



In This Issue

- President's Summer Message, p.1
- YWPHI Board Minutes, p.2
- *In the West* Publication, p.2
- Dues Increase, p.2
- Membership Renewal, p.2
- Board Elections, p.2
- Welcome New Members, p.2
- Mailshed Fixes, p.3-4
 - Parcel Locker Rehab, p.3
 - Locked Mailboxes For Sale, p.4
- Highlands Timber Harvest Plan, p.5
- Exporting Water, p.5
- Fire Safety News, p.6-9
 - President's Letter Redux, p.6
 - Fires Safety Responsibilities, p.7
 - Fire Season Recap, p.7
 - CodeRED Assessment, p.7
 - Fire Hose House Repairs, p.8
 - Burn Suspension Lifted, p.8
 - Fire Safety Grant News, p.8-9
- Holiday House Tour, p. 9

What Has YWPHI Done for You Lately?

On Labor Day we voted on many issues. In recent months, you (because YWPHI is *you*) cleaned and repaired to the parcel lockers, installed new locked mailboxes, an additional rail for rural boxes, and a new bulletin board (p. 3-4). You installed signage and sponsored brush clearing to prevent that area from being used as a toilet (p. 3). You also oversaw a large fire grant to achieve defensible space in over 37% of the neighborhood (p. 8) and obtained another major grant for 2010 (p. 9). You also fixed up the hose houses (p. 8) and planned another Holiday Home Tour (p. 9). Thanks!

President's Fall Message

By Tom Lambert, YWPHI President

For the last few years, I've used this letter to beat the drum on fire safety and membership pleas so that we can all work together on problems that matter to all of us, regardless of whether people are full or part-time residents, lot owners or homeowners, rental managers or, to some extent, long-term renters. And that is still the most important issue facing Yosemite West (see p.6).

That said, there are plenty of other ways to pitch in around the neighborhood. I certainly could do more, but alas, I'm fairly lazy. I do the little I do in hopes that it's better than nothing. That got me thinking lately about what we could do as a community if everyone had a few hours *per year* to contribute. When we lived in Berkeley, government at various levels took care of everything from garbage collection to mail delivery to fire protection. Send money, receive services. Nothing else was asked of us.

Up here, it's a little different. There always seem to be gaps that aren't quite covered by any agency and community members step in to fix problems. Often this is under the sponsorship of YWPHI, though not always by any means. You probably know that volunteers in the neighborhood keep up the mailshed, organize garbage collection and above work hard on fire safety.

Thanks most recently go to Jeff Hornacek, Rea and Jerry Jackman for everything they've done to fix and upgrade our mail facilities and to Kim O'Neil and John Mock for overseeing one grant this year and obtaining *yet another one* for next year.

If you have some time and see something that needs to be done, do it, and then let us know about it so we can thank you publicly (newsletter@yosemitewest.org). If you have a couple of hours, but aren't sure what to do, let us know that too, and we'll help with ideas. Would you like to see an article in the newsletter? Go ahead and write one. Do you have 15 minutes to sweep out the mail shed? Please do. Do you have your lot all cleaned up? Maybe you would like to learn about the grant writing process. Kim and John would love to see someone take this over eventually. It's a huge

amount of work and we really need to think about who is going to do it in the future or at least how better to distribute the load. If you would be willing to commit to a few hours per year at your convenience, let us know (president@yosemitewest.org or 209.379.4127). There's always plenty to do.

YWPHI Board Minutes

Minutes from previous YWPHI Board of Directors' meetings are archived online at <http://yosemitewest.org/board.htm>. Minutes from the September 6, 2009 meeting are now available online. The next board meeting is Wednesday, March 31, 2010 at 7 p.m.

***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>. Each issue is announced to all members by email as soon as it is available for download from the YWPHI site. Your willingness to obtain the newsletter electronically saves YWPHI money on printing and mailing, allowing us to use that money for community projects.

Membership Dues Still Due

We thank our renewing members and ask anyone who has not already done so to send in their annual membership of \$35 per household, which is due September 1st each year. At the annual member meeting in 2008, we voted to raise the dues. Dues had not been raised in many years and YWPHI has taken on a bigger job with all of the fire work that is being run through the association.

You can mail a check payable to YWPHI to 7585 Henness Ridge Road, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389-9108 or send your dues via PayPal to treasurer@yosemitewest.org.

