watershed. The current condition of recreation facilities does not meet the desired established in the INF 2019 Land Management Plan (LMP), specifically for destination recreation areas (MA-DRA-DC) and riparian conservation areas (MA-RCA-DC).

The purpose of the proposal is to:

- Enhance the overall visitor experience within Reds Meadow Valley recreation sites
- Ensure recreation assets are designed to support current and future visitation numbers
- Protect and restore riparian conservation areas (RCA) and other ecologically sensitive areas from past and ongoing recreation impacts

Preliminary Proposal

Location

The following seven recreation sites in Reds Meadow Valley are included in the proposal:

- Upper Soda Springs Campground
- Pumice Flat Campground
- Pumice Flat Group Campground
- Pumice Flat Amphitheater
- Minaret Falls Campground
- Reds Meadow Campground
- Agnew Meadows Parking Area

Proposed activities

Proposed activities include reconditioning or replacing of existing fixed recreation assets (i.e., constructed features and/or amenities) to restore the functionality or life of the asset. The removal or relocation of assets may be necessary to accomplish the purpose and need. Existing fixed assets include but are not limited to:

- Campsites/picnic units, paths, and associated amenities (e.g., fire rings, picnic tables, and food lockers)
- Facility roads, gates, and associated drainage management facilities
- Parking facilities and associated amenities (e.g., parking spurs, parking areas, overflow parking areas, barriers)
- Restrooms and waste management facilities
- Interpretive/educational facilities (e.g., amphitheater)
- Bulletin boards, directional and informational signage, and associated amenities
- Utilities (e.g., faucets, water system, electrical)

The proposal also includes eleven restoration actions designed to improve the overall health and functionality of riparian conservation areas (RCA) and other ecologically sensitive areas within or adjacent to the recreation sites. These actions would be implemented in combination, as needed, at each recreation site to achieve restoration goals:

- Removal of Existing Infrastructure
- Lodgepole Pine Thinning
- Decompaction
- Roadway Water Bars and Drainage Improvements
- Stormwater basins
- Surface Water Redirection
- Floodplain Reconnection
- Planting and/or Seeding

- Low Water Crossing and/or Culvert Replacement
- Flow Spreading
- Natural Vegetation Recruitment

The following is a summary of the proposed campsite changes and restoration acreage at each recreation site:

Recreation Site	Existing Number of Campsites	Proposed Number of Campsites	Change	Existing Site Footprint (Acres)	Proposed Site Footprint (Acres)*	Proposed Restoration (Acres)*
Upper Soda Springs Campground	29	29	--	1.97	1.54	1.43
Pumice Flat Campground	17	18	+1	1.76	1.43	1.49
Pumice Flat Group Campground & Amphitheater	4	4	--			
Minaret Falls Campground	23	27	+4	1.68	1.53	1.22
Reds Meadow Campground	54	48	-6	4.63	2.53	2.94
Agnew Meadows Parking Area	--	--		0.48	0.34	0.22
	127	126	-1			7.30

*Proposed restoration acreage does not directly equal the difference between existing and proposed site footprint. Some assets will be relocated from ecological sensitive areas to more durable surfaces, which may increase overall site footprint, while there are other areas adjacent but not included in current site footprints that are proposed for restoration.

Both the proposed renovation and restoration are designed to improve riparian conservation areas (RCA) and other ecologically sensitive areas. Restoration of hydrologic function and native vegetation cover is planned for approximately seven acres, with approximately three acres within RCA. In addition, drainage associated with assets within recreation sites will be also renovated to protect adjacent RCA. Improved drainage is also anticipated to reduce long-term maintenance needs.

As initially designed, the proposal is anticipated to have only a minimal impact on the total site numbers across the five impacted campgrounds (net decrease of only one campsite). Reds Meadow Campground will be the only campground to see a decrease in capacity, where the reduction of six campsites will enable the restoration of approximately three acres of highly productive meadow habitat.

Timeframe

It is anticipated that implementation would begin in Spring 2025 or Spring 2026 (depending on the status of the Reds Meadow Road reconstruction project) and likely continue over two field seasons. Our goal is to sign a Decision Memo in December 2024.

Environmental Compliance

To satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and applicable laws, regulations and policy, the Forest Service plans to prepare a Decision Memo using the following categorical exclusion (CE) categories:

36 CFR 220.6(e)(22): *Construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, or disposal of buildings, infrastructure, or improvements at an existing recreation site, including infrastructure or improvements that are adjacent or connected to an existing recreation site and provide access or utilities for that site. Recreation sites include but are not limited to campgrounds and camping areas, picnic areas, day use areas, fishing sites, interpretive sites, visitor centers, trailheads, ski areas, and observation sites.*

36 CFR 220.6(e)(18): *Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.*

Scoping Process

We value public participation. The intent of scoping is to share our initial proposal and seek information, comments, and assistance from federal, state, and local agencies and individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposal. Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input at any point during the planning process; however, written comments received prior to **June 06, 2024** will be most useful for developing a proposed action.

