



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

In the West

Newsletter
November 2006

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President's Fall Message

by Grace Bartel, YWPHI President (2006-2007)

With all the dangerous fires we have heard about this summer and fall, I am reminded frequently how fortunate we have been in our beautiful community. I would like to thank our YWPHI board members and membership who have spent their time helping us learn how to protect our properties. Let's keep up the efforts!

Holiday Open House



The holiday season is upon us and YWPHI is sponsoring the **3rd annual Yosemite West Holiday**

Open House, Saturday, December 23rd, starting at 3 p.m. Once again this year's party starts at Don and Kay Pitts' house, 7509 Henness Circle, and will progress down through the community stopping at several other homes. For those arriving late, there will be a map of the open houses on the bulletin board and at the Pitts' house. If you'd like to host one of the afternoon's parties, please call Kay Pitts (☎ 209-372-4775). We'd ask you to decorate it for the holidays and serve drinks, an appetizer, snack or something of the sort. No need to RSVP - we look forward to seeing you there. Mark your calendars, come and meet your neighbors, and join us for this festive event!

Theresa Ho

On October 22nd, park rangers and an SAR team responded to a report of a 35-year-old woman who had a rock weighing an estimated 1,000 pounds roll over her while scrambling on talus. Yosemite West resident Theresa Ho, who was with her husband Tom Lambert about 600 feet above the valley floor in LeConte Gully, suffered chest, spine and lower leg injuries. The medical team stabilized her and hoisted her out of the gully by helicopter to Ahwahnee Meadow where she was transferred to a waiting Air Med helicopter, which took her to Stanford Hospital. Theresa had successful surgery and is now walking and undergoing physical therapy. She's recuperating with relatives in Rio Vista, expects to tackle stairs, and soon thereafter return to Yosemite.

Tom and Theresa were touched by and are grateful for the community's concern, generosity and offers of help. Many people have asked what sort of help they need. They may well need things in the future and Theresa will most likely need some diversion. For the time being, they would encourage anyone who loves Yosemite or loves Theresa or both to make a donation to Yosemite Search and Rescue (The Mountain Safety Fund, c/o Yosemite Association, P.O. Box 545, Yosemite, CA 95389; www.nps.gov/archive/yose/sar/donate.htm). The SAR team showed up with great speed, expensive equipment and a dozen-strong team who helped save her life. We all look forward to seeing Theresa and Tom back home, and wish Theresa continuing progress with her recovery.

About YWPHI

YWPHI was established to promote and protect the best interests 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.

***In the West* Publication**

Many thanks go to all who offered both verbal and written input to this edition of *In the West*: Moose Mutlow of the Yosemite Institute, Jen Nersesian of Yosemite National Park (YNP), Jon Remucal of the Pacific Forest Trust, Faith Kearns of the Center for Fire Research and Outreach, and Dan Tune of U.S. Forest Service; Yosemite West residents Harry Hagan, John Mock, Don and Kay Pitts, Pete Regla and Pete Ulyatt; YWPHI Board of Directors' members Grace Bartel, Jody Brady, and Kim O'Neil who edited this issue for Tom Lambert.

Archived issues of the newsletter are available at www.yosemitewest.org/archive.htm.

The e-Newsletter is available online to YWPHI members signed up to receive it. To sign up for the e-Newsletter, please email treasurer@yosemitewest.org.

2006-2007 Membership Dues Due

We thank renewing YWPHI members and urge anyone who has not already done so to send in their annual membership of \$25 per household, which is due September 1st each year. Members who have not yet renewed will find a renewal notice with this newsletter. Alternatively, you can download a membership form at www.yosemitewest.org/members.htm or call YWPHI Vice President, Kay Pitts at ☎ 209-372-4775 to receive a copy by mail. We invite everyone not presently a member to join, and welcome suggestions from everyone for activities you'd like to see YWPHI doing.

Minutes from YWPHI Meetings

Minutes from previous YWPHI Board of Directors' meetings are archived at www.yosemitewest.org/board.htm. Minutes from the June 17 and September 3, 2006 meetings and the September 4, 2005 annual meeting are now available.

Please contact YWPHI Vice President Kay Pitts (☎ 209-372-4775) to request a copy by mail. The next board meeting is Saturday, December 23rd at 10 a.m.

Mailbox Shelter

Thanks to Malcolm Neal, Larry Newsome, Don Donaldson, and Earl and Grace Bartel, who cleaned the mailbox shelter in the second half of 2006.