This year we sent the dues notices and statements electronically. Please make sure you have whitelisted the yosemitewest.org domain to ensure you receive email communication and the newsletter.

We invite everyone not presently a member to join; you can download a membership form at www.yosemitewest.org/members.htm. We welcome suggestions from everyone for activities you'd like to see YWPHI doing.

Newly Elected YWPHI Board of Directors (2009-2010)

The YWPHI Board of Directors was reelected at the annual meeting on September 6, 2009. Continuing are officers Tom Lambert (President), Kelly Rich (Vice President & Secretary), and Kim O'Neil (Treasurer) and members Jim Andrews, Todd "Kipper" Caranto, and Jeff Hornacek. No terms expired this year. Tom Lambert will continue as newsletter editor, as will Kim O'Neil as webmaster, John Mock as Chair of the Fire Safety Committee, and Rea Jackman and Kay Pitts on the Hospitality committee.

Members of the YWPHI Board of Directors serve as community volunteers and do not receive financial compensation for their time. It may seem obvious to state that Board members are volunteers, but recently someone incorrectly commented that the Board was paid.

Furthermore, we invite anyone attracted by that king's salary to run for a position on the Board. Positions come open almost every year. Next year the YWPHI Board will have four vacancies to fill. If you want to get involved, please throw your hat in the ring. Who knows where it could lead. Rumor has it that a community activist from Chicago was recently elected to some notable position in Washington.

Welcome New Members

We are pleased to welcome new members: Scott and Sandi Renfro.

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.

Mailbox Corner

The mailboxes aren't just a place to get your mail. It's the place where many residents do their neighborhood socializing, occasionally view wildlife, and the place where community information is posted. This fall YWPHI cleaned up the area and made some functional improvements to meet the changing and growing needs of the community.

Parcel Lockers

We enlisted the Jerry and Rea Jackman's help to restore the parcel lockers to use. The parcel lockers are used for packages that don't fit in the regular boxes. The letter carrier leaves a key in your box that unlocks the locker. The key remains locked in place until the mail carrier needs it again.

Two of the parcel lockers were missing their keys, so Rea arranged for replacement keys. Now all four of the parcel lockers are functional for the first time in years — and just in time to get those holiday packages. Our mail carrier Pierce Loberg has on many occasions gone out of his way to drive packages to residents' houses because the parcel lockers were unavailable. We all owe Pierce a big thank you!



Parcel Locker Rehab

Lions & Tigers & Bears Oh My!

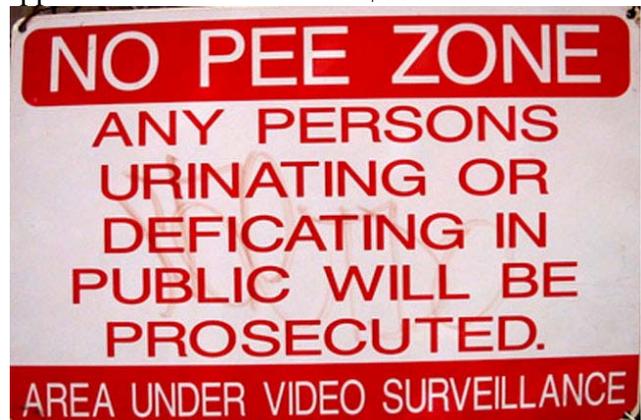
Well, not quite, although we found several wild creatures living inside the mailbox shed. First, we removed an infestation of more than a dozen wasps nests that were beginning to deter our postman. Thanks again to Pierce Loberg for buying (out of his own pocket) and hanging

several traps behind the mailbox shed to kill wasps and yellowjackets) over several months. Thanks to the Pitts for donating the can of spray, which seems to have terminated the problem.

Next, many thanks again to Jerry and Rea Jackman who tackled the cleaning of the parcel lockers. In the process, they removed four mice and a snake — a rosy boa! Rea braved the stench and scrubbed out the lowest parcel locker where the mice had been making their home. It seems the snake had been staying close to its food supply.

Duck & Cover

For those of you who may not know, the area behind the mailbox shed has been used as a toilet by tourists for a long time. (Thankfully, nobody has ever seen a resident back there for those purposes.) The membership discussed what to do about the mess at the YWPHI annual meeting on September 6, 2009. We decided to thin and remove the trees right behind the shed to open up the area to view and to post a sign to dissuade future offenders. At the meeting, the membership approved a maximum of \$600 for the effort.



