We wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2014 New Year

Photo by Nancy Robbins, courtesy of DNC Parks & Resorts at Yosemite
President’s Message
By Robert Asquith

It is nice to experience the quiet of winter after an extremely hectic Fall.

All in the Gateways have suffered significant loss because of the Rim Fire and the Park shutdown. However, now the Park is open, the snow has fallen with more to come, the pass is closed and the High Country is resting, Half Dome cables are down, and many of the animals have retreated to their winter dens.

Looking forward to 2014, this is a new year with new and promising beginnings, we gather on January 9 at the Yosemite Gateway Partners Winter meeting to celebrate the new year, talk about the regeneration from the Rim Fire and make plans for the year. Throughout Yosemite and the Stanislaus National Forest, regeneration starts with an enormous wildflower bloom coming in Spring.

YGP seeks to expand our conversations about culture, resources, and economics to all in our Gateways and beyond. Toward this goal, we are adding content each week to our Facebook page – Yosemite Gateway Partners. Please like us and be part of this conversation.

Please invite any one or organization you feel is appropriate. You can do this by mentioning our Facebook page, by forwarding any of the YGP emails you get, or by sending them this newsletter. All are welcome. We presently have more than 650 registered people and organizations who receive our emails not counting those forwarded.

YGP extends its heartfelt thanks to those that host our meetings – Yosemite National Park staff and Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts at Yosemite and its staff. Thanks for great program participation, facilities, and food.

YGP have the distinct honor of screening the latest Ken Burns film, commissioned by the Yosemite Conservancy, entitled Yosemite a gathering of Spirit. This will be presented at our Winter meeting, January 9.
Ever since Yosemite Gateway Partners became an incorporated organization, its board of directors has been guided by an advisory council. In fact, the by-laws of the organization spell out the charter of this body. Article V: Section 5.0, states, “The Advisory Council shall be an advisory body that studies and debates issues, and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors on matters of policy.”

Over the years, depending on the needs of the organization, the YGP Advisory Council has met quarterly, generally around the time of the quarterly general meetings. The Advisory Council has guided the board in developing the YGP mission statement, recommended goals for growth, and set general direction, including the need to balance general meeting topics. Recommendations from the council further emphasized YGP’s need to remain politically neutral, encourage collaboration within the region, assist Yosemite National Park with traffic congestion issues, and especially, to facilitate communications within the region. The Advisory Council is also the primary place for individuals from agencies and organizations which are prohibited from serving on the YGP board (Forest Service, NPS, etc.), to provide input and focus to YGP’s direction.

The YGP Advisory Council will be meeting from 3:00 to 5:00 PM, January 8, 2014, the afternoon prior to the upcoming January general meeting. It will meet in the administration conference room, first floor of the Yosemite National Park administration building, near the visitor center and museum, in Yosemite Valley.

Following a review of board defined priorities at this meeting, the Advisory Council will review the existing publications list, and set specific objectives for YGP’s email news releases, known as “eblasts.”

We invite you to join us on this visionary council, which assesses local issues and needs in Yosemite and its gateways. The YGP board welcomes your inspiration, advice, suggestions, and community focus.
For a second summer in a row, the communities represented by Yosemite Gateway Partners worked with Yosemite National Park to help visitors avoid traffic congestion in the park. Gateway communities worked with park staff to employ creative solutions that proved to be crucial to the visitor experience. Each gateway offered their own unique solution to help the park manage traffic.

Mariposa, for example, offered the “Mariposa Experience,” which endeavored to promote the rich pioneer history of Mariposa County.

Madera County produced an amazing video highlighting the wealth of recreational opportunities along the Fossils to Falls Trail, which starts in Chowchilla and ends in Yosemite National Park.

Mono County also produced a great video, offering tips to visit Yosemite like a professional. This video informed visitors of trip planning, the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), and fun east side recreational and lodging options.

Tuolumne County continued promoting the new YARTS service along the Highway 120 corridor. While each gateway offered unique solutions to help alleviate traffic, they all worked together and supported each other to help visitors have the best experience possible.

Next summer, Yosemite National Park will continue working with gateway communities to inform recreational vehicle (RV) users about transit options. The park, and surrounding communities, will continue to improve the visitor experience by providing the best solution for those visiting the park with large sized vehicles.

