



Yosemite West Property &
Homeowners, Inc.
www.yosemitewest.org

In the West

Newsletter
January 2005

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President's Message

by Debby Hagan, YWPHI President (2004-2005)

There are about 116 homes and 48 condominium units in Yosemite West. In the near future after the sewer improvements are completed, building on vacant lots will commence again. It is up to all of us to get involved in community activities to help maintain and improve our neighborhood. I encourage all of you who have not already done so to join YWPHI, and to actively participate in the efforts to improve our community.

During the past year, many YWPHI members have donated their time and expertise to aid our community, with financial support provided by YWPHI and your dues. Larry Anstead created the new Information station map with the help of Todd Yates, while Ken Wall designed and constructed the stately map housing. In addition, Ken replaced the broken windows in the mailbox shed and built a large mail-sorting shelf inside. Kim O'Neil set up a new and tremendously improved YWPHI website in November 2003. John Mock has taken the lead as chair and reinvigorated our Fire Safety Committee. Some of the results include resuming fire safety training, building new fire hose houses, which was managed by Steve Yates, and creating a shaded fuel break along the entrance road to Yosemite West. Another successful fire safety event was the annual community clean-up over Memorial Day weekend. Last but not least, YWPHI held its first ever Holiday Home Tour this December. Helen Yates, Grace Bartel and Kay Pitts organized the event and opened their homes to all of us. The Misener, Ruiz, Cofer, and Hornacek families also welcomed neighbors to their homes. The response to the tour was so positive that we plan to do it again next year.

Many other people have contributed to keeping YWPHI running by participating on the Board of Directors or as committee chairs. Last year's board members (2003-2004) included Linda Andrews, Larry Anstead, Grace Bartel, Sharon Haley, Carol Ruiz, Helen Yates and myself. Our committee chairs were Harry Hagan (newsletter editor), John Mock (fire safety), Kim O'Neil (webmaster) and Joan Ulyatt (treasurer and membership). I would like to thank everyone for their significant efforts in helping our community. Special thanks are due to Harry Hagan who is retiring as newsletter editor after six years of exceptional service.

For the new year, YWPHI will concentrate on activities which improve fire safety, encouraging everyone (including lot owners) to carry out fuel reduction on their property, educating homeowners about creating defensible space, and updating the emergency telephone tree. We will continue to sponsor the community clean-up during Memorial Day weekend, our annual meeting and pot luck on Labor Day weekend, and the Holiday Home Tour in December.

We currently have one vacancy on the YWPHI Board of Directors, so please contact me (president@yosemitewest.org) if you're interested in joining the board. Let us know if you want to volunteer your time, expertise, or ideas to improve your community - we can always use your help!

YWPHI Membership

We thank our renewing members and urge everyone to send in their \$25 annual household dues. We invite everyone who is not presently a member to join. YWPHI is working on many projects that benefit the entire community and welcomes support from everyone with an interest in Yosemite West. If you have a new neighbor or meet someone who recently bought a lot invite them to join YWPHI. You can download a membership form at www.yosemitewest.org/members.htm or call YWPHI President, Debby Hagan at ☎ (415) 834-1914 to receive a copy by mail. YWPHI represents the community, so please get involved and let us know what you would like us to be doing.

YWPHI Activities in 2004

YWPHI members donated their time and labor to make all these activities happen. Your dues cover only out-of-pocket expenses. Please continue your support!

» Around the Neighborhood

- replaced broken windows and added mail-sorting shelf to the mailbox shed
- designed and installed the new Information station map

» Informing the Community

- printed and mailed two YWPHI newsletters and sewer bond updates to the community
- managed the YWPHI community website www.yosemitewest.org

» Addressing Fire Safety

- conducted three community fire safety training sessions
- organized the Memorial Day weekend clean-up of yard debris
- acted as liaison between the community and local agencies
- promoted fire safety education by arranging

for U.S. Forest Service, NPS and Mariposa County Fire Department personnel to attend the Memorial Day weekend picnic and two fire safety trainings