Since we already had a crew doing defensible space work in the community (see p. 8), we realized the crew could make a dent in creating defensible space at this corner. The defensible space crew did the fuel reduction work on October 8, 2009. In the process, they also chipped the debris that the CalFire roadside vegetation clearance crew had left in September 2009. The defensible space crew could have easily spent several days working behind the shed, but the area is much improved by what they were able to do. Finally, we installed a sign on the back outside wall of the mailbox shed.

Bulletin Boards

We purchased and installed two new bulletin boards. The original bulletin board was broken, marred by graffiti and too small to accommodate announcements many times of the year. Thanks to Jeff Hornacek for installing the new bulletin boards and disposing of the old one.

New Locked Mailboxes for Sale

The locked mailboxes in the mailbox shed were all purchased many years ago. In recent years, many of you have expressed an interest in purchasing locked mailboxes. A vote of the membership at the YWPHI annual meeting on September 6, 2009 approved a \$2,000 budget to install a new mailbox cluster.



We're pleased to report that the installation of the new mailbox cluster is complete. Thanks go to Jeff Hornacek for his research and labor on this. The cluster has 12 individual medium size locked mailboxes, one parcel locker, and an outgoing mail slot.

We are waiting for the post office to install the master lock for the unit. Once this lock is installed, the cluster will be operational. The master lock has been ordered, so we expect it to arrive and be installed in the coming week or two.

Meanwhile, YWPHI is offering the mailboxes for sale to its members. The cost per mailbox is \$160. This is a one-time fee based on our costs to install the mailboxes, not an annual rental fee. Once you purchase the mailbox, it's yours to use and resell as you wish. Please mail a check payable to YWPHI to 7585 Henness Ridge Road, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389-9108 or send your payment via PayPal to treasurer@yosemitewest.org.

Mailboxes will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis determined by when your payment is received. First preference will be given to ongoing YWPHI members. We cannot guarantee that there will be mailboxes for everyone who wants one.

If your membership has lapsed or you are not a member, please visit the Membership page at <http://www.yosemitewest.org/members.htm> for instructions on how to join YWPHI. Long-term renters are also welcome to join YWPHI. As per Article III paragraph 2 of the YWPHI Bylaws (<http://www.yosemitewest.org/bylaw.htm>), a "full-time (non-transient) occupant of a single-family residence in Yosemite West" is eligible to become an Associate Member of YWPHI.

Rural Mailboxes

In order to make space to install the new mailbox cluster, we needed to move a few rural mailboxes. We'd like to thank Jeff Hornacek for purchasing the supplies and installing a third row at the top of the rural mailboxes. Now there is plenty of space for new rural mailboxes.



Highlands Timber Harvest Plan

Yosemite Highlands, Inc., a privately owned corporation, has filed a Timber Harvest Plan (THP) for 600 acres directly west, northwest and north of Yosemite West. The proposed timber harvest will be conducted on two parcels owned by Yosemite Highlands, Inc.: APN 006-070-029 (312.89 acres); and APN 006-070-027 (319.97 acres); you can refer to the Parcel Map in Appendix A of the Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan (<http://www.yosemitewest.org/ywcpwp.pdf>).

The THP (number 4-09-009/MAR-2) proposes to selectively harvest trees, which will be physically removed over Yosemite Park Way, Henness Ridge Road, and Wawona Road. The THP, once approved, will operate for three years, with a two-year extension possible. All Yosemite West property and homeowners are encouraged to download and review the Highlands THP at <http://bit.ly/HighlandsTHP>. Section II outlines the operations, and will likely be of the most interest. The Public Comment Period closed on October 26, 2009.

