



Yosemite West Property &
Homeowners Inc.

www.YosemiteWest.org

In the West
Newsletter
April 2009

President's Spring Message

By Tom Lambert, YWPHI President

At the height of last summer's Telegraph Fire, the flame front was less than 20 miles from Yosemite West and, for a brief time, was advancing at 30 miles per hour. The fire jumped the Merced River, our power was on and off for many days, and ash rained from the sky. The largest firefighting crew ever to work the area stopped the fire a couple ridges before it would have begun its descent to the South Fork of the Merced. If it had jumped the South Fork, our only defense would have been the defensible space

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around our homes and around our neighborhood. This issue of *In the West* is pretty much entirely devoted to how **you** can get involved in making us more fire safe, if not for your own skin and property values, then to help out your neighbors.

Most people in Yosemite West have worked hard in the last few years to make their homes safer. We still have a long way to go as requirements get stricter and forests get denser, but we are fortunate to have two neighbors who have really put fire safety on the agenda in Yosemite West and who have volunteered hundreds of hours to help us get to where we are. John Mock, of the YWPHI Fire Safety Committee, and Kim O'Neil, of the YWPHI Board, have gone to great lengths to secure grants that allowed us last year to complete the *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan* (a crucial step in acquiring more grant money), and an initial shaded fuel break around part of the neighborhood.

We already owed them a lot, but this year they've done it again. They have **acquired yet another grant** this time to the tune of \$75,000 for work inside the neighborhood. If you've never tried to obtain grant money, suffice it to say that this is a huge effort and a fantastic track record. The new grant is explained in detail inside, but in brief, it will specifically to provide crucial fuel load reduction within the neighborhood. That's **over \$130,000 in grants** YWPHI has acquired through John and Kim's hard work with an additional application pending. These grants do require us to provide some matching funds and these funds will come in part from our volunteer labor ("in kind" contributions) and from the coffers of the YWPHI, that is to say from the dues of our members.

Despite all this, there are still a few people who haven't joined us and we would love to welcome the last of you aboard this year. Membership costs **less than ten cents per day** and we've tried to make it easy — last year we added Paypal as a payment option. If you still aren't convinced that this is a great investment in your property, **call me** at (209) 372-4769 and tell me what I can do as president of YWPHI to make membership worth it to you.

Volunteers Needed on Sunday, May 24

We need volunteers to provide pick-up or dump trucks and to help load and unload the trucks. If you have a truck or are able-bodied or both, please come and help if you can. Contact Tom Lambert (209-372-4764; president@yosemitewest.org) with any questions or to volunteer. All volunteers will be picked up by the trucks as they drive by starting at 8 a.m. Your help is greatly appreciated! We fully appreciate that some members of the community are not physically able to load pine needles. If you have a truck and can sit in the cab and drive, you'll still be a hero even if you don't touch a rake or a pitchfork.

YWPHI Board Minutes

Minutes from previous YWPHI Board of Directors' meetings are archived online at <http://yosemitewest.org/board.htm>. Minutes from the November 9, 2008 meeting are now available. The next board meeting is July 8, 2009.

***In the West* Publication**

Thanks go to these contributors to this edition of *In the West*: John Mock, Chair, YWPHI Fire Safety committee, and YWPHI Board member Kim O'Neil.

Archived issues of the newsletter are available to download as a PDF at <http://www.yosemitewest.org/archive.htm>. If you wish to be notified when new issues are available for download, please send a request via email to treasurer@yosemitewest.org. Your willingness to obtain the newsletter electronically saves YWPHI money on printing and mailing, allowing us to use that money for community projects.

Yosemite West Emergency Telephone Tree Update

YWPHI maintains and annually updates the YOSEMITE WEST EMERGENCY TELEPHONE TREE, which lists and is distributed to homeowners with their contact information. (It does not include nor is it distributed to vacant lot owners.) Many homeowners have primary residences elsewhere, and the tree endeavors to list any telephone contact information at alternative residences and cell phone numbers.

The emergency telephone tree is intended to systematically notify residents during an emergency or when a situation arises that affects the entire community. However, YWPHI, its members and officers, and those using the emergency telephone tree, cannot guarantee that anyone will receive timely and adequate notice of an emergency, and disclaims all liability.

The YOSEMITE WEST EMERGENCY TELEPHONE TREE is for the exclusive use of Yosemite West homeowners and residents (including occupants of long-term rental properties). To protect privacy, please keep the
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emergency telephone tree confidential, and do not forward it or provide copies to others for any purpose. YWPHI also provides the list to the Mariposa County Fire Department and Yosemite National Park fire chiefs.

In April 2009, YWPHI updated the YOSEMITE WEST EMERGENCY TELEPHONE TREE. Shortly YWPHI will be sending you an email message with instructions to download on how to download the updated tree.

Please send an email to telephontree@yosemitewest.org to inform us of any changes to your contact information, or to remove your name from the tree for any reason. If you have recently built your home, please send us your phone number.

Welcome New Members

We would like to welcome Bob and Judy Yoho and their family to YWPHI. We are especially pleased to also welcome returning members: Jody Brady, Richard and Rita Kern, and Ken LeBlanc.

