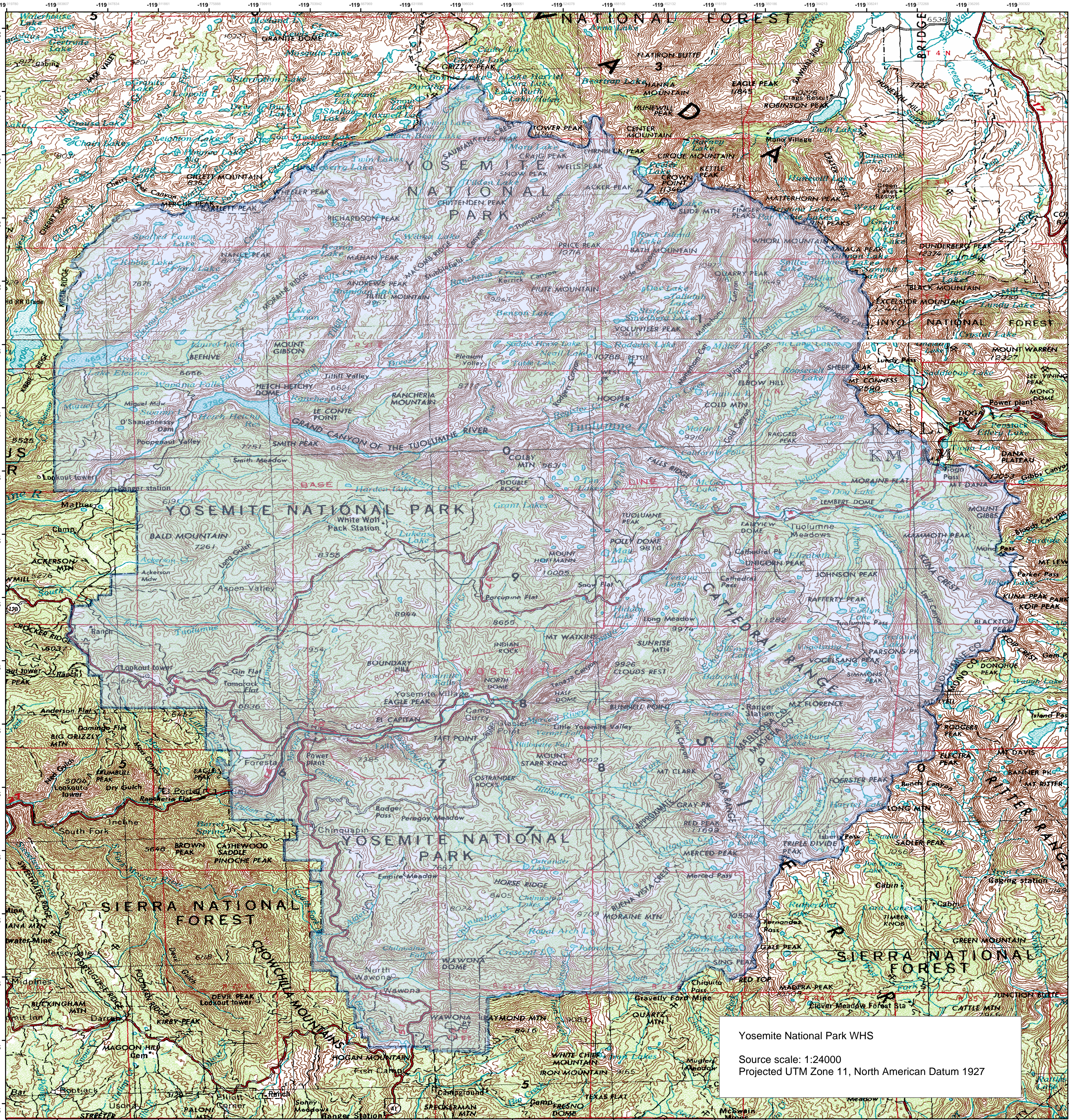


World Heritage Sites of the United States  
Yosemite National Park (308), Inscribed on Februaray 11, 1984  
California

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Yosemite NP World Heritage Area



Early visitors to Yosemite came into the Valley on horse-drawn stages over a dusty road clinging perilously to the steep slopes. Photographer: Boysen, J. T. ca. 1903 (National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection)