Exporting Water

Mariposa County Public Works Department received questions from several property owners this summer about contractors drawing water from hydrants in Yosemite West. In August, Public Works received a request from Eagle Peak Rock & Paving to draw water from Yosemite West to use for construction project on the Wawona and Glacier Point roads. Eagle Peak is drawing water from the Badger Pass Ski Resort, but that well does not have adequate capacity. Eagle Peak said they might need as much 10,000 gallons per day from Yosemite West. Mariposa County Public Works granted authorization based on several considerations: a) property owners access Yosemite West using NPS roads, so improvements to these roads will benefit Yosemite West; b) the quantity of water usage would not have a significant impact on the overall water system; and c) Yosemite West and Public Works benefit by having a good working relationship with NPS. Eagle Peak was tracking

the amount of water they use so Public Works could invoice them for usage (at a rate of \$18.10 per 1,000 gallons, which is the rate on the water fee schedule for usage of more than 52,000 gallons) at the end of the project. Alpine Builders also drew a small amount from a hydrant for a construction project in Yosemite West because their metered supply was inadequate for the job. They also paid for the water used. The revenue generated will be credited to the water division in the Yosemite West budget. Usage of Yosemite West water is a topic that the Yosemite West Maintenance District Advisory Committee will be addressing with Public Works.

When a wildfire broke out near Yosemite West on Thursday, August 27, Public Works contacted Eagle Peak and told them to immediately stop drawing water, so it could be conserved for firefighting. After the fire was over, Eagle Peak was later reauthorized to draw water from the hydrant.

YWPHI and Maintenance Issues

As a reminder, YWPHI reports about the activities of and topics of interest to the YWMDAC as a service to the community and is **not involved with the committee's activities**. YWMDAC is a liaison between Yosemite West property owners and the Public Works Department, which is responsible for daily operation of the maintenance district. YWMDAC's recommendations are not binding; Mariposa County Public Works Department reviews any recommendations and proceeds with those they feel have merit. Any major activities or policy issues generally go before the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors for approval. Mariposa County posts official minutes of YWMDAC minutes after they are approved.

Whenever you come across a problem or concern about the roads, sewer or water in Yosemite West, please call the Mariposa County Public Works Department at 209-966-5356. Their office should always be the first point of contact. **Please respect the privacy of any Public Works' employee who lives in Yosemite West.**

Fire Safety Roundup

President's Appeal

Let's start with a **brief poll**. Raise your left hand if you found last season's fires scary. Raise your right hand if you want Yosemite West to still exist in ten years. If you didn't raise either hand, feel free to skip the rest of this newsletter.

We had plenty of reminders this summer that, if anything, we need to accelerate the work we've been doing. We had two fires on the border of Yosemite West this season and the Big Meadow fire nearly destroyed Foresta (see p. 7 below). We narrowly dodged the bullet again. Furthermore, recent research appearing in the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*, based on data for the Yosemite area from 1984 to 2005, finds that we are likely to see a 22% increase in the number of severe fires in Yosemite by 2050 as a result of climate change.

We have to be realistic about the threats and the solutions. Many people are hoping for a magic bullet in the form of a major firebreak around the neighborhood or the proposed fire station at the Yosemite Institute campus. While those are part of the solution, there is no single magic bullet and all other measures depend on getting and keeping the interior of the neighborhood fire safe.

Yesterday I took a drive around the neighborhood and saw **houses with branches brushing or nearly touching decks and roofs**, dense stands of firs and cedars, and dead trees still standing. I know I still have some work to come into compliance, but I'm committed to reaching compliance before the next fire season. I hope everyone else will take that pledge too. If you have boughs almost touching your house, the time for action is before the next fire season rolls around.

Many people are reticent to cut for aesthetic reasons, but a healthy, natural forest would not look like this. The forest around Yosemite West is a clear cut that grew back under a strict fire suppression regime. This has skewed the balance of species and resulted in high-density growth. We made the choice to live or vacation in a place with high fire danger and we are now governed

by state and local codes that obligate us to create a fire-safe environment rather than putting firefighters at risk and spending millions of dollars in taxpayer money every time a fire starts. As the neighborhood gets built out, it simply isn't realistic to expect that we can maintain visual privacy on ¼ acre lots. The fact is, our neighborhood is still a tinderbox and it is imperative to redress that situation before a fire does it for us. Finally, everyone needs to realize that houses that have limbs nearly brushing the house or deck, will be red flagged, meaning that in a major fire, **firefighters may not even attempt to save that house**.

Once again next summer, we will benefit from grant money obtained through the efforts of John Mock and Kim O'Neil. I am deeply grateful for what they've done, but we can't expect two individuals plus government agencies to take responsibility for the fire safety of our private homes. Success depends on **participation**. This year's program went well. We had more people wanting to participate than we had funds to handle. Next year's grant will be even bigger and hopefully we can accommodate everyone this time. If you didn't participate last time, please do so this time. **Even if you do not need any work done**, filling out the statement of how many hours you contributed helps provide matching funds toward the grant.