- assisted Mariposa County Fire Department in conducting a GIS survey of Yosemite West
- designed and installed three metal fire hose houses
- conducted an inventory of fire safety equipment owned by YWPHI and now housed in fire hose houses
- acquired donations of fire hoses, nozzles and hardware from NPS and Mariposa County Fire Department
- conducted an inventory of fire hydrants to remove debris and brush
- coordinated with Mariposa County Public Works Department to purchase and install new reflective markers for hydrants
- attended a grant-writing workshop held by California Fire Safe Council
- arranged with NPS to complete fuel reduction along the entrance road into Yosemite West
- prepared and signed a Memorandum of Agreement with private property owners adjacent to Yosemite West and NPS for cooperation on fuel reduction

» Promoting Community Spirit

- arranged the Memorial Day and Labor Day weekend picnics
- organized the Holiday Home Tour

About YWPHI

YWPHI was established to promote and protect the best interest of the owners of land used for residential purposes in Yosemite West. YWPHI shall strive for the improvement and betterment of all facilities and services within the area, and shall promote and encourage maximum community and civic spirit, and foster good will and friendship among all residents of Yosemite West.

A Name, New Look & e-Newsletter

The YWPHI newsletter has a name - *In the West*. With the name comes the voice of more of the community. Many thanks go to these contributors to the first edition of *In the West*: YWPHI Board of Directors' members Debby Hagan, Helen Yates, Grace Bartel and Kim O'Neil; residents Harry Hagan, Don Pitts, John Mock and Moose Mutlow; and NPS employee Deb Schweizer.

We will endeavor to publish *In the West* on a quarterly basis with the issues coming out January 1st, April 1st, July 1st, and October 1st. In order to make this publishing schedule possible, we need to reduce the costs of producing and distributing the newsletter. We can easily do this by sending the newsletter via email (in the form of a PDF file) to as many members as possible.

Please email the newsletter editor at newsletter@yosemitewest.org to sign up to receive an e-newsletter. (If you do not email, we will continue to mail a hard copy to you.) We encourage everyone with email to sign up to receive an e-newsletter.

YWPHI Website

Celebrating its 1st anniversary in November 2004, our website www.yosemitewest.org has fast become the go-to place for the latest news and information. Recently, the website has been averaging more than 2,000 hits per month with the highest visitation to date being more than 2,500 hits per month. The website is updated almost on a weekly basis and a feature on the News page called "What's New on the Website" makes it easy to get to the latest postings. It's our hope that the website will enable YWPHI to communicate relevant information in a timely manner.

YWPHI Fire Safety Committee

Fire Hose Houses

YWPHI owns fire hoses, nozzles and related equipment that is for emergency use until a fire company can arrive. Yosemite National Park (YNP) and Mariposa County Fire Department very generously donated additional fire hose and hardware, giving us enough equipment to stock four locations in Yosemite West. Three red steel fire hose houses augment the previous single storage site, which is on Ken Wall's porch. That site (at the southeast corner of Henness Circle) holds our largest stash of hose and equipment inside large trash cans. The three new red hose houses are secured with a combination lock and located on Yosemite Park Way:

- below the intersection of Henness Ridge Road, near the top of the fire road connecting Yosemite Park Way to Buck Brush Lane;
- near the intersection of Choke Cherry, at the top of the fire road connecting Yosemite Park Way and Manzanita Lane; and
- adjacent to the fire hydrant located between 7244 and 7254.

Fire Safety Training

More than thirty individuals here in the West participated in three training sessions on May 1st, June 5th and September 11th. Everyone practiced how to open fire hydrants and operate a fire hose and other fire equipment owned by YWPHI. The volunteers who attended the training and qualified to operate a fire hose can receive the combination to the fire hose houses.

We expect to resume monthly training again in spring 2005. Check the monthly calendar on the YWPHI website at www.yosemitewest.org/calendar.htm and look for notices on our community bulletin board at the mailbox shed for dates. Come learn how to take an active role in protecting your property from fire.

