

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors



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July 2, 2019

Dear Yosemite West Property Owner,

I want to make you aware of a recently initiated conversation on potential collaborative efforts that may benefit Yosemite West property owners. As you know, a number of organizations have connections to the broader Yosemite West community. For that reason, I've been drafting a Memorandum of Understanding that would include organizations willing to participate in conversations about efficient, cost effective delivery of various services to the community. Thus far, Yosemite Conservancy, Yosemite National Park and NatureBridge have agreed in principle to be signatories to the MOU. When we've clarified the relationships among those parties, I intend to invite Scenic Wonders, Inc. and Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc. to also consider being signatories. I'm also interested in identifying any other organizations that might wish to participate.

The organizations named above have access to resources and expertise that could be applied to address issues that have confronted Yosemite West for years. As the Mariposa County Supervisor representing Yosemite West, I am committed to asking questions about what resources exist and how they might be made available to optimize benefits to the Yosemite West community. Those issues include development of a second water source for the community, emergency medical response, a fire station on the NatureBridge campus, additional water storage for fire suppression, road maintenance, snow plowing, vegetation management and access to the Yosemite West community via Henness Ridge Road.

In turn, Yosemite West has a functioning potable water system, a waste water treatment system that needs improvement and roads that are not in good repair. The community and the County know we need to find ways to ensure the continued viability of all three systems as well as addressing other community needs.

In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board, the agency responsible for promulgating and enforcing ground and surface water quality and use in California, is consistently requiring additional monitoring and reporting for public and private water systems. Due to financial and compliance issues associated with smaller systems, the agency has also been encouraging consolidation to create more economically sustainable entities that are more capable of meeting regulatory requirements and producing safe water quality and waste water disposal.

I hope you'll be part of the conversations necessary to find solutions to these challenges. We need your input to develop those solutions and your consent before any project involving use of Yosemite West resources can be implemented.

Mike Reynolds, Yosemite National Park Superintendent, and representatives of Yosemite Conservancy as well as County staff will be available to meet with you on July 26th at 10:00 AM at the NatureBridge Campus on Henness Ridge Road. As background, Mike has prepared the enclosed information.

The July 26th meeting will be the beginning of the many conversations that will be necessary to work through the opportunities for collaboration. You are also welcome to attend the Yosemite West District Advisory Committee meetings. The two remaining meetings for 2019 are scheduled for September 12th at the Library in Wawona and December 12th at the Wawona Community Center.

Please plan to attend the July 26th meeting and, in the meantime, don't hesitate to contact me at (209) 742-1242 or via email at rsmallcombe@mariposacounty.org.

Best regards,

Rosemarie Smallcombe
Mariposa County District 1 Supervisor

To: Rosemarie Smallcomb, Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
Cc: Yosemite West District Advisory Committee
Mike Healy, Mariposa County Director of Public Works & Transportation
Kristina Rylands, NatureBridge Yosemite Regional Director
Jerry Edelbrock, Yosemite Conservancy Chief Operating Officer
From: Michael Reynolds, Superintendent Yosemite National Park
Date: June 27, 2019
RE: Yosemite West water request for National Environmental Science Center

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On June 13, 2019, the Mariposa County department of public works met with the Yosemite West District Advisory Committee. The purpose of that meeting was to share a request from the NPS to explore the potential of becoming a customer of the Yosemite West water system. A permanent water supply is needed to provide ongoing service to the National Environmental Science Center (NESC), operated by our education nonprofit park partner, NatureBridge. To be clear, no decision has been made, and this is just one of several possibilities the NPS is considering. I'm currently weighing a number of options and believe this might be a partnership win for both the NPS and Yosemite West community.