By working with gateway communities, Yosemite will be able to reach RV users prior to their visit to the park. These contacts will help visitors enjoy the park without unhooking their RVs. Additionally, this effort will also continue the park’s effort to reduce traffic congestion during the busy summer months.
Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau

South Gateway - Winter 2013-14 Events
By Rhonda Salisbury

Yosemite Grant Anniversary Events:
New Year’s Eve, John Muir Style – South Gate Brewing Company, Oakhurst – Dec 31
Yosemite “Rocks” – an Artistic Learning Series, Oakhurst – Jan 11, Feb 8 and March 8
Lincoln’s Battleground at South Gate Brewing Company, Oakhurst – March 14
Sequoiascape – Fresno Yosemite International Airport – 2013-14
Lore & Lure of Yosemite Exhibit at the Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau - 2014

February 1 - 28th Annual Rotary Crab Feed, Oakhurst
All you can eat bread, salad, pasta and CRAB! Raffle Prizes, Door Prizes, Full Bar. All proceeds donated locally by the Oakhurst Sierra Rotary Club.

February 8 & 9 - Wine & Chocolate Weekend on the Madera Wine Trail
Join the family wineries along with Madera Wine Trail for wine tasting, delectable chocolate creations, local art, music & more

February 8 - Vision Academy of the Arts, “A Grand Night of Entertainment”
An evening of music, art, entertainment and auctions at the Golden Chain Theatre in Oakhurst

March 2 - Chick Days at Oakhurst Feed & Pet Supply
Backyard flock raisers learn how to manage their hens, support a healthy coop, and identify avian disease. Ca. Dept. of Ag and Land O’ Lakes Purina will be on hand as experts in their respective fields, to teach and answer questions. Baby chicks will be on sale, along with great deals on chicken coops. Fun for the whole family!

March 8 - German Fest, Oakhurst Chamber of Commerce
Back by popular demand this four-course authentic German meal includes Deutsches Brot, (German bread), Gurkensalat (cucumber salad), Graupeneintopf (barley stew), rotkohl (sauerkraut, red cabbage), and two choices of German sausages, plus apfestrudel (apple strudel) for dessert.

For more information go to www.YosemiteThisYear.com/events
Join Yosemite Conservancy and Yosemite National Park in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Yosemite Grant by hosting a screening of the documentary Yosemite: A Gathering of Spirit in your community. Yosemite Conservancy partnered with renowned filmmakers Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan to produce this inspirational film honoring the landmark federal legislation, signed by President Abraham Lincoln, that preserved Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. This act, the first time our government set aside land for public use and enjoyment, gave birth to the national park movement.

We are excited to offer the film to partners of Yosemite National Park and are already filling up the anniversary-film calendar with screening events hosted in Yosemite’s gateway communities. Yosemite Conservancy will provide the film, free of charge, for community screenings of 25 or more attendees. Please contact Catherine Cilfone, anniversary-film coordinator, at 210-379-6951 or ccilfone@yosemiteconservancy.org for information.


Yosemite: Your Park, Our Experts. Join Us for an Adventure!

Do you want to go on your first backpacking trip but don't know where to start? Dreaming of photographing the Yosemite Falls moonbow? Whether this is your first or 100th visit to Yosemite National Park, we have the adventure for you.

Our full lineup of 2014 Outdoor Adventures is now available. Every season offers a new opportunity to enjoy the park you love.

Your participation in these programs also supports Yosemite. Proceeds from Yosemite Conservancy Outdoor Adventures are used to fund trail repair and access, habitat restoration and wildlife protection. Deepen your connection to this magnificent place, while ensuring its protection for future generations.

Upcoming Adventures


January 18 Beginner Backpack Workshop: First-time backpackers receive expert tips during this indoor training session.

February 8 Snowshoeing Yosemite: Mariposa Grove 2: Discover the majestic big trees on snowshoes.

Find detailed information about these programs at www.yosemiteconservancy.org/outdoor-adventures, or call 209-379-2317, x10.

Ostrander Ski Hut Reservations


To make a reservation, please apply online at www.yosemiteconservancy.org/ostrander, or call 209-379-5161 (Monday–Friday, from 8:30 am–4:30 pm).
Wild Fires to Wild Flowers
The Rebirth of a Forest
Happening Now in & near Yosemite National Park
See Mother Nature’s Recovery for Yourself!

California State Route 120 spans the Central Valley, Sierra Nevada Foothills, Yosemite National Park, and the High Desert of the Eastern Sierra. Don’t miss out, plan your Highway 120 Adventure!

This is a once in a lifetime chance to see the lifecycle of a forest, from a major fire, through the reforestation effort, to a multi year rebirth of the land including a wildflower display to delight the eye.

We LOVE Yosemite but we Think Outside the Park too!