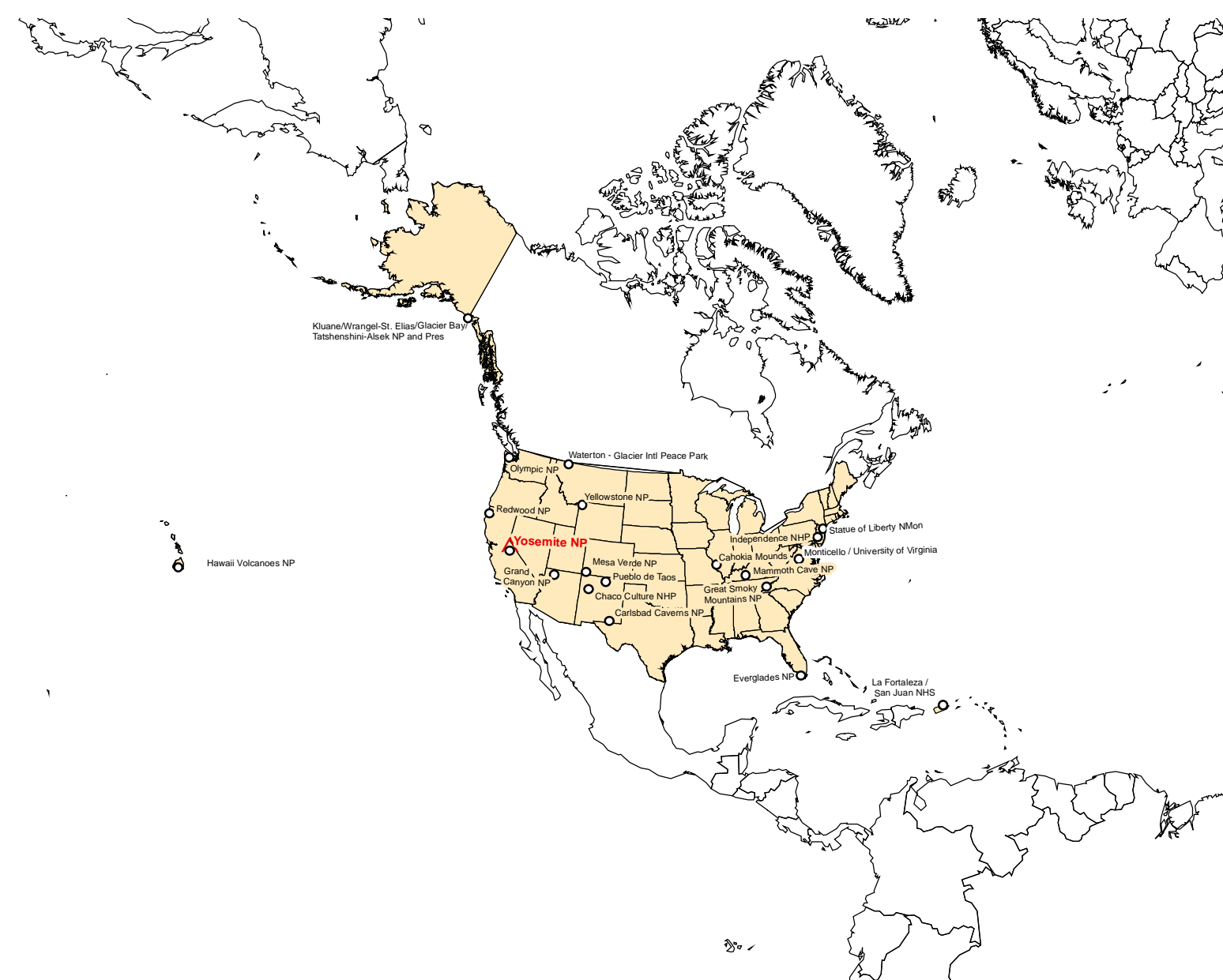
Yosemite National Park: Longitude 119°53' - 119°12' W / Latitude 38°11' - 37°30' N

Yosemite National Park lies on the west slope of the central Sierra Nevada Mountains in the Sierra Cascade Biogeographical Province of North America. Total size is 3079 sq km. The area was previously heavily glaciated and although no glaciers are still existent in the park the marks of their passing are everywhere. Glacial action combined with the granitic bedrock has resulted in unique and pronounced landform features. These include distinctive polished dome structures as well as the related glacial features of hanging valleys, tarns, moraines, and U-shaped valleys. Monolithic granitic blocks such as Half Dome and the perpendicular wall of El Capitan are classic distinctive reflections of the geological history of the area. Elevations vary from 579 m to 3998 m. The park is known for its many waterfalls including the Yosemite Falls and Ribbon Falls, the third highest free-leaping fall in the world (491 m). There are two major rivers which begin in the park and 300 lakes.

There is considerable climatic variation with mean temperatures varying some 20° between valleys and mountains. Precipitation also varies from 1270-2653 mm. In Yosemite are found 5 of the 7 recognized life zones of the US. The variety of flora is reflected in the existence of 6 distinct vegetation zones which are governed by altitudinal variation. Notable are 3 groves of the giant sequoia tree and extensive alpine meadows. There are 1200 species of flowering plants along with various other ferns, bryophytes, and lichens. There is one endemic, 8 threatened or endangered species of plants (US Federal Register).



Yosemite Valley (winter) from Wawona Rd. near Bridal Veil Falls. Photographer: Allan Rinehart, ca. 1937 (National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection)



View of Half Dome. Photographer and date: Unknown (National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection)

It is difficult to discuss the values of Yosemite without reference to John Muir, the early naturalist who is considered the "father" of Yosemite and who wrote eloquently about the park. His various books on Yosemite represent classic statements in the development of the national parks concept and are still often quoted today.

Although it is generally accepted that Yellowstone was the first national park ever established, Yosemite was the first concrete implementation of the national park concept when, 8 years prior to Yellowstone's establishment, Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were collectively the first area ever set aside by a government "for public use, resort, and recreation" in perpetuity. Yosemite's natural beauty was the impetus, then, for the first implementation of the national park concept as we know it today.

Adding to Yosemite's cultural importance are the archeological features found in the area. The 569 sites designated to date including stratified 2000 year-old middens, provide a significant resource for the study of paleo-cultural ecology and environmental change in western North America.



Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, California. Photographer: unknown, ca. 1906 (National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection)

Text extracted from the World Heritage Nomination for Yosemite National Park. Map compiled by Cultural Resources GIS Facility, Historic American Landscapes Survey, Heritage Documentation Program, March 2006