For reasons of liability and expense, the grant will not cut large trees or limb higher than fifteen feet off the ground. We all, and I'm speaking of myself too, need to come out of the bubble of denial and **assess the safety of our homes realistically and objectively**. Last year we saw a lot of work cleaning up ground fuels in advance of Memorial Day and the arrival of the thinning crew. This year I hope we'll all focus on trimming up the big trees in advance of the grant crews coming through. If we can get those limbs down and hauled to the road, we can take care of them there under the grant.

Cleaning up the inside of the neighborhood is the most essential step to giving us a chance of surviving a major fire from outside the neighborhood and stopping a minor fire within the

neighborhood from spreading. On the one hand, all future grants will depend on our success in accomplishing this. More importantly, there is simply no point to building a massive firebreak around the neighborhood until the neighborhood itself is fire safe. Large fires can send embers half a mile in front of the flame front. This is why the best consultants in the business made cleaning the neighborhood the #1 priority in our Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Mission of the YWPHI Fire Safety Committee

At this year's YWPHI annual meeting, the membership voted for and approved a mission statement for the Fire Safety Committee, which was suggested by John Mock:

The mission of the YWPHI Fire Safety Committee is to preserve Yosemite West's natural and built resources by educating and mobilizing all property owners to make their houses, lots and the community Fire Safe. The YWPHI Fire Safety Committee does not fight fires nor enforce any laws or regulations. The YWPHI Fire Safety Committee seeks to communicate and cooperate with County, State and Federal agencies whose mission is fire protection and public safety.

2009 Fire Season Recap

Yosemite National Park announced October 16 as the end of this year's fire season storms earlier that week. Rainfall totals varied from 8 inches in Wawona to 5.5 inches in Yosemite Valley. Closure of fire season occurs when there is a season-ending precipitation event totaling 2 inches or more.

Fire season may be officially over, but each year the fires get bigger and closer to our community. Four fires in 2009 could have potentially threatened Yosemite West: two lighting ignitions, one escaped prescribed burn, and one accidental ignition.

West Fire

This year's fire season jumped the gun, with a wildfire starting near Yosemite West four days before the official fire season start date

(May 22). On May 18, we had an afternoon thunderstorm, which is uncommon for May. This storm resulted in 100 lightning strikes and four fires, the earliest lightning-ignited fires ever in park. One of the lightning strikes ignited a fire near the park boundary, north and west of Yosemite West, and posed a significant threat to our community. The fire was within the park's suppression zone so National Park Service (NPS) dispatched firefighting crews by helicopter. Crews fought the fire aggressively and contained it to ¼ acre. The fire was totally out by May 20. Its location was roughly midslope between the Yosemite View Lodge in El Portal and Yosemite West. It was the smallest fire of the season, but the closest to Yosemite West.

Grouse Fire

A lightning strike on May 30 ignited a fire north of Grouse Creek, northeast of Yosemite West. The fire, which burned within the 1990 Steamboat fire perimeter, began to grow quickly on June 26 with a change in conditions. NPS managed the fire, which grew to 3,044 acres by July 11.

Big Meadow Fire

A prescribed fire ignited by NPS fire managers on August 26 in Foresta escaped and grew beyond the predetermined 91-acre fire perimeter to burn a total of 7,425 acres into the scar of the 1990 A-Rock Fire. Once the fire burned beyond the perimeter, firefighters began suppression efforts. The fire was 100% contained on September 10.

Heness Ridge Fire

A fire ignited on August 26 on Henness Ridge approximately 2-1/2 miles west of Yosemite West near Cathewood Saddle and Barrel Spring. By midmorning on August 27, flames were visible from Yosemite West. Firefighting resources had to be diverted from the Big Meadow Fire to extinguish it. The fire burned about five acres.

CodeRED

As of August 2009, the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office had contracted with Emergency Communications Network to license its CodeRED high-speed notification solution.