How to Provide Input

Written comments can be submitted electronically at:

<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?project=66145>

Comments can also be mailed or hand-delivered during business hours (M-F 8:00am – 4:30pm) to: Mammoth Ranger District, Attn: Chris Buehrer, P.O. Box 148, 2510 Main Street, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. Names and addresses of those who provide written scoping comments will be considered part of the public record. **Please submit written comments prior to June 06, 2024.**

Contact Information

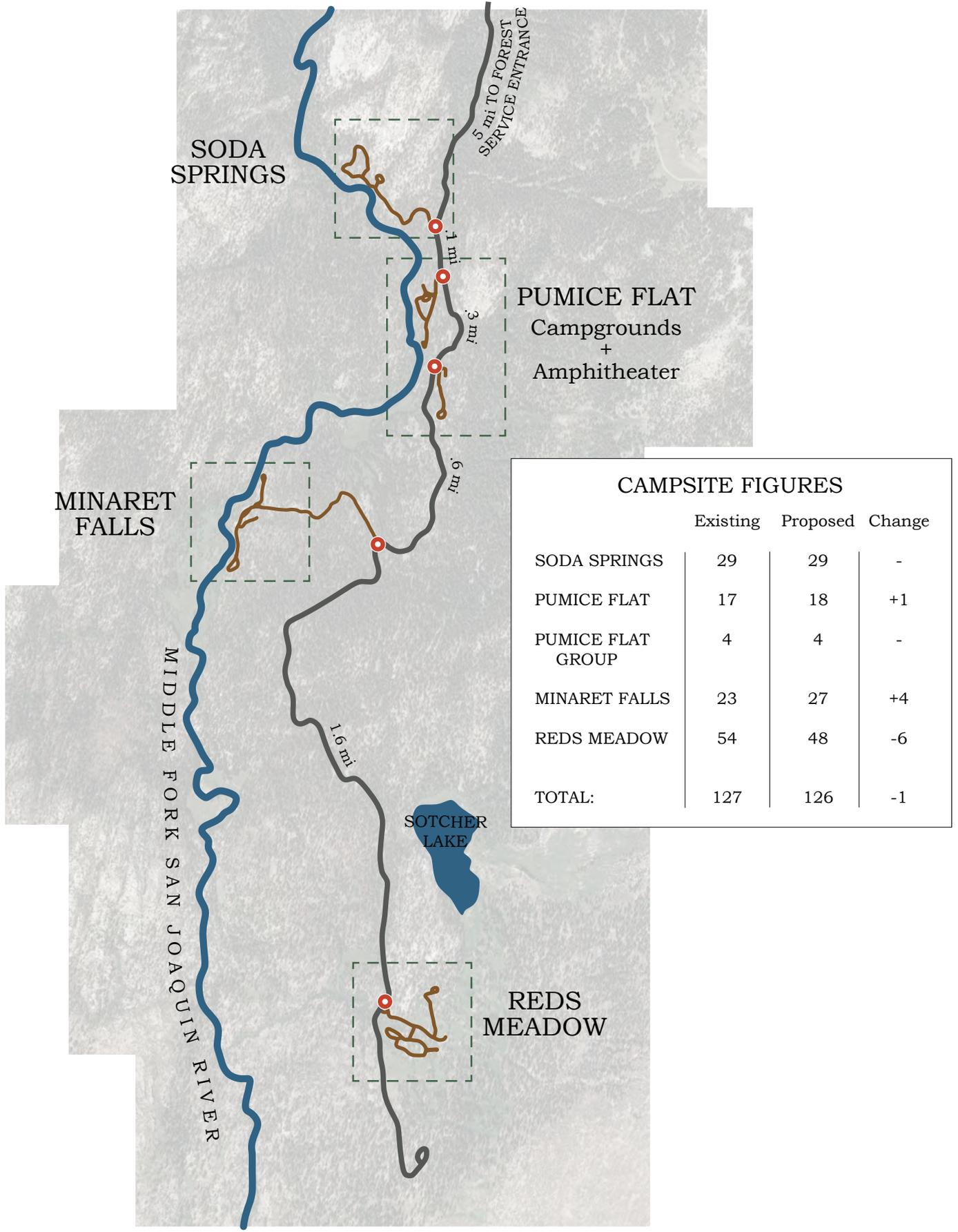
Additional information about the project can be found at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/inyo/?project=66145>

For additional information regarding this project, contact Chris Buehrer, Recreation Staff Officer, Mammoth Ranger District by email at christopher.buehrer@usda.gov, by phone at 760-924-5518.

