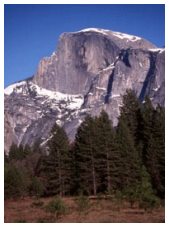

Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc.

December 7, 2009

Dear Yosemite West Property Owner:

We would like to share the results of Yosemite West's 2009 defensible space project, which was accomplished with funding provided by a National Fire Plan grant awarded to YWPHI from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council (see http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm). These results are being mailed to every property owner of record in Yosemite West using grant funds.

All the on-the-ground work was successfully completed in October. The goal of the project was to conduct fuel reduction on approximately 30% of the 293 parcels or 90 parcels (ie, 30% of the 109 acres or 36 acres) in Yosemite West. We exceeded the goal by treating 101 parcels (58 houses and 43 vacant lots) on approximately 37 acres. We estimate the project cut and chipped 1,330 tons of fuel. We want to thank all property owners who participated in this project. If you signed up to participate, your property was successfully treated.

To further measure the project's success, we would also like to share the 2009 RED ZONE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT survey results of all houses in Yosemite West compiled by the Mariposa County Fire Department (MCFD). We are summarizing the survey results here. The RED ZONE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT of Yosemite West was first conducted in 2004 (please refer to Section 5.0 of the *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan)* and a second assessment was conducted in 2008. The assessment identifies and ranks structures that the fire department can safely defend, so the MCFD's goal is to have every house in the higher risk Red and Orange Zones improve to the Yellow Zone.

Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment of Houses in Yosemite West									
Hazard Zone	Hazard Value	Risk Level	2004	2008	2009	Goal	Change 2008 to 2009	2008	2009
			% Structures in Survey					# Structures in Survey	
Green	0 - 34	Least	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0	0
Yellow	35 - 69	Some	24%	23%	40%	⇨ 100%	17%	25	53
Orange	70 - 104	High	64%	57%	51%	0%	(6%)	61	69
Red	105 +	Extreme	12%	20%	9%	0%	(11%)	21	12
								107	134

Here are some key points from the 2009 RED ZONE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT. The data clearly demonstrates that everyone who participated in the 2009 defensible space project improved their Hazard Value whereas nonparticipants showed zero improvement. We will be targeting the latter for participation in the 2010 defensible space project.

2009 Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment Overview	**2008**	**2009**	**Change**	
			Participants	**Non-participants**
% 2009 defensible space project participants whose Hazard Value improved			100%	0%
% total homeowners whose Hazard Value improved	n/a	37%	37%	0%
# houses in Red Zone	21	12	9 fewer	0
% houses in the high-risk Red and Orange Zones still requiring action by homeowners (goal = 0%)	77%	60%	17% fewer	0%
# houses in Yellow Zone	25	53	28 more	0
% houses in Yellow Zone (goal = 100%)	23%	40%	17% more	0%
median Hazard Value (decrease = improvement)	79	75	(4)	0
average Hazard Value point improvement median Hazard Value point improvement most improved Hazard Value point improvement			13 7 51	0 0 1
% of total homeowners whose Hazard Value remained the same or worsened (yes, you can ignore the trees, but they keep growing)			0%	48%
# houses remaining in the Red Zone	21	12	0	12
# newly constructed houses since 2004 in high-risk Red and Orange Zones			0	4
highest (most risk) Hazard Value	139	139	99	139
% houses with less than 100 feet of defensible space and not in full compliance with PRC§4291, the state law requiring 100 feet of defensible space from structures	n/a	70%		
% houses with vegetation near the roof (i.e., branches within 5 feet, overhanging branches, and/or debris on the roof itself) that needs to be removed	76%	70%	6% decrease	
# houses without adequate defensible space	n/a	94[1]		
% houses that do *not* have or have only non-reflective street address signage *visible at street level*.	63%	51%	12% decrease	

[1] Not all of the 2009 participant houses achieved the goal of creating adequate defensible space. The reasons for this shortfall include property owners flagging ladder fuels as "Do not cut," branches within 5 feet of the structure and more than 15 feet above ground beyond the project's scope, and large dead trees on the property.

The RED ZONE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT focuses on parcels with houses. There is no equivalent assessment for vacant parcels. However, fuel reduction on vacant parcels is essential for structural protection and communitywide defensible space. We want to thank all the vacant parcel owners who participated in the 2009 defensible space project; the treatment on these lots is very attractive, opening the forest for views, birds and wildlife.

Defensible Space Grants Overview					
Fuel Treatment	**2009 Grant**			**2010 Grant**	**Total (Approximate)**
Description	**Goal**	**Actual**	**Goal Exceeded**	**Goal**	**Goal**
% parcels	30%	35%	5%	50%	80%
# parcels	90	101	11	147	237
# parcels with houses	45	58	13	74	119
# vacant parcels	45	43[2]	(2)	73	118
# acres	36	37	1	55	91
% acres	30%	34%	4%	50%	80%

What the grant funding can help property owners do

During spring 2010, we will be contacting all property owners of record with details of the 2010 defensible space project with participation details. The fuel reduction to be conducted under the 2010 grant includes removing and chipping ladder fuels, coniferous trees less than 6 inches in diameter at breast height, and shrubs and trees near driveways and parking areas to create more vertical and horizontal spacing between shrubs and trees.

What property owners need to do for themselves

The grant funding cannot cover all the fuel reduction that needs to be done. Property owners need to address the following fuel reduction tasks with their own labor and/or at their own expense:

- ➜ remove pine needles and pine cones all the way to property lines;
- ➜ remove accumulated duff more than 3 inches thick;
- ➜ limb branches higher than 15 feet above ground and/or that are within 5 feet of or overhanging structures (this work typically involves climbing trees);

[2] Six of the participating vacant parcels had fuel loading that was heavier than anticipated, and these six parcels will be further treated during the 2010 project.

➜ remove dead and dying trees;
➜ reduce the dead and downed wood on the ground, which cannot be chipped; and
➜ decrease the stem density[3] per acre.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to create communitywide defensible space and a Fire Safe community. Please email firesafety@yosemitewest.org with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

John Mock, Ph.D.
Chair, YWPHI Fire Safety Committee

[3] "The current forest has up to 1,000 tree stems per acre. In natural conditions, there would be only between 100 and 200 stems per acre, reducing to only fifty large trees per acre" (*Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan*, page 7). Decreasing stem density will improve overall forest health in addition to reducing risk from wildland fire.