Yosemite Hwy 120 Chamber of Commerce & Groveland Yosemite Visitor Center
11875 Ponderosa Lane, Suite A, P.O. Box 1263, Groveland, Ca 95321
(209) 962-0429 info@groveland.org www.YosemiteChamberofCommerce.com
Like us at facebook.com/yosemitechamber and facebook.com/Highway120Adventure
Follow us at twitter.com/YosemiteCOC and twitter.com/Hwy120Adventure

The Northern Gateway to Yosemite: Groveland Highway 120 ROCKS!
On January 11, 2014, the city of Sonora will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Yosemite Grant with displays of Yosemite art and musical performances. The festivities will be highlighted by an exclusive screening of the latest film by Ken Burns, “Yosemite: A Gathering of Spirit” at one of the town’s most cherished landmark, the Sonora Opera Hall. Ken Burns is widely recognized as a master filmmaker with award winning documentaries about The National Parks, The Civil War, Baseball, Jazz, and the Brooklyn Bridge among many others. This event was made possible by the generous contributions of the Yosemite Conservancy, the only philanthropic organization dedicated exclusively to supporting Yosemite National Park.

A live Opera Hall performance portraying John Muir by Lee Stetson, an actor who stars in Burns’ masterful “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea”, will also accentuate an evening filled with Yosemite “spirit” during Sonora’s 2nd Saturday Art Night. Stetson has been recognized as the voice of John Muir for many years in performances that have left audiences amazed and wondering if they had just met the old Scot himself.

Musicians will play original and period musical pieces in many of the local shops that line Washington Street whose windows and walls will be adorned with magnificent paintings and photographs representing the crown jewel of California, Yosemite National Park.

John DeGrazio is one of the event’s organizers and owns YExplore, a Yosemite tour company impacted by the recent Rim Fire and government shutdown. He declares “This event is an embodiment of the spirit of Yosemite and the great people who continue to build our community here in Sonora. Rather than lament our losses, we prefer to move forward and show the world what a cultural outlet our little town has become.” Graced with scenic beauty in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, Sonora is quickly becoming recognized as an area engulfed in the arts. The Tuolumne County Arts Alliance works closely with many local artists who are given the opportunities to express themselves during these special nights and groups like The Greater Good, a local collaborative of artists, insure those expressions are creative and current. BZ Smith is the owner of Hive-arts.org and is a leading visionary for 2nd Saturday Art Night. BZ shares “I hope everyone in Sonora is as excited about this unique event as I am. We are fortunate to share this incredible opportunity. So, it is our goal to make the town shine on January 11th.”

Screenings of “Yosemite: A Gathering of Spirit” will be on the hour at 5, 6, and 7 pm on January 11 at the Opera Hall located at 250 South Washington St. and will be free. Stetson will perform at 8 pm. Shops will remain open throughout the evening and will be showing the works of many highly talented local artists. Visitors are also encouraged to share in the culinary experiences offered by several of the town’s restaurants.

**About Sonora Second Saturday Art Night**

Sonora Second Saturday Art Night celebrates our community’s diverse artistic spirit each month with a joyful night of lively music, theatre, art shows and literary arts. More than 1000 Tuolumne County visual artists, photographers, musicians, performing artists and writers receive inspiration and courage to create from these mountains in the heart of the Sierra Nevada ~ This place we call “home”!
The third largest fire in the history of California burning over 130 thousand acres and going uncontained for 6 weeks brought dismay to Yosemite visitors and local business including Photo Safari Yosemite.

Of the 133,000 acres burned, about 20,000 was inside the north west part of the park boundary. This man made fire made for some spectacular images, but unfortunately at great cost of over $130 million.

In addition to the Rim Fire, many of the local gateway businesses were adversely affected along the 41 and 140 corridors with the Carsten and Alpine fires contributing to a less than stellar summer.

And if that wasn’t enough, starting October 1, the Federal Government shut down the National Park Services including our local Yosemite Park for 16 days. The closure impacted the Photo Safari Yosemite guide services with several canceled park excursions. However, an alternative Bass Lake/Nelder Grove Photo Safari was designed and successfully made up for the losses.

Now the next concern is how much snowfall we will be seeing this season. With the two year drought still in progress, we are hoping that the precipitation will be more than last season!!
PROTECTING MORE THAN THE GROUND WE WALK UPON

By Alexis Sohlden

Yosemite National Park is only one of the 401 national parks in the United States. It is a prime example of the National Park Service’s mission to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” When hearing this you picture Yosemite’s magnificent waterfalls, thriving meadows, immense geologic features, and abundant wildlife.

Look up. One of these natural resources not often thought about happens to be the brilliant sky above. Many of Yosemite’s visitors participate in daytime activities and settle into their warm, cozy beds by nightfall. However, Yosemite rewards those visitors who venture out at night.