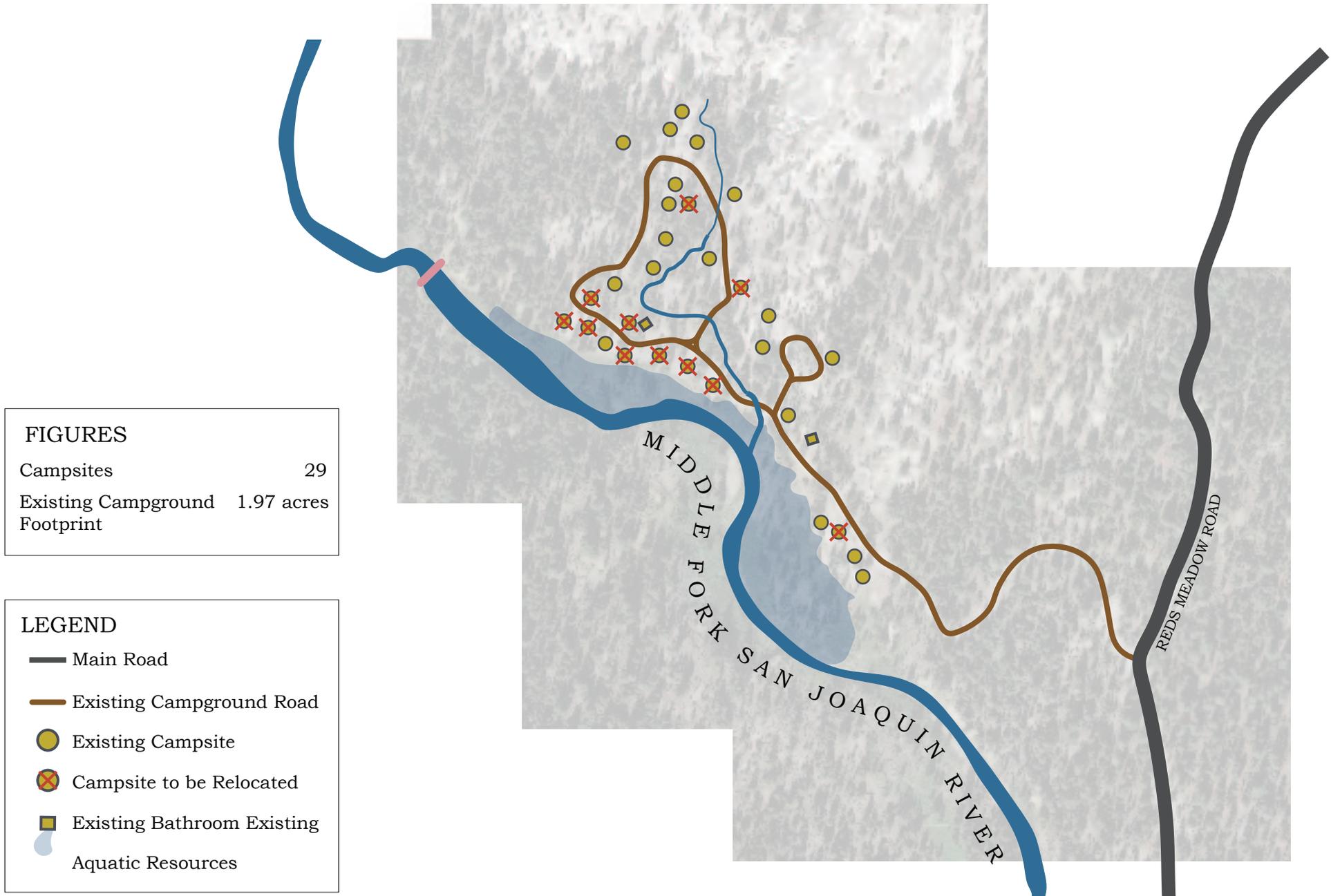
REDS MEADOW VALLEY CAMPGROUNDS

Site Map



UPPER SODA SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

Existing Layout

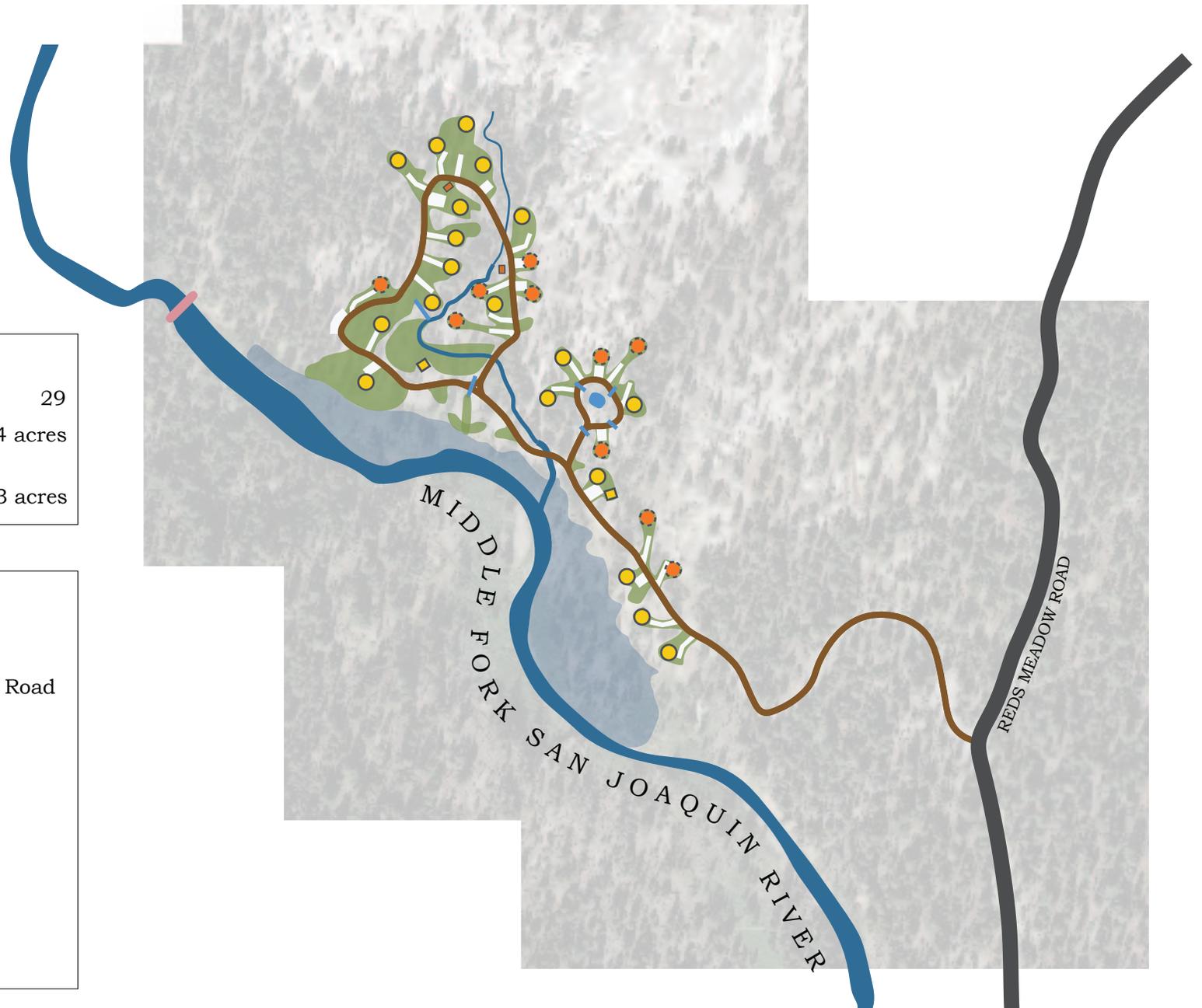


UPPER SODA SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

Proposed Layout + Restoration

FIGURES	
Campsites	29
Proposed Campground Footprint	1.54 acres
Restored Habitat	1.43 acres

LEGEND	
	Main Road
	Existing Campground Road
	Existing Campsite
	Relocated Campsite
	Existing Bathroom
	Additional Bathroom
	Meadow / Riparian Restoration
	Water Management



