

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

In the West

Newsletter
July 2005

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President's Summer Message

by Debby Hagan

YWPHI President (2004-2005)

We are grateful to the volunteers and residents who participated in the annual community fire safety clean-up in May. Thank you for helping to reduce the fuel load in Yosemite West! Please read pages 4-5 for summaries of the chipping program, Memorial Day Weekend yard clean-up and fire agency presentations.

We also thank Joseph deSilva, Grace Bartel and Steve Wilkins for volunteering to clean the mailbox shed during May, June and July. All of us appreciate your efforts.

Pete and Joan Ulyatt have retired as treasurer and membership chairs for YWPHI after many years of service. During their diligent stewardship our account balances and membership numbers have both increased, and YWPHI benefitted from their excellent management. Linda Andrews has agreed to take over as treasurer and membership chair, and we welcome her commitment to YWPHI. Thank you Pete, Joan and Linda!

Enclosed within this newsletter is your **YWPHI Membership Form for 2005-2006**. We thank our renewing members for their support and encourage everyone in Yosemite West to join YWPHI. Your \$25 annual dues allows YWPHI to sponsor many projects which benefit the entire community such as fire safety activities, the mailbox shed, and information station. YWPHI represents the community, so please get involved and let us know what you would like us to be doing.

Please mark your calendars for Sunday, September 4th, when the YWPHI annual meeting and potluck brunch starts at 10:30 a.m. behind John and Betty Clark's home on the south side of Henness Circle (see p.3 for more details). Brunch is followed by the YWPHI business meeting that includes approval of the minutes from the last annual meeting, reports from YWPHI committees, and election of new members of the YWPHI Board of Directors. All YWPHI members are encouraged to attend this meeting and participate in improving your organization.

There will be three vacancies on the YWPHI Board of Directors for 2005-2006. Please contact Helen Yates at (209) 372-4300 or email nominating@yosemitewest.org if you would like to volunteer. The newly elected board will meet after the business meeting to assign duties for the coming year.

We look forward to seeing you all at the picnic!

YWPHI Website Traffic Grows

The YWPHI website www.yosemitewest.org now averages more than 3,700 hits per month - a 18% increase during the second quarter of 2005 - with almost 3,900 hits during June.

A feature on the Home page and News page called What's New on the YWPHI Website provides a quick link to the latest postings.

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

Thanks go to these contributors to this edition of *In the West*: Jonathan Remucal of The Pacific Forest Trust, Yosemite West residents Don Pitts and Harry Hagan, and YWPHI Board of Directors' members Grace Bartel, Debby Hagan, Carol Ruiz (digital photography) and Kim O'Neil.

Please email the newsletter editor at newsletter@yosemitewest.org to sign up to receive an e-newsletter.

Minutes from YWPHI Board of Directors' Meetings

Once approved by the board, minutes from previous YWPHI Board of Directors' meeting are archived on the YWPHI website at www.yosemitewest.org/board.htm. The archive currently contains minutes from all meetings held during 2004 and 2003. The minutes from the last board meeting, which was on April 15, 2005, are now available online. Please contact secretary@yosemitewest.org or call Grace Bartel (☎ 209-372-8752) to request a copy by mail.

A draft of the minutes from the September 5, 2004 annual YWPHI meeting will be available to members for their review and comment at this year's annual meeting on September 4, 2005.

Bearanoia

If you haven't seen a bear yet this year in Yosemite West, the chances are you will soon. Bears have been spotted cruising the neighborhood since mid June. Remember that during summer 2004 bears broke into several homes, and California Fish & Game Department had to destroy three bears. Unfortunately, home invasions have already happened this year and one bear has already been trapped and killed. Bears typically look for an easy way into a house - an open, easily accessible ground level window. Bears are active throughout the day and night, but have entered homes in the early morning between 5 and 7 a.m. Everyone is advised to close your windows when you are not home and at night.

Read *Living With Bears* (www.yosemitewest.org/bears.htm) to learn what you can do right now to decrease the risk.

KEEP BEARS WILD

Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc. Labor Day Picnic & Annual Meeting

**Sunday, September 4, 2005
10:30 a.m.**

The YWPHI Labor Day picnic and annual meeting starts at 10:30 a.m., Sunday, September 4, 2005 behind John and Betty Clark's house on the south side of Henness Circle. YWPHI members and guests are welcome to attend.