Please visit the CodeRED Website's Community Enrollment Notification page at <http://bit.ly/YowestCodedred> to enter your address and phone numbers(s). Submitting this information will enable you to be notified by your local emergency response team in the event of emergency situations or critical community alerts. CodeRED has the capability to not only call local telephone numbers in Yosemite West, but also primary residences elsewhere and cell phone numbers.

The Sheriff's office successfully activated the CodeRED system on August 26, 2009 to provide us with an update about the Big Meadow and West fires as it related to possible evacuation. Rumors were flying and tensions were rising that day, and the notification system gave useful, first-hand information.

Fire Hose Houses

YWPHI purchased "Fire Hose" signs for the fire hose houses to replace the original signs that were peeling off. The new signs are reflective with larger lettering. YWPHI paid \$74.25 for the signs.



Burn Suspension Lifted

On October 14, CalFire lifted the suspension of burning on private lands in the Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit, which includes Mariposa County. Residential burning, which is limited to piles of pine needles and branches, 4-feet by 4-

feet in diameter, is allowed only on permissive burn days. Call the Mariposa County Burn Day Information Line (209-966-1200, 888-440-2876) to check the "permissive burn status" and for further instructions (e.g., permit requirements, limited hours, etc.).

Many property owners wait until late spring and even Memorial Day weekend to rake and haul pine needles, but the fall can be an excellent time for raking and burning. The task goes fast when the pine needles are dry and it leaves less work for the springtime. Full-time residents frequently do fall burning, so if you're a part-timer who hasn't done it before, give it a try. Remember to keep your garden hose handy and to douse your fire thoroughly when you're done.

Fire Safety Grant News

2009 Defensible Space Grant Update

We successfully completed all the on-the-ground work for our 2009 defensible space grant on October 8, 2009. The project's goal was to conduct fuel reduction on approximately 30% of the 293 parcels or 90 parcels (ie, 30% of the 109 acres or 36 acres) in Yosemite West. We exceeded the goal by treating 101 parcels (58 houses and 43 vacant lots) on approximately 37 acres. **We estimate the project cut and chipped 1,330 tons of fuel.** (We had a waiting list of 33 parcels, which will be rolled over to the 2010 grant; see p. 9 below.)

To further measure the success of the project, the Mariposa County Fire Department is preparing a Red Zone fire risk assessment of all houses in Yosemite West. They expect to complete this report in December 2009 and will mail a copy to every homeowner. To learn about prior Red Zone assessments, please visit <http://www.yosemitewest.org/mcfdgis.htm>.

We want to extend thanks to the crew from Terra Firma Customs: Sean Rankin, Mike McGee, Don Rankin, John Breece, Anthony Romero, and Tony Romero. YWPHI paid the crew a total of \$2,500 in bonuses for successful on-time and on-budget completion of this project. The YWPHI membership approved the payment of bonuses at the September 6, 2009 annual meeting.

New 2010 Grant for \$304k+

We've saved the best news for last. YWPHI has been awarded more than \$304,000 in funding provided by a new National Fire Plan grant from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. (For those of you who are keeping track, this grant is the fourth grant awarded to YWPHI; the four grant awards total more than \$445,000. You can find a summary of grant activities at <http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm>.) The 2010 grant will continue defensible space work within the community and conduct fuel reduction on private property adjacent to Yosemite West's

western boundary according to guidelines in the *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan* (<http://www.yosemitewest.org/ywcpwp.pdf>). If you did not participate in the 2009 defensible space project, we will be contacting you again and asking for your cooperation in creating community-wide defensible space, which means removing ladder fuels and other hazard fuels from your property.

We also attended a mandatory pre-award workshop in August 2009. The Fire Safe Council is currently preparing the grant agreement, which we expect to receive and sign before year end.



Holiday Open House

Saturday, December 26th

3:00 - 7:00 pm

Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc. is happy to announce the 6th annual YOSEMITE WEST HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE. All community members and their guests are invited to come. Meet and greet old and new neighbors and enjoy tasty holiday treats and libations at this festive annual event. The party will visit these two homes:

3:00 – 5:00 p.m. **Hors d'oeuvres and more** at Jerry & Rea Jackman's home, 7431 Yosemite Park Way

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. **Sweets** at Richard & Jamie Heim's home, 7316 Yosemite Park Way

To avoid parking issues, ride with a neighbor or walk if possible. No need to R.S.V.P., but call our party planner Rea Jackman (209-372-4465) with any questions.

We hope to see you there!



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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