Fuel Reduction

YWPHI requested the National Park Service (NPS) to add our community access road to their 2004 fuel reduction work. They did, and it looks great! This is an example of what we hope will be accomplished along the entire exterior perimeter of our community. Residents and lot owners are encouraged to take steps to make their own property fire safe by removing downed branches and logs, limbing trees up to fifteen feet, removing small trees (less than six inches in diameter at chest height) especially white fir and incense cedar and flammable shrubs like manzanita and ceanothus (buck brush). Visit www.yosemitewest.org/firesafe.htm to learn more about what specific steps you can take.

John Mock, chair of our fire safety committee, attended a daylong grant writing workshop held in November by the California Fire Safe Council. YWPHI will be submitting a grant proposal in February 2005 to the Fire Safe California Grants Clearinghouse to fund perimeter fuel reduction. This action was recommended by Wildland Fire Associates, the consultants hired by NPS who presented their initial study of fire danger in and around Yosemite West to the community on September 25, 2004. For a summary of this meeting and their recommendations, go to www.yosemitewest.org/firesafe.htm.

NPS and Contractors Continue Hazard Fuel Reduction Near Yosemite West

by Deb Schweizer

NPS Fire Education Specialist

Approximately twenty acres of wildland-urban interface (WUI) was mechanically treated in October 2004. This work was accomplished by YNP fire crews and private companies contracted by NPS. This work was completed on NPS land along the boundary between the park and Yosemite West. This hazard fuel reduction project helps eliminate the ladder fuels that can carry fire from the ground to the

canopy of the forest. Approximately forty WUI acres were treated by the NPS in 2003. Additionally, the Henness Ridge lookout and helicopter landing zone was cleared in fall 2004.

Brush from the clearing projects was piled and NPS fire crews have started to burn these piles. NPS crews will continue to burn piles throughout the winter when conditions permit.

Residents will also notice the extensive mechanical thinning along the Wawona Road. This project will continue next season. The primary goal of this project is to reduce fire hazards along major travel routes through the park. In the event of a wildfire, this will help ensure public and firefighter safety. Thinning for removal of hazardous wildland fuels establishes and maintains fuel breaks and evacuation routes in the event of a wildland fire emergency.



Brush piles ready for burning

A Fed Bear is A Dead Bear

by Moose Mutlow

This has been a busy bear year in the West - multiple cases of car and house break-ins, garbage scrounging and at least one documented bear/person interaction that left someone with a big scratch and a great story to tell! Unfortunately the consequence of all of these interactions is a negative one for the bears. Given their intelligence and strength, once bears have begun to associate a developed area with food they become extremely hard to redirect and, as a result, euthanasia remains typically the only option.

According to the regional office of the California Fish and Game Department, two bears were euthanised this year in our area. In the case of bears breaking into property, Fish and Game does not have a relocation policy for the bears it captures. Even if relocation were an option, there are a number of challenges including displacement of existing populations, liability of introducing a “trouble” bear into an area and the fact that in many cases bears will travel enormous distances to return to their home ranges.

Bear behavior changes once they tap into alternative food sources - some remain active throughout the winter with no periods of dormancy. They learn to break into cars at night and will actively cruise areas when they know garbage might be left unattended on a porch. In the West there have been at least four bears in the area regularly. At least one sow and her cubs were seen frequently around buildings and dumpsters, a dangerous trend as cubs rely on their mothers to build the skills they will need in adult life. These early interactions around people and development reduce the bear’s natural fear of people, making it more likely for confrontations to occur. Living in an area with so much wildlife right in our backyards is an incredible privilege that comes with a great deal of responsibility.