2006-2007 YWPHI Board of Directors

The YWPHI Board of Directors for the current membership year (9/1/2006-8/31/2007) was elected at the annual meeting on September 3, 2006. The newly elected 2006-2007 board includes Grace Bartel (President), Kay Pitts (Vice President), Debby Hagan (Secretary), returning members Jim Andrews, Tom Lambert and Kim O'Neil, and new member Jody Brady.

John Mock chairs the YWPHI Fire Safety committee. Kim O'Neil is Acting Treasurer and webmaster. Kay Pitts and Jim Andrews are on the Hospitality committee and Tom Lambert and Jody Brady are on the Nominating committee.

Welcome New Board Member

Jody Brady lives in Walnut Creek, California. The mother of two sons - now theoretically grown - she owns Good Stuff Coupons and Good News from Good Stuff Magazine, a direct mail advertising company. Long a fan of Yosemite, Jody purchased - first a condo and then last year - the place she named "Casita Verde" on Henness Ridge Road. An avid hiker - you'll see her out and about.

Hennes Ridge Logging

by Jon Remucal, PFT Stewardship Manager

Pacific Forest Trust (www.pacificforest.org/pft, PFT) purchased the 727-acre Ransome Ranch in November 2004. In 2006, PFT purchased two additional parcels on Hennes Ridge - the 80-acre Sparling Ranch and the 170-acre Donahoe property (see the figure below).

Past management on these properties led to a forest dominated by white fir and incense cedar, significantly increasing fuel loads and wildfire danger.

To begin restoring the landscape, PFT submitted a Timber Harvest Plan (THP) to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) in August 2005. The plan, which was designed by registered professional forester Joe McGuire in consultation with YNP and Bob Heald, manager of the University of California's Blodgett Forest, was approved in November 2005 after a review process that also involved the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Department of Fish and Game. Anyone wanting to read the THP can request a copy from PFT or the CDF office in Fresno.

PFT started logging on the Ransome and Sparling properties in October 2006. Residents who have seen large logs on trucks exiting the properties have expressed concern

about the size of trees being logged. Two reasons explain the rationale for the harvesting of trees. First, the area being logged is a selection area where marketable, larger-diameter trees are/were being removed. In general, trees with the largest diameters and greatest vigor are retained. Second, many trees cut in the fuel break area are too small to be sent to the sawmill. They are being cut and piled during logging, and will be burned under appropriate conditions to reduce fuel loads.

The loggers may haul logs from the Ransome property out along Hennes Ridge Road through Yosemite West and from the Sparling property via the dirt road by the sand lot. Signs will be placed on roads to warn of logging truck activity. Hauling is restricted to weekdays.

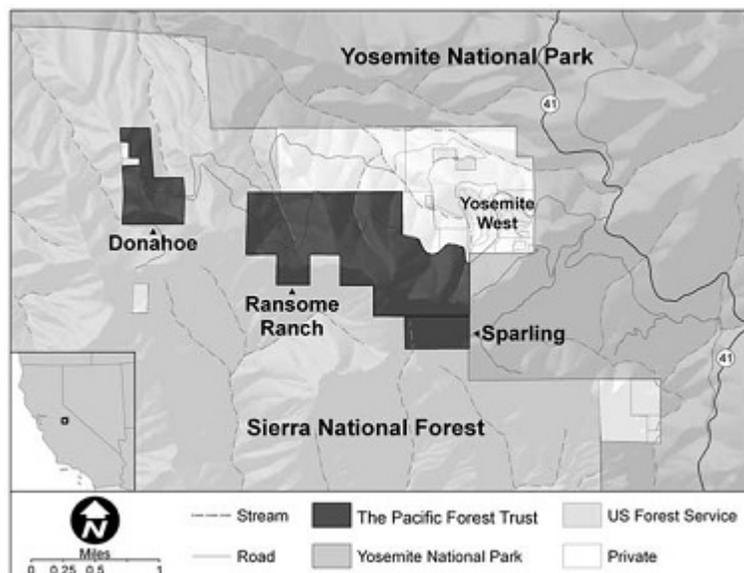
PFT's forester and stewardship manager recently walked along Hennes Ridge Road thoroughly documenting the pre-logging condition of the road. PFT has processed a \$30,000 performance bond (as per Mariposa County requirements) to ensure that sufficient funds are available to repair any damage to the road from logging trucks.

You can download a map (www.yosemitewest.org/pftmap06.jpg) of the area being logged this fall. Logging is expected to continue as long as weather allows. Logging may resume in spring 2007 (again dependent on weather), but will be discontinued during the period between May 1 and the weekend after Labor Day, as per YNP requirements.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jon Remucal (☎ 415-561-0700, jremucal@pacificforest.org).