PUMICE FLAT CAMPGROUND / GROUP CAMPGROUND

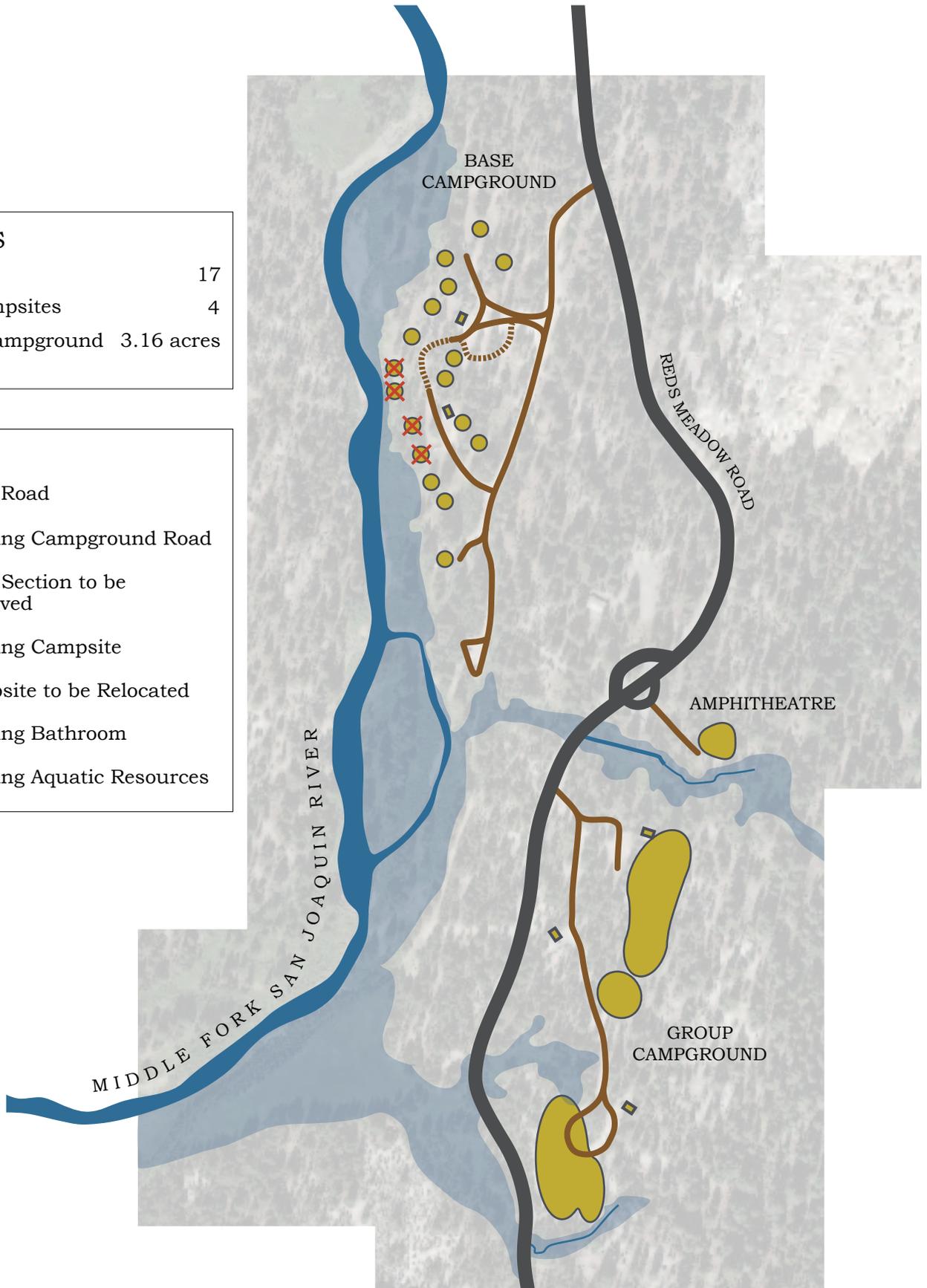
Existing Layout

FIGURES

Campsites	17
Group Campsites	4
Existing Campground Footprint	3.16 acres

LEGEND

-  Main Road
-  Existing Campground Road
-  Road Section to be Removed
-  Existing Campsite
-  Campsite to be Relocated
-  Existing Bathroom
-  Existing Aquatic Resources