In order to preserve these bear’s continued healthy existence a few proactive measures will help conserve and protect them:

- Keep food sources away. Close dumpsters, keep pet food indoors and empty tasty items out of vehicles at night. If you have bird feeders make sure they are well away from the ground and in an area where they cannot be reached. If you have a fruit tree in the yard, harvest the fruit before it hits the ground. This will remove potential foraging areas in proximity to your house.
- Keep a good distance from wildlife. Getting close breaks down the natural boundary that bears enjoy. They are meant to be treated with respect; you do not see deer getting close to bears for a very good reason. Bears are extremely fast, very strong and they are predators.
- Police the area. If you see potential problems try to get involved. The majority of people simply do not know what to do. Tell others about the bears euthanised this year and ask for their help in making sure it does not have to happen again.
- If you have a bear interaction, remember you as a human are in this case the dominant animal. Be assertive, do not run away. Throw rocks, shout and once the animal turns, pursue it at a safe distance to make sure it understands you are the boss. Typically, aggressive bear behavior is either a bluff or the result of an animal feeling threatened. Sows will charge if they feel their cubs are in danger. Make sure that the animals have a genuine escape route before hazing them.

Read more about “Living with Bears” at www.yosemitewest.org/bears.htm.

MARIPOSA COUNTY COMMITTEES

This newsletter reports about activities of two committees: the Yosemite West Planning Advisory Committee (YWPAC) and the Yosemite West Maintenance District Advisory Committee (YWMDAC). The committees act as a liaison between Yosemite West property owners and Mariposa County Planning Committee and Public Works Department, respectively. The committees make recommendations to Mariposa County, but cannot implement any changes. The individuals serving on these committees are Yosemite West property owners who are appointed by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors and may or may not be YWPHI members. YWPHI provides information about the committees as a service to the community and is *not* directly involved with the activities of either committee.

Yosemite West Maintenance District Advisory Committee (YWMDAC)

Sewer Repair

As of December 2004, construction on the Yosemite West Wastewater Treatment Facility is approximately 80% done. A lot of electrical work remains to be done. The major contractor is shutting down operations for the winter and will likely resume in April or May 2005 depending on weather conditions.

Once the sewer repairs are completed and the system is online, the system will be tested. When the system is operating satisfactorily, then the California Regional Water Quality Board will be notified. Assuming the California Regional Water Quality Board approves the sewer system, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors in concurrence with the California Regional Water Quality Board will then determine when building permits will be issued and also when the building moratorium will be lifted. Dana Hertfelder, Director of Mariposa County

Public Works, said it will probably take three months from when testing starts until the moratorium could be lifted.

The EDU Bank

We learned about EDUs in the lead up to the sewer assessment vote in April 2004. Anyone who wants to build a home or remodel an existing one by adding a bathroom, laundry room or kitchen needs to understand the EDU Bank. An EDU or “equivalent dwelling unit” refers to a “standard” sized-home with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, one laundry room and one kitchen. After each of the 178 vacant lots gets its one guaranteed EDU, there are between thirty and thirty-two “extra” EDUs. These form the EDU Bank.

The extra EDUs will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Be aware that if you want to build a house larger than a “standard” sized-home, you should not wait. EDUs may not be available later and you will only get the one EDU guaranteed to each vacant lot. If you want to remodel your existing home by adding a room with an EDU valuation, the same principal applies - if you wait, the EDUs may not be available. You will need to contact Mariposa County to pay in advance for extra EDU and to get the required building permit.

EDU Valuations

“Standard”	= 1.000 EDU	= \$9,996.21
Bathroom	= 0.316 EDU	= \$3,158.80
Kitchen	= 0.105 EDU	= \$1,049.60
Laundry	= 0.263 EDU	= \$2,629.00

Further information about YWMDAC, including details about the Yosemite West Wastewater Treatment Facility and water quality, is on the YWPHI website at www.yosemitewest.org/ywmdac.htm with links to meeting agendas, minutes, etc. and related documents.

Yosemite West Planning Advisory Committee (YWPAC)

YWPAC continues its efforts to develop a Special Plan for Yosemite West. The committee has prepared a first draft which is, or will shortly be, available at the Mariposa County Planning Department's website at www.mariposacounty.org/planning/index.html. The committee will ultimately make recommendations about zoning and land use issues in Yosemite West. Some of the topics that are being addressed include (1) how to balance rental and non-rental uses in Yosemite West, (2) how to mitigate impacts of transient rental facilities on other property owners, and (3) whether larger-scale rental offices should be housed in a central check-in facility near the mailboxes. The committee's recommendations must be approved by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors. There will be several opportunities for public comment about any recommendations.

