

Answers to questions from the August 31st community discussion at Yosemite West regarding the proposed Environmental Education Campus

Additional questions may be directed to Jen Nersesian at jen_nersesian@nps.gov.

1. **How would sewage be dealt with?** Wastewater would be dealt with on-site using septic systems. An assimilative soil capacity test was conducted to assess the ability of the ground to deal with the waste water load, and the test indicated that the soil composition has good percolation rates. Two separate systems have been proposed allowing rotation of leach fields on the site.
2. **How do you know that water is available and that it would not affect Yosemite West?** A production well was sunk near Chinquapin and a sustained pump test (more than 14 days) was conducted in the fall of 2006. The well has a sustained production of 28 gallons per minute. Water levels were monitored in a deep well at Yosemite West during the test pumping (the well at Yosemite West is 4100 feet southwest of the production well and is 930 feet deep). Water level in Yosemite West well declined 2.8 feet during the test pumping. The water level recovered 0.5 feet during the first 3 days after pumping stopped and then remained constant. This type of drawdown in the Yosemite West well would not affect its production capacity.

If we assume that the Chinquapin well is pumped continuously (24 hours/day) for an entire year, the predicted drawdown at the Yosemite West well would be less than 10 feet. In reality, the Chinquapin well would not be pumped continuously and therefore the drawdown at the Yosemite West well would be far less than 10 feet. Even ten feet of drawdown would not affect its production capacity; thus there would be no appreciable impact on the Yosemite West well.

Scheduled well pumping would be 7 hours/day at 28 gpm in current plan.

3. **Can you supply us with a copy of the well test results?** Due to a confidentiality agreement between Yosemite Institute (who conducted the test) and a private landowner, the results cannot yet be released. However, they will be made available when the draft plan is released, which is anticipated in the first quarter of 2009.
4. **Has the National Park Service (NPS) approved a facility design yet, and how do they decide?** The NPS recently decided on a preferred alternative (since the Labor Day weekend discussion at Yosemite West), which is the Henness Ridge site. This preferred alternative will be assessed in the plan and will be available for public review and comment in the first quarter of 2009. Schematic designs will be included in the draft. Design details are still being refined, but will be designed to fit into the park's historical context.

5. **Is it an “either/or” on the alternative or could Crane Flat and Henness Ridge combination be used?** The alternatives under consideration do not include one where Yosemite Institute would be at both sites.
6. **How are kids managed and who watches during evening times?** YI runs a tightly structured program in which students are monitored by instructors, teachers or chaperones at all times. Evening time is scheduled around dining and programs/presentations. Students are not permitted to leave the site at any time without an adult. In the more than 35 years at Crane Flat there has not been an issue with fire safety, theft or vandalism in the nearby campsite, housing units or gas station.
7. **How has noise been assessed and would it travel up to Henness Circle?** Yosemite Institute groups are chaperoned and limited to 15 or less, including 2-3 adults. The Institute will have clear protocols in place for behavior to manage noise levels. A trail study was conducted to look at impacts of student groups and did not find evidence that student groups were problematic or negatively impacting the experience of others.
8. **Would the Henness Ridge facility be larger than the current one?** Yes, it would be larger. The present facility at Crane Flat has 84 total beds (76 student and 8 staff beds). The Henness Ridge alternative would move 100 beds currently in the Valley and the existing 76 student beds at Crane Flat to the Ridge, and there would be 48 additional beds added to this for a total of 224 student beds.
9. **Can you give us more specifics on the fire station?** What is currently under consideration is having a wildland fire crew stationed at the Henness Ridge site during the fire season when they are not called off to other fires. A firehouse is being designed to accommodate this. Expanding it to include a structural engine is also being discussed, but this would likely not be manned by the NPS.
10. **How is NPS feeling about the concepts--are they on board?** The project alternatives have been developed by the NPS. Thus, all action alternatives propose solutions the agency could accept. The environmental education campus plays an important role in helping the NPS to accomplish our core mission by providing environmental education to diverse groups and fostering future stewards of Yosemite.
11. **Would there be a commercial store on the site?** No.
12. **What are the ages of the students?** Predominantly 7th and 8th Grade students are served by Yosemite Institute.
13. **Who pays the fire crews in the summer?** Any NPS fire crew salary would be an NPS responsibility.
14. **What is the adult-to-child ratio on the trips?** Instructional groups are around 15 total, with one YI instructor, up to two accompanying teachers/parent chaperones, and generally 12 students.

15. **What trails would be used to avoid contact with Henness Circle?** Yosemite Institute groups would not access trails from within Yosemite West.
16. **Is a fully restored Fire Tower part of this proposal?** This is currently not included in the plan, and would need to be an independent project. Funding has not yet been allocated for such a project.
17. **How would traffic be surveyed and how would safety be ensured on the turn into the site?** A traffic study has been undertaken and the level of service (“A”) would not change. The campus entrance would be designed with safety as the utmost priority.