PUMICE FLAT CAMPGROUND / GROUP CAMPGROUND

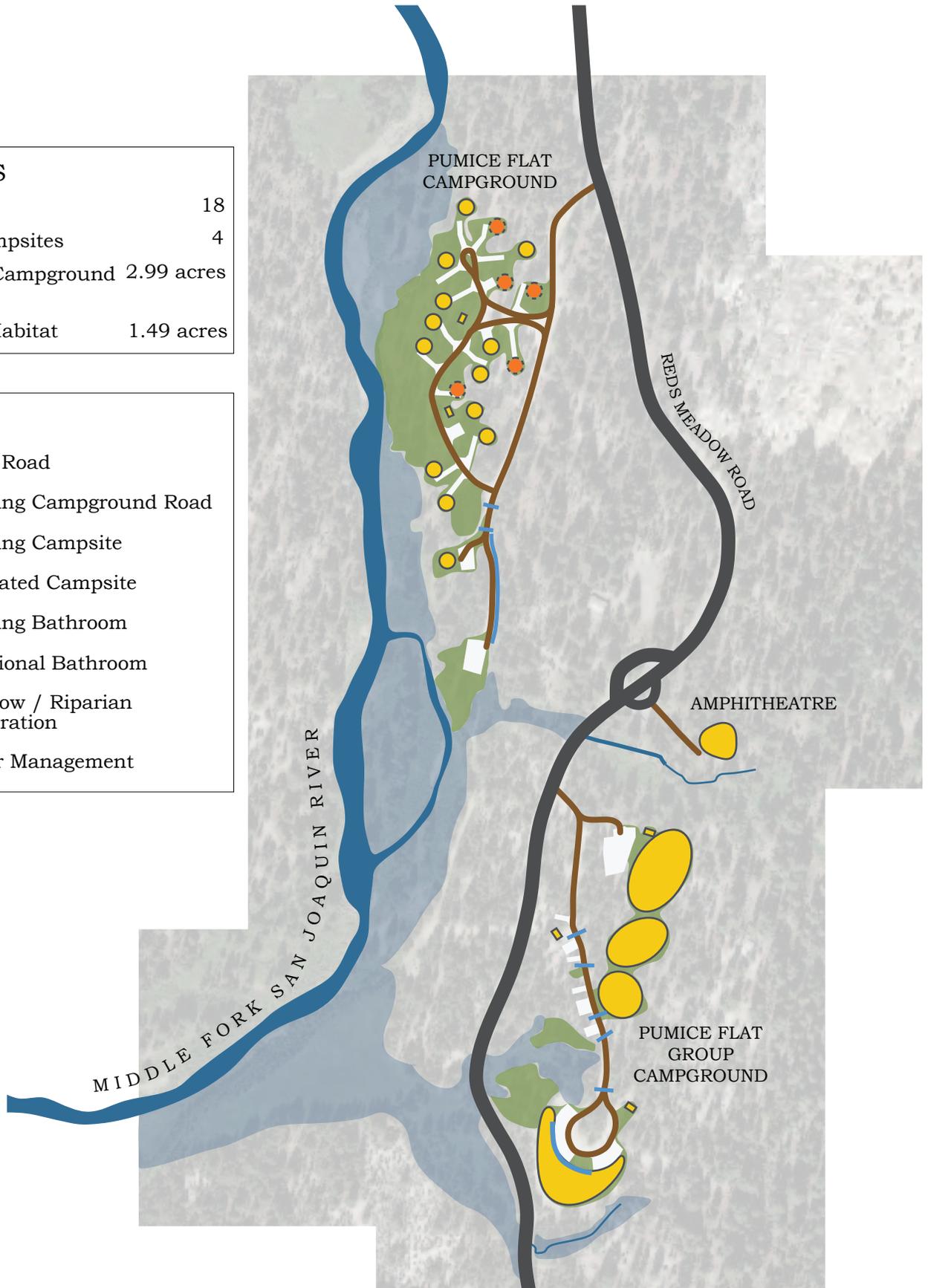
Proposed Layout + Restoration

FIGURES

Campsites	18
Group Campsites	4
Proposed Campground Footprint	2.99 acres
Restored Habitat	1.49 acres

LEGEND

-  Main Road
-  Existing Campground Road
-  Existing Campsite
-  Relocated Campsite
-  Existing Bathroom
-  Additional Bathroom
-  Meadow / Riparian Restoration
-  Water Management



MINARET FALLS CAMPGROUND

Existing Layout

FIGURES

Campsites	23
Existing Campground Footprint	1.68 acres

LEGEND

- Main Road
- Existing Campground Road
- ▤ Road Section to be Removed
- Existing Campsite
- ⊗ Campsite to be Relocated
- Existing Bathroom
- Existing Aquatic Resources