Milestones

Chief Blaine Shultz of the Mariposa County Fire Department is retiring at the end of December 2006. We thank the chief for his support for and protection of our community and wish him the very best in his retirement.



Yosemite Institute Relocation

by Jen Nersesian, Management Assistant to the Superintendent Branch Chief, YNP Public Involvement & Outreach

As you may have heard, NPS is evaluating the suitability of a site (referred to as the “sand lot”) near Yosemite West for the future location of a Yosemite Institute (YI) Environmental Education Campus. You can download a fact sheet explaining the project’s basics (www.yosemitewest.org/yifacts.pdf) and email questions to yose_planning@nps.gov.

What stage of planning and design is the project at? This project is still in the planning and environmental evaluation stage. Currently, NPS is collecting data that will be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Although the formal public scoping/comment period has closed, the public can still provide comments or express concerns throughout the planning stage in public meetings, at our open houses or through our website (www.nps.gov/yose/planning). Formal comments will again be welcome when the draft EIS is released in early 2008.

Where would the campus be located if this site is selected? The facility would be located near Wawona Road on the south side of the Yosemite West entrance road. The site totals 31 acres, but the campus would be centralized on about 17 flat acres with knolls and rocky outcrops providing a buffer between the campus, community and roads. Preliminary site designs will be available for public review in the draft EIS.

Is there enough water to support the campus? Will it impact our water supply? Drilling found water on October 30, 2006. The well for the campus would draw from a source different from Yosemite West’s wells, and is therefore not anticipated to affect the community’s water supply. NPS is working

with Mariposa County to ensure minimal impacts to Yosemite West wells through subsequent hydrologic tests. The test well and surface flows will be monitored closely this fall to ensure there is not an unacceptable level of impact to any surrounding water supplies. If successful, the well could also become a new long-term water source for the Chinquapin area as well as other support services, such as fire protection. The water study is expected to be completed this winter.

If the campus is built at the sand lot, would it mean students and parents in our neighborhood? No. This is not desirable or acceptable to NPS or YI. A goal of the campus is to provide a rich educational experience for children in a remote outdoor setting. The students, primarily 7th and 8th graders, are closely supervised and managed at all times, and would not be permitted to wander off campus. The campus entrance would precede Yosemite West, so that buses and students would not be entering or passing through residential areas. Outdoor activities would be directed onto either established trails that minimize the exposure to interaction with Yosemite West, or students would be shuttled by bus to other park locations. Students would not be dropped off and picked up in private vehicles (only parents acting as chaperones will be present), but would instead arrive by a bus that goes straight to the campus. YI programs currently run during the school year, so the campus would have little activity during summer.

How will this impact Yosemite West in a fire evacuation? Safety, emergency access, and fire egress are high on the list of criteria for site evaluations. Yosemite West residents’ concerns are also being heard. An area fire emergency plan would be developed that would provide for safe and efficient community and campus evacuation, including a second emergency route that would exit directly from the campus onto Wawona Road.

What other alternatives are being considered?
How was the selection determined? The sand lot is one of 11 sites being evaluated, including some sites outside the park: Crane Flat, Foresta, Grouse Creek, Hazel Green, Hodgdon Meadow wood yard, McCauley Ranch, Ransom Ranch, Wawona North, Wawona South, and Upper Henness Ridge.

At a spring 2006 workshop, a decision-making process called “Choosing by Advantage” evaluated and ranked each site by 60 criteria. The sand lot site scored the strongest of all potential sites because of its existing network of nearby trails, its seasonal changes (snow), the forested “wilderness” setting, the sufficient buildable ground, and easy access with existing roads and short bussing distances to other park destinations.

In late October, YI’s Board of Trustees took a field trip to view the sand lot site, and one resident expressed concern that there was a bus in a residential area. As stated previously, if the sand lot becomes the final site, buses will have no need to enter the community itself, but will go directly onto the campus before reaching Yosemite West. However, during the project’s planning and construction phases, it may be necessary for vehicles to occasionally access the site via other routes. It is YI’s goal that residents have adequate notification of activities and to minimize disruptions.

YI and NPS welcome your ideas, suggestions and continued dialogue on how best to make this happen. If you have thoughts you would like to share, please contact Jen Nersesian (☎ 209-372-0249, jen_nersesian@nps.gov).

