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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Upper Soda Springs campground is my main area of experience. My main concern is the bridge just outside the campground which was washed out during the runoff from the winter of 2022/2023. All of 2023 it haphazardly sat with one of the 2 main support beams balanced on a single protruding bolt - tempting hikers who otherwise needed to make a miles-long detour to cross the swollen river. I believe the repair of this bridge is paramount to safe recreation for campground users, as it is commonly used by visitors to cross the mighty Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River. Most months of the year, this river is extremely dangerous to cross without that bridge. Furthermore the bridge connects a whole network of trails including the John Muir Trail and Pacific Crest Trail, making it a key piece of infrastructure on a world-famous hiking route. The detour requires hiking several miles on the windy Reds Meadow Road.

As for campsite relocation, that campground does have some sites in danger of eroding into the river, although there is a decent thicket of trees adding stability to the Eastern bank. I believe that moving sites could allow for industrious visitors to carve out a new access point to the river, as they sometimes do, by removing some of the small trees. Sites could potentially be added further back along the campground access road, toward Reds Meadow Road, allowing for more spacious and peaceful site locations.

My final suggestion has to do with providing visitors with better objective information. Your campgrounds already have some wonderful signs - keep it up! The signs that could be added are: information with the length and/or condition of the dirt access roads, whether water or facilities are available, and general rules of conduct like removing trash from bear boxes. Lastly, a location where NPS and partner organizations can post printed updates for campers would be very helpful. The Reds Meadow Campground has a bulletin board for such alerts which have been helpful in disseminating information about construction closures, educational programs, and severe weather alerts.