You’ll find that the sky is even more enhanced during the winter months. To make the most of this opportunity to see the winter night sky, many activities are offered by Delaware North Companies (DNC).

Starry Skies over Yosemite - Interpretive naturalists lead you and fellow star enthusiasts through Yosemite Valley as you explore the heavens, moon, Milky Way galaxy, meteors, constellations, comets, and folklore.

Not exactly sure where you’re supposed to be looking? Let us guide you with tools that clearly point out the stars and constellations for you to see.

Night Prowl - If you’re feeling a little more adventurous you might opt for the Night Prowl. Follow an interpretive naturalist in the dark through an area of Yosemite Valley not often visited by humans during the nighttime. Along the way, you’ll discuss nocturnal animals, senses, adaptations, and, of course, the night.

Full Moon Snowshoe Walks - You’re in for a truly special treat if you find yourself visiting Yosemite near or on a full moon date.

Full Moon Snowshoe Walks are offered only 15 times per year, typically January through March. An interpretive naturalist leads the way on a guided moonlit snowshoe walk at Badger Pass. Using only the moon to light your path, you’ll explore animal adaptations, astronomy, and Yosemite’s winter history.

Other Activities - There are still plenty of other activities offered if you’re looking for activities that will keep you warm and cozy indoors. These include evening presentations or films at Yosemite Lodge at the Falls and fireside storytelling at The Ahwahnee. Whatever your desire, it’s available during winter in Yosemite

For more information, please visit http://www.yosemitepark.com/evening-programs.aspx or call Alexis with DNC P&R at Yosemite’s Interpretive Services department at 209-372-8243.
A Festive Holiday Concert

By Les Marsden

The Mariposa Symphony Orchestra’s 12th Season Festive Holiday Concert will be held on Saturday, December 21 at 7 pm – exactly eleven years to the day of the group’s very first-ever concert. Just as true now as it was then: there’s no better way to get into the holiday spirit - but what a difference those years have made!

I’m amazed at the astounding growth of this ensemble. Those who haven’t attended an MSO concert in a year or more may be pleasantly surprised to find a far more polished orchestra. And that difference will really be obvious in the case of Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite drawn from his classic 1892 ballet. It’s been more than a few years since we last played this great piece. Many of our newer members were excited to do so because they’ve never played it before - and many of our veteran musicians reminded me that perhaps it’s been TOO long since I programmed this favorite piece of theirs! So it’s back this year, including that brief dance English Gigue that was cut even before the ballet’s premiere, but which I discovered in manuscript, orchestrated and have included since our very first performance of the Nutcracker Suite – an MSO exclusive just for you.

Also on the program: Beethoven’s greatest overture and that’s saying a lot! His Leonore Overture III has an amazing backstory and the piece itself is nearly a symphony in miniature, albeit one of the most exciting, driven and ultimately triumphant pieces he ever composed. Other pieces on the program include the beautiful intermezzo movement from Lalo’s one and only Cello Concerto, featuring the MSO’s own Gay Dunn as soloist – trust me, she’ll dazzle you. And if that’s not enough, how about the greatest, most recognizable and beloved waltz NOT by Strauss (you’ll recognize Waldteufel’s Les Patineurs instantly by sound, if not by name!)? Or that standard of the season, Leroy Anderson’s Sleigh Ride – which was actually composed during a July heat wave. Plus (of course) Sierra Christmas Party – the piece I composed (nearly) overnight for our very first concert, and which has been de rigueur as the closer at each Holiday concert since.

Tickets are now available at an astonishing $6 for adults and $4 for students at the Mariposa County Arts Council’s office at 5009 Highway 140 in Mariposa (top floor of Chocolate Soup) adjacent to the Mariposa Art Park. For more information call 209.966.3155. Tickets are also available at the Mariposa Visitors Center across from Miners Roadhouse – call 209.966.7081. Full concert info including complete program notes are now available on the Mariposa County Arts Council’s website: http://tinyurl.com/MariposaSO Hope to see you in Mariposa on the 21st and until then, Happy Holidays from your MSO.
Mammoth Mountain Celebrates 60 Years
Mammoth Mountain opened for skiing and snowboarding on November 7th with special $60 lift tickets to help celebrate the mountain’s 60th birthday. The world-class ski area was founded in 1953 by legendary Eastern Sierra local, Dave McCoy.