Structural Vulnerability Survey Results

By Faith Kearns, Ph.D., CFRO

In July 2006, researchers with the Center for Fire Research and Outreach (CFRO) at the University of California, Berkeley completed a wildfire hazard assessment survey for

Yosemite West homeowners. This science-based survey was developed by CFRO and focuses on structural vulnerability to wildfires (as opposed to surveys such as Red Zone, which focus more on wildfire suppression).

CFRO mailed survey results to all Yosemite West homeowners along with suggestions for improvement and a map of overall ratings in the community. To get an overall rating, CFRO created a relative ranking for Yosemite West so that one-third of the community falls into each of the high, medium, and low categories. While this ranking may give some indication of relative fire safety, it is more important for individual homeowners to focus on addressing survey results falling into the “high” category - mitigating these hazards will reduce your risk quickly. CFRO is still interested in getting feedback on the survey. If you haven’t already done so, please complete the survey for your own home in order to help CFRO improve its approach.

Visit <http://firecenter.berkeley.edu> or contact Faith Kearns (☎ 510-643-0409, firecenter@nature.berkeley.edu) with questions.

Courtesy Inspections

By Dan Tune, USFS Fire Prevention Officer

CDF has arranged in previous years with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) fire prevention officers from Sierra National Forest to conduct an **Annual Fire Hazard Clearance Inspection** to evaluate property owners’ compliance with defensible space regulations (www.yosemitewest.org/100ft.htm).

However, USFS was *not* able to complete any home inspections in Yosemite West this year because the USFS stance is changing with regards to home inspections. USFS has been informed it no longer has the authority to issue citations to noncompliant homeowners. Without any “teeth” USFS inspections are basically just a courtesy. In order for real change to occur, CDF will need

to perform the initial and follow-up inspections and cite any noncompliant homeowners. USFS in general, and the district in particular, are having an increasingly difficult time maintaining a workforce to perform courtesy inspections. As discussed at your Memorial Day weekend picnic, USFS is still short-staffed by two fire prevention technicians.

While there are still plenty of hazard and defensible space issues that need to be addressed, Yosemite West is comparatively safer than most Mariposa County communities. YWPHI's continued effort to promote fire safety has yielded great results, and the overall impression of the community was favorable.

Ultimately the responsibility for fire safety lies with you - the property owners. CDF is also scaling back the inspection process and increasingly relying upon Fire Safe Councils, homeowner associations and individual property owners to spread the word regarding defensible space. I'll still be the fire prevention officer you should contact with any questions, Dan Tune (dtune@fs.fed.us, ☎ 559-877-2218 ext. 3281).

Proposed Camping Ordinance

by Harry Hagan, Planning Commissioner

Mariposa County recently took enforcement action in the Hornitos area arising from long-term use of a camper-trailer on an otherwise vacant lot. Complaints by neighbors led to a Mariposa County Planning Department investigation. The Planning Department determined that long-term use amounted to residential use, but the trailer did not meet applicable zoning and code requirements. The Planning Department's determination was upheld by the Planning Commission, then by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, and then by the Superior Court.

As a result, Mariposa County is reevaluating its ordinances applicable to

noncommercial camping. Camping on lots that have a valid building permit is not affected and is allowed. On October 20th, the Planning Department proposed an ordinance to the Planning Commission to allow temporary camping for up to seven out of 12 weekends in a 90-day period on all residential lots in Mariposa County, which includes vacant lots in Yosemite West.

At the Planning Commission meeting, concerns were voiced about fire risks, sanitation, and whether camping was appropriate on vacant lots in residential subdivisions. In light of these concerns, the proposal was sent back to the Planning Department. A revised proposal will come to the Planning Commission in December, which is likely to preclude camping on undeveloped lots in "Town Planning Area" and in areas zoned "Rural Residential," which includes Yosemite West.

The *Mariposa Gazette* publishes Planning Commission agendas, which are also online at www.mariposacounty.org. You will be able to read the revised proposal on the county's website or request a copy from the Planning Department (☎ 866-723-5151, 209-966-5151).

YWMDAC Vacancies

The Yosemite West Maintenance District Advisory Committee (YWMDAC) has two vacancies due to the resignations of Walt Rowland and Helen Yates. We thank Walt and Helen for their years of service on this committee.

YWMDAC acts as a liaison between Yosemite West property owners and the Mariposa County Public Works Department, which is responsible for the daily operation of the Yosemite West Maintenance District.

Anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact District 1 Supervisor Lee Stetson (☎ 800-736-1252, 209-966-3222, lstetson@mariposacounty.org).