YWPHI will provide plates, napkins, cups, soft drinks, beer and wine. As always, bring a dish to share at the potluck brunch:

If Your Last Name Starts With -	Please Bring -
A - H	main dish (e.g., quiche, frittata, etc.)
K - P	fruit or vegetable, whole or in salads
Q - Z	sweet rolls, coffee cake, Danish, muffins

It also helps to bring your own folding chairs. Only a few chairs will be available from neighbors' houses.

The YWPHI annual meeting will take place following the brunch. The annual meeting includes the election of the YWPHI Board of Directors to serve for 2005-2006 and the approval of minutes from last year's annual meeting. A draft of the minutes from the September 5, 2004 annual meeting will be available to members for their review and comment. Topics on this year's agenda include updates on the Yosemite West Maintenance District, including a sewer update, the Yosemite West Planning Advisory Committee's work on the Special Plan, and fire prevention.

Please email secretary@yosemitewest.org or contact Grace Bartel (☎ 209-372-8752) with any questions, comment or suggestions you may have.

Door Prizes Again This Year !

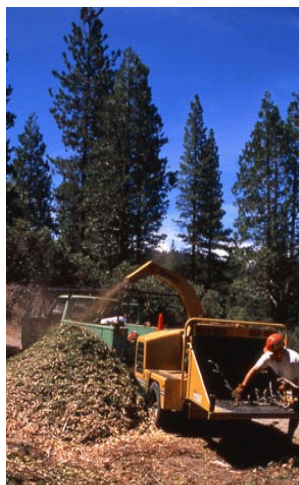
Spring-Summer Fire Safety Results

Successful Chipping Program

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council, through a grant funding a county-wide chipping program, provided a crew and chipper free of cost to Yosemite West. The three-person crew, led by Brian Warren, worked in our community for three days - May 23rd to 25th - and chipped more than 16 tons of brush, limbs and small trees. We appreciate the hard work of all community members who piled their yard debris at the curb, and of Brian, Tony and Eric, who ran the chipper on some very hot days.



The chipping program helped the community meet its goals to reduce the amount of dead and downed wood on the ground, improve defensible space around structures, and to reduce the amount of yard debris in the community burn pile.



Our thanks to Jan Hamilton, Chair, and Kimberly Bullock, Coordinator, of the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council for organizing this project and supporting hazard fuel reduction in Yosemite West.

Memorial Day Weekend Activities

Pine Needles & Yard Debris Removed

By everyone's account, this year's Memorial Day Weekend yard clean-up was the biggest yet. A steady stream of pick-up trucks made their way down Yosemite Park Way to the community burn pile. Our successful chipping program helped ensure they carried mostly pine needles.

Thanks to everyone who worked in their yards and helped their neighbors. Special thanks go to those who volunteered their trucks and their helpers: Bill Bond, Brian Hagan, Harry Hagan, Malcolm Neal, John Mock, Don Pitts, Ed Reed, Al Ruiz, Bob Skrdla, Pete Ulyatt, Ken Wall, Steve Yates and Todd Yates.

Community Picnic

By noon on Sunday, more than fifty people had made their way to the annual Memorial Day Weekend picnic held on Henness Circle. YWPHI's Hospitality Committee and board members - Carol Ruiz, Grace Bartel, Debby Hagan and Helen Yates - prepared a tasty picnic lunch that disappeared quickly.

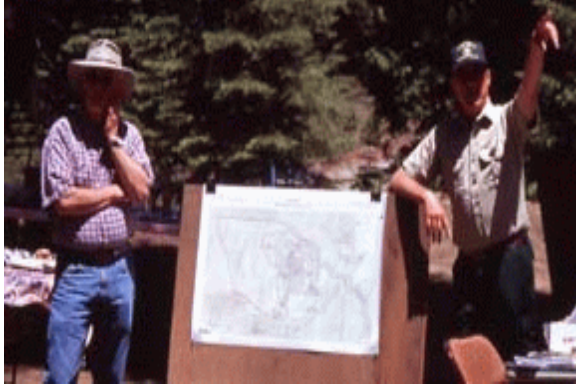
Guests & Presentations

We were joined at the picnic by several guests:

- Carl Douhan, consultant from Wildland Fire Associates (www.wildlandfireassociates.com)
- Tom Nichols, YNP Fire Management Officer
- Deb Schweizer, YNP Fire Information Specialist
- Smiley Tierney, U.S. Forest Service Fire Prevention Officer
- Jan Hamilton, Chair of the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council
- Jonathan Remucal, Stewardship Manager of The Pacific Forest Trust

Carl Douhan presented the *Draft Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)* (www.yosemitewest.org/wfa50225.htm). Smiley Tierney discussed the CDF Property

Inspections taking place in July and (www.yosemitewest.org/fowner.htm#inspection) the implications of the new California law requiring clearance of 100 feet from your house to increase defensible space.



Carl Douhan (left), Smiley Tierney (right)

We're grateful to all the guests for their contributions and taking time out of their holiday weekend to support Yosemite West.



Viewing draft of Red Zone Risk Assessment map and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map.

Discounted Fire Safety Books

Firescaping (Wilderness Press, 1st edition May 2005) by Douglas Kent, is a 149-page book that explains "creating fire-resistant landscapes, gardens, and properties in California's diverse environments."

This highly recommended book sells for \$18.95, but has been made available to YWPHI at a 50% discount by the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council.

To purchase the book, mail a check made payable to YWPHI in the amount of \$13.45 (\$9.50 for the book plus \$3.95 shipping/handling) to 7585 Henness Ridge Road, Yosemite, CA 95389-9103. If you are in Yosemite West and would like to pick up a copy of the book, please email firesafety@yosemitewest.org or call Grace Bartel (☎ 209-372-8752).

Fire Safety Education Packets

The YWPHI Fire Safety Committee distributed *Fire Safety Education packets* to property owners. Each packet contains literature published by Firewise and Fire Safe and instructions on how to borrow fire safe videos from YWPHI:

From Firewise

www.firewise.org

- Is Your Home Protected from Wildfire Disaster? A Homeowner's Guide to Wildfire Retrofit
- Firewise Construction Checklist
- Firewise Around Your Home
- Firewise Communities/USA
- Your Home Doesn't Have to Burn

From Fire Safe Council

www.firesafecouncil.org

- A Homeowner's Guide to Fire Safe Landscaping

Videos Available to Borrow

- *Protecting Your Home from Wildfire* (25 minutes) by Rocky Mountain Research Station, U.S. Forest Service
- *Wildfire! Preventing Home Ignitions* (19 minutes) by Firewise Communities with researcher Jack Cohen at the Fire Sciences Laboratory of U.S. Forest Service

Please email firesafety@yosemitewest.org or call Grace Bartel (☎ 209-372-8752) if you were unable to attend the presentation and would like to receive a packet or check out a video.

Work Party Cleared Fire Hydrants

On July 2nd volunteers in Yosemite West cleared obstructions from around all 24 fire hydrants in the community. We found 25% of the hydrants blocked by dirt and rock, and another 10% by snow stakes. This completes the community portion of the work to ensure summer accessibility to fire hydrants. The next step is to place uniform reflective markers at each hydrant, which Mariposa County Public Works Department has agreed to do. This work will be useful to Mariposa County Fire Department in preparing their community risk assessment, and to Yosemite National Park Fire Department in the event of an actual fire.

Our Forest - Friend or Foe?

We all love the forest, but trees too close to our houses can be treacherous friends. It's not just the wildfire danger they bring, but also the threat of falling on our houses, particularly during winter storms. Two trees went down along Henness Circle and Dogwood Lane this past winter. The first took out a deck, narrowly missing the house. The second luckily did not hit any structures.

And every winter treetops snap off from high winds and heavy snowfall. A few years ago, the top of one tree snapped off and crashed into a Henness Circle house causing major damage. Falling trees concern both homeowners and lot owners, because trees on lots can fall on a neighbor's house. Nobody wants this to happen to their house or to be potentially liable for it happening to their



neighbor's house.

Many part-timers are not in Yosemite West during winter storms and are not sufficiently aware of the ferocity of the winds, and the vulnerability of large trees and of their homes. The trees have substantial mass (a fancy way of saying they're heavy). And many of them are well in excess of 50 feet tall. When they're falling 30 or 40 feet, they pick up some real speed. When a heavy object moving at substantial speed hits a house, the house loses.