MINARET FALLS CAMPGROUND

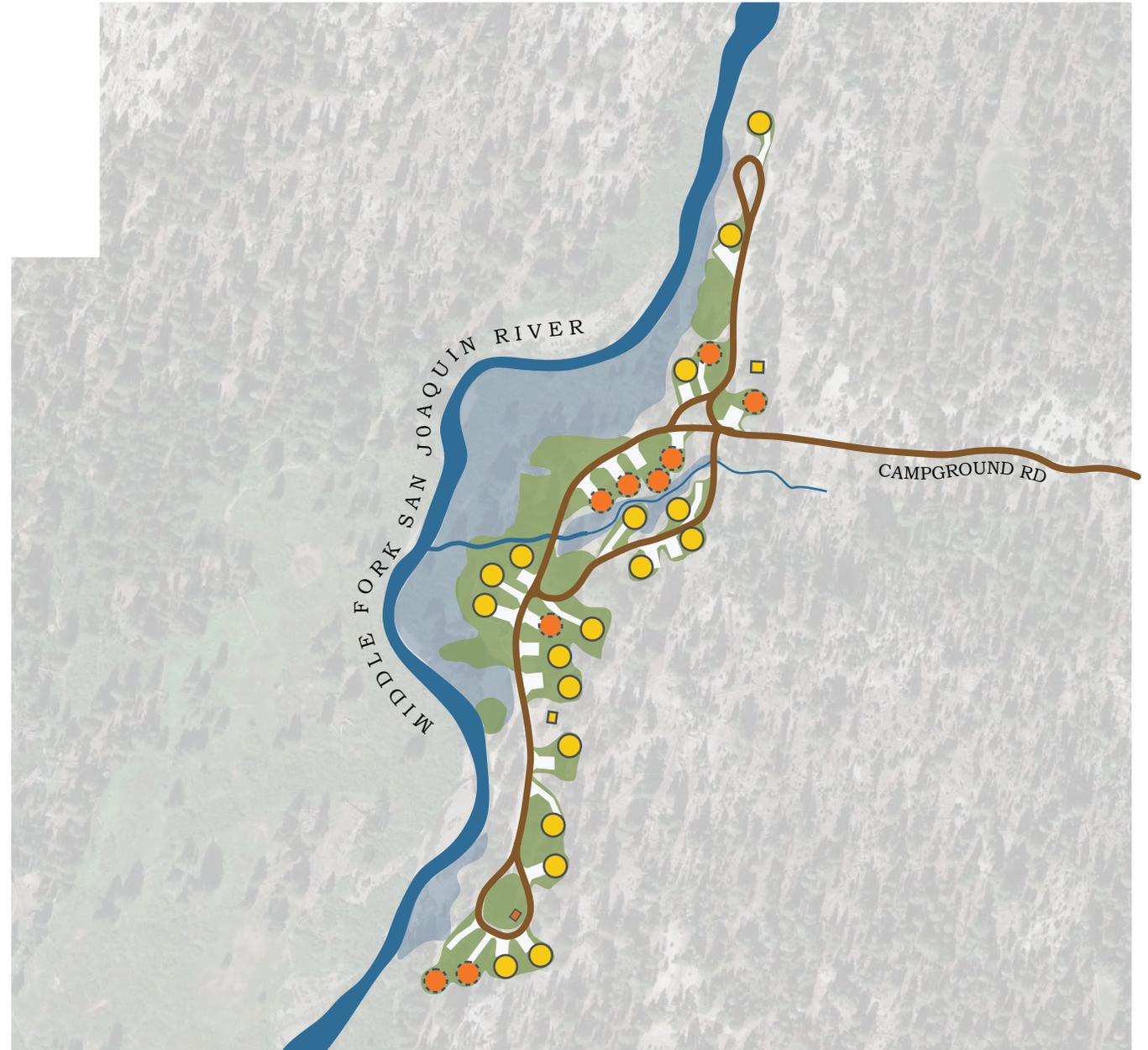
Proposed Layout + Restoration

FIGURES

Campsites	27
Proposed Campground Footprint	1.53 acres
Restored Habitat	1.22 acres

LEGEND

- Main Road
- Existing Campground Road
- Existing Campsite
- Relocated Campsite
- Existing Bathroom
- Additional Bathroom
- Meadow / Riparian Restoration