Mark Your Calendars — Key Dates

May 13 — First meeting on the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project (see p. 6).

May 16 — Second meeting on the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project (see p. 6).

May 24 — Memorial Day Cleanup and Picnic (see p. 4).

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.

Do You Have Defensible Space?

In preparation for fire season, everyone, whether you own a house or a vacant lot, needs to create defensible space on their property and contribute towards creating community wide defensible space in Yosemite West. Defensible space is area where the forest floor has been cleared of pine needles and pine cones, trees and shrubs have been thinned, and dead and dying trees have been removed. This reduces the threat of an oncoming wildfire and allows firefighters to safely defend property.

Research proves that defensible space makes the difference between a house surviving a wildfire or being destroyed. You can make a difference in whether or not your home and community survive a wildfire. Your actions will make it safer for the firefighters who risk their lives to protect your property. Defensible space in a very high fire hazard environment such as Yosemite West is essential and just plain common sense.

A 30-Foot Circle is Not Enough

Most of us are used to raking and clear a 30-foot perimeter around our house. In the long bygone days of the early 2000s, that was enough, but not anymore. California law now requires homeowners to treat the area 100 feet from all structures or to your property line, whichever is closer. What this means is that you can't just rake your debris to the perimeter of your lot and leave it. Technically, the secondary perimeter beyond the initial 30 feet can have no more than a 3-inch layer of duff, which would be greatly exceeded of course by raking debris into a pile. In short, given the size of most lots in Yosemite West, compliance with the new law requires that you actually rake up the debris on pretty much your whole lot and then either **burn it in place or remove it from your land**. This implies a significant increase in the labor involved in staying compliant, but research shows that it's a minimum to give a community and the firefighters a fighting chance. (see <http://www.yosemitewest.org/firesafe.htm> for further details).

The key steps to maintaining or achieving defensible space are:

1. Brushing the forest floor by:

- raking pine needles and picking up pine cones
- removing dead/downed wood
- increasing horizontal space between shrubs

2. Thinning the forest by:

- removing *all* ladder fuels (any tree less than 6 inches in diameter at breast height, except ornamentals)
- increasing vertical space between shrubs and trees
- limbing trees at least 15 feet above ground; higher on steeper slopes
- removing dead and dying trees
- increasing horizontal space between large trees
- removing branches overhanging structures and any branches within 5 feet of structures

3. Improving access to your property

- reducing vegetation, trees and branches near your driveway and parking areas (at least 6 feet horizontally and 15 feet vertically).

Now the Good News

This year, YWPHI has received a substantial **grant to improve defensible space within Yosemite West** (funding provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council). The goal of the grant is to create defensible space on 30% of the parcels in Yosemite West (about 90 parcels) by reducing hazardous fuels around houses and on vacant lots. As a result, the Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment for Yosemite West should see the percentage of structures in the desirable yellow zone increase from 24% to 62%. This is a one-time-only opportunity for homeowners and vacant lot owners to remove the dangerous vegetation and dead wood on their property. See pages 5–6 for details of how to participate in the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project.

Yosemite West Memorial Day Weekend Yard Clean-up

Sunday, May 24, 2009

<http://www.yosemitewest.org/firesafe.htm>

The community burn pile, located at the lower end of the development off Yosemite Park Way, will be open on Memorial Day weekend to provide a place to dispose of yard debris. The burn pile fills up quickly each spring and you can ease the pressure on it in two ways:

- by burning pine needles on your own property; call the Mariposa County Burn Day Information Line (888-440-2876) and carefully follow all guidelines and requirements.
- by participating in the grant-funded Yosemite West Defensible Space Project (see pages 5–6).

If you do not have a vehicle to transport yard debris to the burn pile, volunteers with trucks will be cruising the neighborhood on Sunday, May 24 between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m., but **you must help load and unload all your material into their trucks**. In turn, you'll be expected to help with loads from your neighbors' yards. Please don't leave piles along the street expecting others to take them away – no one will touch them.

This clean-up is a community event, not a free service offered by the homeowners' association. Volunteers are there to help, *not* to do all your work for you. If you are physically unable to actually help load trucks, that's fine. You can still provide refreshments and applause! Equipment is always at a premium. If you have a truck that helps immensely. Gloves, rakes, pitchforks, wheelbarrows and tarps are very helpful.

Free Picnic Lunch Sunday, May 24 at noon

YWPHI is sponsoring its annual Memorial Day Weekend picnic lunch and invites everyone in the community on Sunday, May 24th to join us at the southeast corner of Hennes Circle (in Ken and Marilyn Wall's backyard). The YWPHI Hospitality Committee will be serving food about noon. Please bring your own chairs.

The picnic is not only time to eat and unwind after a lot of hard work, but it is also an opportunity to learn more and ask any questions you may have about the upcoming **Yosemite West Defensible Space Project** (see pages 5–6).

Two types of curbside piles:

- **Piles for Hauling** to the community burn pile. Have your piles ready by 8 a.m. Sunday, May 24. **You must be there in person to load and unload your piles.**
- **Piles for Chipping** *after* Memorial Day Weekend. See pages 5–6 for details on the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project that replaces this year's chipping program.