Anyone wishing periodic updates on the committee's progress can ask to be put on the mailing list. Please direct your requests, comments and suggestions to the Mariposa County Planning Department. Just contact Skip Strathearn or Planning Director Kris Schenk at ☎ (209) 966-5151 or (866) 723-5151.

Further information about YWPAC is on the YWPHI website at www.yosemitewest.org/ywpac.htm with links to meeting agendas, minutes, etc. and related documents.

COMMUNITY NEWS

On The Move

Although the sale of homes in 2004 has remained slow, there has been an increase in the number of lots sold. The passage of the bond measure for the sewer repair and the anticipation of the removal of the building moratorium have provided a stimulus for lot sales. According to the Yosemite Gateway

Multiple Listing information, the price of the lot sales in 2004 ranged from \$16,000 to \$142,500. There was a total of nineteen sales. Some of the sellers provided financing for the new buyers. Currently there are six lots listed in the Multiple Listing Service ranging in price from \$115,000 to \$180,000. We welcome all of the new property owners to our community.

New Neighbor

Pacific Forest Trust (www.pacificforest.org), a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to preserving private forest lands, purchased the 730-acre Ransome tract adjacent to Yosemite West and YNP in late November 2004. This is the largest land conservation project adjacent to the park in decades. The property, which lies south and west of Yosemite West and adjoins the Sierra National Forest, was included in the original park boundaries proposed by John Muir. "Protection of this land was one of our highest priorities," said Mike Tollefson, the park superintendent. "It benefits the park by adding further protection to Yosemite's boundary and increasing connections between protected lands, while decreasing demands on water supplies and sensitive park resources. We are very pleased to have a private partner take the initiative to conserve this critical property."

Ho, Ho, Ho . . .

Our 1st Annual Holiday Home Tour held on December 12th was a big success! There was good food from soup and sushi to salsa, good drinks (hats off to the margarita maker and the "special" punch that really packed a punch) and most of all, a great turnout with no shortage of holiday spirit. Almost fifty folks joined the party, which started up on Henness Circle and made it all the way down to the bottom of Yosemite Park Way stopping at seven houses. Partygoers chipped in a \$5 donation that covered the cost of the food and drink at all homes.

Many thanks to our residents who opened their homes and shared good cheer -

Don and Kay Pitts, Jeff and Melissa Hornacek, Earl and Grace Bartel, Ron and Linda Cofer (hosted by Todd Yates), Steve and Helen Yates, Al and Carol Ruiz (hosted by Debby Hagan), and Neal and Carol Misener. We'll plan next year's tour early in hopes of getting an even bigger turnout.

Digging Out . . .

You'll see the veterans Mitch and Terry back this winter plowing our community roads. And, you'll also see new faces - Ronnie, Rick and Bruce. Please welcome the new snowplow drivers and say hello when you meet them. We appreciate the hard work and long hours everyone puts in to keep our roads accessible during snowstorms.

While Mariposa County Public Works Department is responsible for plowing our roads, it is the community's responsibility to keep our fire hydrants accessible in winter. Most of us have never even thought about this issue. If there's ever a fire in winter, the fire department won't be able to fight the fire if they can't find the hydrants! NPS and the Mariposa County Fire Department have asked the community to keep the hydrants clear. Get together with your immediate neighbors and work out a rotational plan for shoveling the area around the nearest hydrants. A map of the community fire hydrants is available online at www.yosemitewest.org/fhmap.jpg. Thanks for pitching in.

<p>YWPHI Board of Directors (2004-2005)</p> <p>Debby Hagan, President; Helen Yates, Vice President; Grace Bartel, Secretary; Members Larry Anstead, Carol Ruiz & Kim O'Neil</p>	<p>YWPHI Committee Chairs (2004-2005)</p> <p>Pete and Joan Ulyatt, Treasurer & Membership; John Mock, Fire Safety; Kim O'Neil, Newsletter Editor & Webmaster. (Committee chairs are <i>not</i> necessarily members of the board of directors.)</p>
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