Sewer Project Funding

A September 29, 2006 article in the *Mariposa Gazette* announced that “. . . the Yosemite West Waste Water Treatment Plant paid the County back \$300,000 on their loan . . .” This was the first Yosemite West residents and members of the YWMDAC had heard of this. At the October 27, 2006 YWMDAC meeting, Mariposa County Public Works Director Dana Hertfelder discussed the \$300,000 transfer. Here is a summary drawn from the ensuing discussion.

What happened to the \$300,000? Mariposa County announced it is transferring \$300,000 out of the Yosemite West’s sewer repair fund into the county’s general fund, which means we no longer have access to these funds.

Where did the \$300,000 come from? The \$300,000 represents a portion of the contingency fund set aside in the bond assessment to repair the Yosemite West Wastewater Treatment Facility that Yosemite West residents voted on and passed in 2004.

Why did Mariposa County transfer \$300,000? When the sewer system first failed, Mariposa County advanced \$1.08 million, an amount fixed at an April 23, 2002 Mariposa County Board of Supervisors’ meeting, to the Yosemite West Maintenance District for immediate repairs. The community understood that a resolution passed at the same Mariposa County Board of Supervisors’ meeting as an inducement to vote yes and pass the bond assessment, meant the county would make a “contribution” to or forgive the Yosemite West Maintenance District the \$1.08 million if the sewer bond passed. Now two years after the bond assessment vote passed, the county has apparently reneged on its promise to Yosemite West, and now wants the money back. The county is saying that the \$1.08 million is a loan that they want repaid. They are transferring \$300,000 because that amount was on hand as cash.

Can the county do that? The \$300,000 transfer raises questions about the appropriateness of the transfer, and the legal authority for it. The resolution which enabled the bond assessment vote states that the county cannot take funds out of the bond assessment to repay the county. At an April 2004 Mariposa County Board of Supervisors’ meeting, county supervisors identified three options for handling any excess funds from the bond assessment: (a) repay the county the lesser of 5% of the project or \$1000; (b) return the funds to the property owners who were assessed; or (c) spend the funds for other maintenance and operations in the Yosemite West Maintenance District.

County Counsel has taken the position that the emergency advances to the Yosemite West Maintenance District were deliberately *not* included in the bond assessment. However, to him it does not follow that the advances were grants. He considers the advances to have been loans that must be paid back. He claims that there is no paperwork to the contrary. County Counsel also contends that nothing that was said orally to the community is binding. But even if the advance of funds was a grant (and he believes it was not), such a grant would not have been legal.

What does this mean to property owners? Basically, the county just took approximately \$1000 from every property owner of record (\$300,000 divided by approximately 300 lots), and they may want more. It is not clear how or if the county might expect to recover the remaining \$780,000 (\$1.08 million minus \$300,000). And, it is not clear what will happen next. We will endeavor to keep the community updated as news develops. Visit www.yosemitewest.org/news.htm for updates.

Please direct any questions to District 1 Supervisor Lee Stetson (☎ 800-736-1252, 209-966-3222, lstetson@mariposacounty.org); and Dana Hertfelder, Director of Mariposa County Public Works (☎ 209-966-5356; dhertfelder@mariposacounty.org).

Winter Road Conditions

Mariposa County Public Works Department with CDF and CDC teams led by Mitch Jonasky has been clearing roads and roadsides in Yosemite West of debris, brush, dirt, fallen pine needles and cones, etc. Many thanks to all the crew members who worked on the annual roadside clean up.

Winter snowfall and accumulation may happen any day. The county does an excellent job of removing snow and keeping our roads clear and open. Residents can help this effort by being mindful of how and where you plow or blow snow from your property.

Please don't plow or blow snow from your property onto county-maintained roads. This extra snow on the roads narrows roadways, obstructs traffic, and may necessitate additional plowing with different equipment.

Extra plowing costs everyone since the money comes from Yosemite West Maintenance District's limited operating budget. For more information about the Yosemite West Maintenance District and special districts in general, please visit www.yosemitewest.org/ywmdac.htm.

YWPHI Board of Directors (2006-2007)

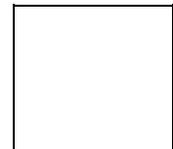
Grace Bartel, President; Kay Pitts, Vice President; Debby Hagan, Secretary; Members Jim Andrews, Jody Brady, Tom Lambert, and Kim O'Neil.

YWPHI Committees (2006-2007)

Tom Lambert, Newsletter Editor; Kim O'Neil, Webmaster and Acting Treasurer; and John Mock, Fire Safety.

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Address Correction Requested

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