I want to be as transparent and open to collaboration as possible. You and your constituents may have several questions. Here are some I would like to address immediately:

WHY IS WATER NEEDED NOW? DIDN'T THE NPS PLAN FOR WATER WHEN THE CAMPUS WAS DESIGNED? In order to create an area solution at Chinquapin, the NPS established a well and 230,000 gallons of water storage at the NESC to accommodate the Chinquapin comfort station, the NPS ranger quarters, and NatureBridge campus. When drilled in 2006, it produced ample water quantity. The well had a sustained production of 28 gallons per minute. Draw down testing and stream flow monitoring on other wells and Indian Creek were independently conducted during the pump test in order to assess impacts on Yosemite West's water supply. The Well Supply Study produced by Ken Schmidt indicated there was no effect on Yosemite West water supply as a result of the pump test. With prolonged years of drought, the well's production has diminished significantly. A new water solution is needed, particularly for the NatureBridge campus, the opening of which is on hold until a permanent source can be identified. The first phase of the

campus (56 out of 224 total student beds) is not able to open to students until a state approved water supply is in place.

HOW MUCH WATER WOULD BE NEEDED? Per the 2010 Record of Decision on the Yosemite Environmental Education Center Final Environmental Impact Statement, the campus would be built to a capacity of 224 student beds, along with 4 staff housing units. The campus was designed as a Net Zero Energy facility built to a LEED Platinum standard. It possesses an on-site state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant along with a greywater recycling system. Water conservation strategies, including low-flow fixtures and greywater system, will reduce the current consumption at the Crane Flat campus of 25 gallons/person/day. At full build-out of 224 beds, the campus would consume approximately 3,500 gallons per day.

All utilities infrastructure at the campus was provided by NatureBridge. The NPS is responsible for providing water delivery, distribution, and storage. Currently, two storage tanks totaling 200K gallons of water storage are in place and operational. This provides capacity for not only potable water but fire suppression.

WHO WOULD BE THE CUSTOMER? The NESC is a facility of the NPS, with NatureBridge as the operating partner. After nearly 50 years of successful partnership, NatureBridge would operate and maintain the campus as part of an existing cooperative agreement. Currently, NatureBridge pays the NPS for water provided to all of its facilities.

HOW IS THE YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY INVOLVED? Currently, the NPS is only considering a water option for the NESC facility. While the Yosemite Conservancy has purchased land in Yosemite West with the intent of developing employee housing, they are early in the conceptual phase and plans have not yet been developed.

HOW DOES THE YOSEMITE WEST COMMUNITY BENEFIT? With the NPS partnering with the Yosemite West community, along with NatureBridge, we have a collective desire to be good neighbors. Already, the campus was an instrumental base of operations during the Ferguson Fire. We anticipate that continuing into the future. In addition, there are other ways that the NPS and NatureBridge can come forward as neighbors in good faith:

- A dedicated 2-bay fire station is part of the approved NESC design. In addition to housing NPS wildland fire crews, this facility could provide structure fire protection to the greater Yosemite West community and significantly reduce response time. Mariposa County officials have already discussed the potential for an ambulance bay. NatureBridge, in consultation with the NPS as senior partner, is currently reviewing the next phase of the project.
- The NPS is willing to explore other ways that it could augment Mariposa County services to improve roads, plowing, or other infrastructure in Yosemite West.
- A reliable domestic water source will guarantee 230K gallons of water stored in the community at the NESC water tanks. This would significantly increase the standing water supply in the event of an emergency, as proven during the Ferguson Fire.
- If approved to be brought onto the Yosemite West water system, the NPS would provide a reliable stream of revenue and system maintenance for Mariposa County.

I appreciate the ability to share with you the beginnings of what I hope will be a collaborative conversation. If the community determines that this is not a worthwhile endeavor for Yosemite West, my team will turn its attention to other water solutions.

On July 26 at 10:00am, the NPS, NatureBridge, and Yosemite Conservancy have been invited to present more information at a public meeting to be held at the NESC. In the meantime, I look forward to discussing this further with you and other Yosemite West constituents. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

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Michael Reynolds
Superintendent
Yosemite National Park
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