Experts agree that the forest in Yosemite West is suffering from a neglect of forest management. Experts can spot problems that the average homeowner would never detect. To the layperson, ours may look like a health forest, but it's not. And when trees are not healthy or diseased, they are weaker and more susceptible to falling during high wind and heavy snow. Here are the signs that our forest is **not** healthy:

- The density of trees is too great. The *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan* discusses the historical distribution per acre and suggests what a healthy forest should look like today. Thinning dense stands on your property allows for healthy growth and reduces both trees falling and wildfire danger.
- Examination of fallen or cut trees shows that the outer, newer tree rings are very close together. The inner, older tree rings are more widely spaced. In a healthy forest where trees have plenty of room to grow, tree rings (which indicate age) are more widely spaced.
- White fir trees are dying. White firs - whether alive or dead - should be cut down in favor of the pine species originally found here. White firs are particularly vulnerable to snapping during storms.
- Disease is present due to drought and lack of overall forest health. A major concern is insect pests such as bark beetles that infest pine trees. To learn how to tell if any of your trees are infested (how to spot disease and identify pitch tubes) visit www.barkbeetles.org.

Timber Harvest on Henness Ridge

by Jonathan Remucal, Pacific Forest Trust

In November 2004, the Yosemite West community got a new neighbor when the Pacific Forest Trust (www.pacificforest.org, PFT), purchased the 727-acre parcel known as Ransome Ranch. PFT is a non-profit conservation group that works to preserve, enhance and restore private, productive forests and sustain their many public benefits. These benefits include clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, biodiversity and forest products.

For those not familiar with the property, Ransome Ranch stretches out along and above Henness Ridge Road, southwest of Yosemite West. Past management on the property led to a shift from forest dominated by sugar pine and ponderosa pine to one dominated by white fir and incense cedar. Significant under story fuel loads were also allowed to develop, contributing to the overall wildfire danger in the area.

To begin restoring the landscape, PFT plans to perform a timber harvest this fall with two goals in mind:

- to create a fire-resilient forest that will protect Yosemite West and resources in Yosemite National Park (YNP); and
- to restore a more natural species composition, favoring fire-resilient, large-diameter pine where appropriate.

PFT and our on-site forester are consulting with YNP representatives and prominent forest and fire ecologists to ensure the harvest results are consonant with the *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*, the fire safety work being performed on adjacent park lands and the restoration goals established by PFT.

We will post a notice on the community bulletin board to inform everyone when logging will start. Logging trucks will access our property via Henness Ridge Road. A specific concern raised by some community members attending the Memorial Day Weekend picnic is that logging trucks may

damage Henness Ridge Road and that Yosemite West property owners would be responsible for any necessary repairs. Should any road damage occur, Henness Ridge Road will be restored to its current condition at no cost to the residents of Yosemite West. Road repair costs are included in our timber harvest plan. Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me (☎ 415-561-0700, jremucal@pacificforest.org).

Sewer Project Update

Work on the repair of the Yosemite West Wastewater Treatment Facility was shut down for the winter. The St. Paul Insurance Company, the surety company that bonded the project, hired the Lovett Silverman Construction Company as construction consultants. The original contractor Mauldin-Dorfmeier Construction Inc. is now in bankruptcy. Lovett Silverman has assumed project management and responsibility to hire contractors to finish the work. Their agent is Manny DeLaVega. They have hired a subcontractor, Bill Marvin, to complete the remaining electrical work. Work is expected to resume in late July, and completed and inspected in late September 2005. If all goes well, the next building season could be summer 2006. Please direct any questions to Dana Hertfelder, Director of Mariposa County Public Works Department (☎ 209-966-5356, dhertfelder@mariposacounty.org).

Yosemite West Special Plan Update

The Yosemite West Planning Advisory Committee is close to concluding a draft Special Plan for the community, addressing issues of zoning and land use. The plan is a recommendation only, and will be forwarded to the Mariposa County Planning Department for review and further public input. To read the draft, visit www.mariposacounty.org/planning or call ☎ 209-966-5151 to request a copy.