- Water Management



REDS MEADOW CAMPGROUND

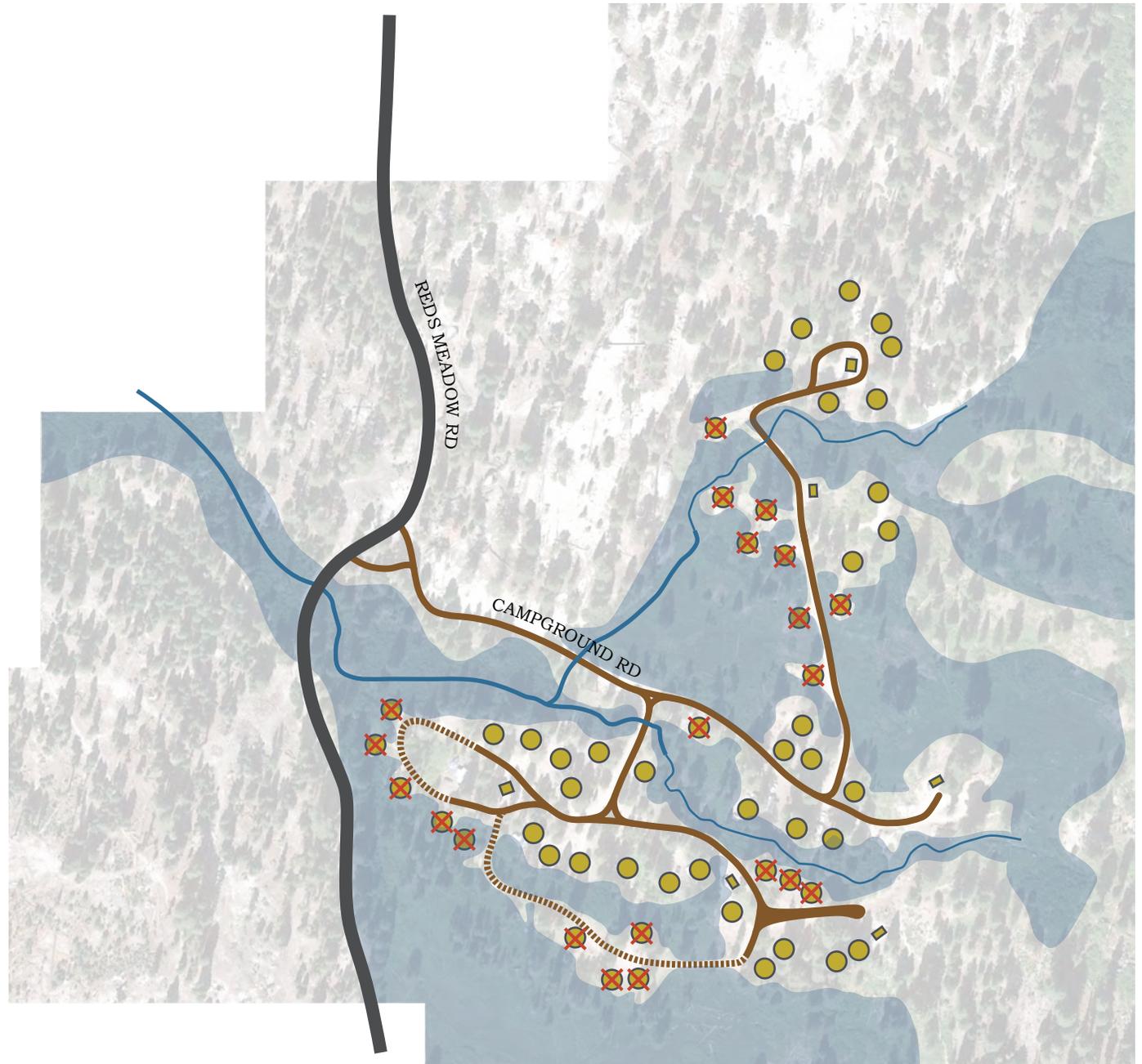
Existing Layout

FIGURES

Campsites	54
Existing Campground Footprint	4.63 acres

LEGEND

- Main Road
- Existing Campground Road
- - - Road Section to be Removed
- Existing Campsite
- ⊗ Campsite to be Relocated
- Existing Bathroom
- Existing Aquatic Resources