What Goes In the Community Burn Pile

- pine needles and pine cones

What Stays Out of the Burn Pile

- piles for chipping
- logs and stumps
- garbage (plastic bags, glass, etc)
- hazardous or toxic materials
- construction debris

If you are preparing your lot for building, you cannot bring this debris to the community burn pile. The burn pile cannot handle this large volume of material. You must make your own arrangements (e.g., by renting a dumpster) to dispose of the debris.

YWPHI does not manage the community burn pile. Please direct any questions you may have (e.g., opening/closing dates) to the Mariposa County Public Works Department (209-966-5356).

New Fire Safety Grant — Yosemite West Defensible Space Project

YWPHI has been awarded a National Fire Plan grant of \$75,655 from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council (see <http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm>). The grant will be implemented in spring/summer 2009. The purpose of the grant is “to create defensible space in accordance with PRC §4291 on 30% of the parcels in Yosemite West or 36 acres of the 109 acres in Yosemite West.” The project is described in Appendix H – Project Summary #1 of the *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*, approved by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors in June 2008 (you can download the complete CWPP at <http://yosemitewest.org/ywccwpp.pdf>).

If you own a house, the grant will pay for a crew to do the trimming, limbing and thinning work necessary to comply with the 100-foot defensible space California state law in accordance with the guidelines detailed in California Public Resources Code 4291. **You, however, are responsible for raking** and removing all of your own pine needles and pine cones.

If you own a lot, the grant will pay for a crew to cut and remove dangerous vegetation, in effect creating a “shaded fuel break” on your property. This will not only help make Yosemite West a safer place, but may also increase the value of your lot.

What Kind of Work Will the Grant Fund?

- Removing dead and downed wood, increasing space between shrubs and trees.
- Removing ladder fuels (trees less than 6 inches in diameter at breast height), removing dead or dying trees, removing branches overhanging or too close to structures and chimneys, increasing space between large trees, etc.
- Improving access by reducing vegetation and trees near driveways and parking areas.
- Chipping the debris generated from these activities.

Five Steps to Benefit from this Grant

1. Sign a Letter of Commitment agreeing to participate.
2. Make a \$160 In-Kind Contribution (as a match of time and/or money), which can be satisfied by any combination of; volunteering your time to conduct fuel reduction work on your property, providing receipts to YWPHI for out-of-pocket expenses to hire independent labor to conduct fuel reduction on your property, or providing a cash match.
3. Accept the 2008 Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment prepared by the Mariposa County Fire Department as a defensible space evaluation of your property, which will guide the crew in carrying out work on your property.
4. If you own a vacant lot, you will accept an on-site fuel reduction evaluation conducted by the crew who are experienced and knowledgeable about creating defensible space.
5. Support YWPHI and acknowledge its efforts in obtaining this grant by joining YWPHI and paying \$25 annual membership dues for the current membership year.

What about the Chipping Program?

YWPHI has sponsored a Chipping Program four years in a row. This year, however, the **Yosemite West Defensible Space Project** will replace the annual Chipping Program. We still encourage property owners to start making their own curbside piles for chipping. However, anyone who wants their curbside piles chipped must participate in the project.

Chipping Preparation

Hand pile brush and small-diameter branches with cut ends pointing in the same direction toward the street at curbside.

Don'ts for Chipping Piles

- No yard debris in the street
- No rocks, dry pine needles, pine cones, or bark
- No piles higher than breast height
- No branch/tree greater than 8 inches in diameter
- No machine-made or dozer-made piles

(more on the grant on p. 6)

Next Steps and How to Help (*cont. from p. 5*)

1. YWPHI will be sending a **detailed information packet** to every property owner in Yosemite West.
2. Meanwhile, we invite everyone to attend preliminary **community planning meetings** to encourage discussion and to answer questions about the project. The first two meetings, which will be held at Kelly Rich's house, 7304 Buck Brush Lane, are:

Wednesday, May 13, 7-8 p.m.

Saturday, May 16, 5-6 p.m.

Both meetings will cover the same material; you are welcome to attend either or both meetings. If you can't come in person, you can **participate via conference call**. To attend by phone, please dial 800-786-1922 a few minutes before the designated time, and enter participant number 66638246#.

3. The project will be asking for the **volunteer energy of community members** to act as "Block Captains" whose responsibility will be to help enlist the support and participation of their neighbors.

For More Information

Visit www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm for updates on the projects. Please feel free to contact John Mock, Chair of the YWPHI Fire Safety Committee via email firesafety@yosemitewest.org with any questions you may have.

YWPHI Board of Direction (2008-2009)

Tom Lambert, President; Kelly Rich, Vice-President and Secretary; Members Jim Andrews, Todd Caranto, Jeff Hornacek, Rea Jackman, Kim O'Neil.

YWPHI Committees (2008-2009)

Tom Lambert, Newsletter Editor; Kim O'Neil, Webmaster and Treasurer; John Mock, Fire Safety; Rea Jackman and Kay Pitts, Hospitality.

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