REDS MEADOW CAMPGROUND

Proposed Layout + Restoration

FIGURES

Campsites	48
Proposed Campground Footprint	2.53 acres
Restored Habitat	2.94 acres

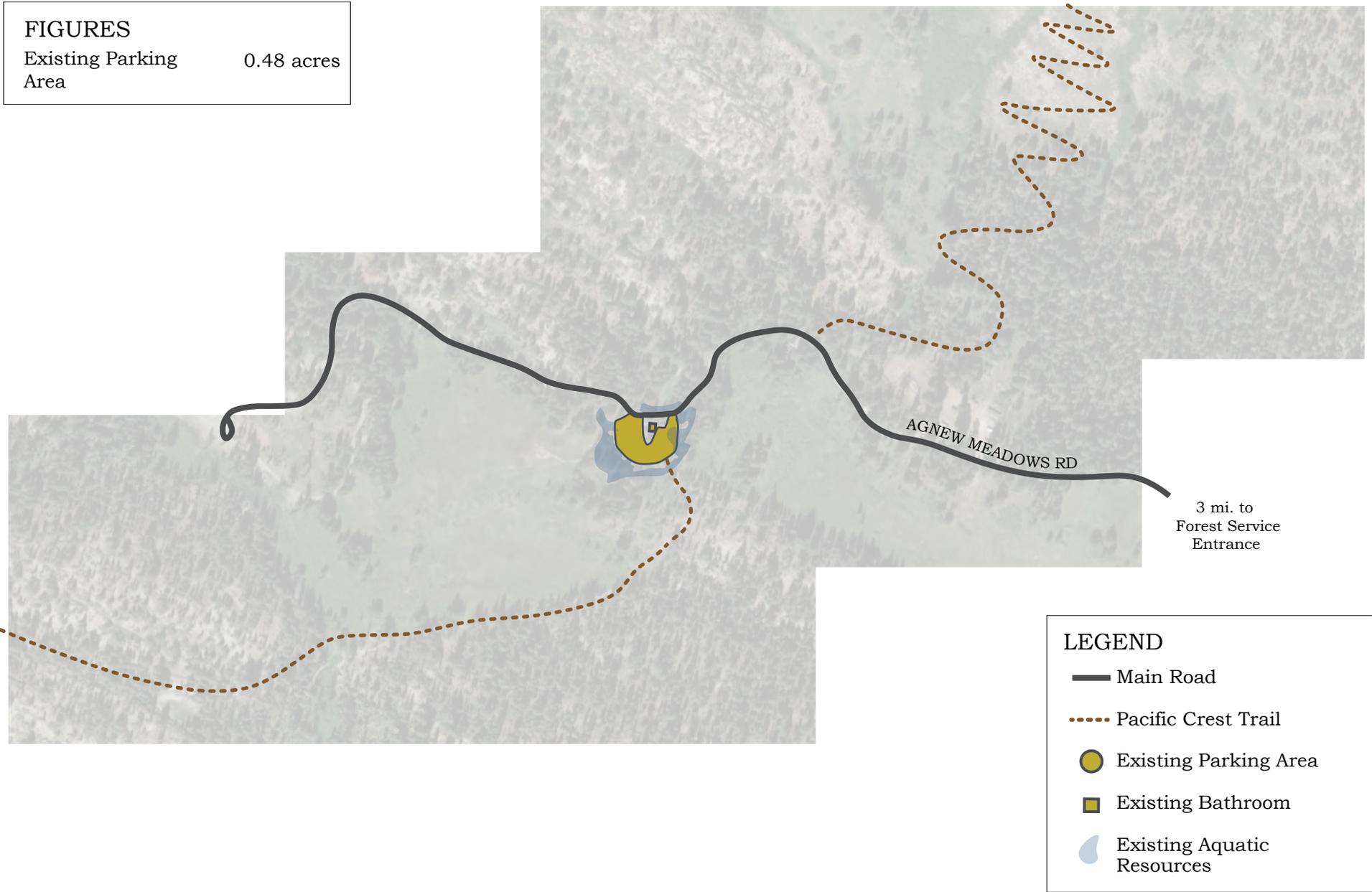
LEGEND

- Main Road
- Existing Campground Road
- Existing Campsite
- Relocated Campsite
- Existing Bathroom
- Meadow / Riparian Restoration
- Water Management



AGNEW MEADOWS PARKING AREA

Existing Layout



AGNEW MEADOWS PARKING AREA

Proposed Layout + Restoration