June Mountain Offers FREE Skiing for Kids and Family–fun Winter Events
June Mountain Ski Area is open again for skiing and snowboarding, after a one-year hiatus in operations last winter. The 2013-14 winter season begins December 13th (weather permitting), with a special $10 lift ticket to celebrate Opening Day. Everything you’ve loved about June Mountain remains the same, except a new look for kids’ lift tickets: they’re FREE! Yes, kids 12 and under will ski and snowboard free at June Mountain all season long, no restrictions. Off the slopes, the June Lake village is more charming than ever, with festive holiday lights, Winter Festival & Triple-Threat Winter Triathlon scheduled for Jan. 24-25, 2014, Snowmobile Rally scheduled for Feb. 28-Mar. 1, 2014, picturesque cross country skiing in Silver Meadow, cozy lodges and more.

Winter Fishing
Popular fishing spot on the California-Nevada border, Topaz Lake, hosts its annual Topaz Lodge Fishing Derby beginning New Year’s Day and going through mid-April 2014, in which anglers catch tagged fish for cash and prizes. Elsewhere in the county, winter anglers are welcome at sections of the East Walker River, Owens River, and Hot Creek. And, as of March 1, 2014, winter fishing is permitted on the West Walker River – new this year – from the Hwy. 395 bridge (mile marker 96) to the inlet at Topaz Lake. Winter catch-and-release fishing regulations apply. For more information, please visit MonoCounty.org/fishing.

Six Tried-and-Tested Areas for Cross Country Skiing in Mono County
The Eastern Sierra has so much to offer in the way of snow-covered wilderness, that finding the perfect place to glide on skis is easy. Whether you’re a novice and need equipment and instruction, or are an experienced adventurer seeking a challenge in a hardly-touched landscape, you’ll find your ideal cross country experience at Rock Creek’s Sno-Park, Mammoth Lakes’ Tamarack Cross Country Ski Center or Shady Rest trails, June Lake’s quiet Silver Meadow or Obsidian Dome, or remote Bridgeport Winter Recreation Area off Hwy. 108/Sonora Pass.

Winter Air Service – Get Here Faster.
Direct flights to Mammoth Yosemite Airport in the heart of Mono County, are available on Alaska and United Airlines from LAX, San Diego, San Francisco, and Orange County throughout the winter months.

For more information on Winter Activities and Events in Mono County, call 800-845-7922 or visit us at MonoCounty.org
INSPIRING WORKSHOPS

By Debbie Cook

There is always something to learn, something to share, and something to take away from the experience. The John Muir Geotourism (JMGC) enjoys providing the opportunity for one to do just that. Here are the highlights of November workshops.

The holiday card workshop led by Jim Leitzell of Dawn & Jim’s Art Farm was great fun. I participated in the workshop and it was amazing to me what you could create with scraps of paper. I learned that even the smallest piece can be used to embellish your masterpiece. A few cards are on display at the center. Stop by and check it out. You can also visit the art farm website at http://www.greeleyhillartfarm.com

One might wonder what CPR and first-aid have to do with the John Muir? Well, there is always a connection to something if you look for it. Karen Wilson, Secretary to the JMGC board of directors is a certified instructor and is passionate about teaching CPR and first-aid. Attendees for this class came from the forest service along with a few residents that live in very rural areas where they must rely on themselves in emergency situations. And, because of Karen’s efforts, eight more people are now capable of administering first-aid and CPR. So, what do CPR and Muir have to do with each other? CPR save lives, John Muir saved our national parks. Both are indeed very worthy causes.

Something Muir practically invented was field sketching. November brought the second field sketching workshop to the Center and it was even more successful than the first. A joy to see was a six and a half year old, as he shared with us, who came to participate with his dad. Also in attendance were two University of California Merced colleagues that shared they were brushing up on their skills before piloting a fieldwork-intensive nature writing course they will be teaching in the spring. A total of eight students came in eager to learn and experiment with their new skills. Karen Wilson led the workshop and shares that each time she is able to help someone to ‘get it’, is such a reward.

More workshops will be scheduled in the future. If you have a subject you would like us to have a workshop for or are interested in leading a workshop, please contact Debbie Cook at debcook@johnmuir.us. You can also visit our website and sign up for our newsletter to be included in all the happenings at the Center by visiting www.johnmuir.us
“Who was that masked man?” is a phrase that is well known to just about every child raised from the 1930’s to 1950’s as the tag line at the end of a “Lone Ranger” episode. Although not masked in the traditional sense as depicted in the TV series, Galen Clark was truly California’s first “lone ranger”, and if a beard counts, he was also masked.

Now you are probably asking yourself right about now “Galen Clark?  Who was Galen Clark?” And therein lies the biggest parallel today with the fictional character we all know and love as the “Lone Ranger” – the man that saved the day and then rode away with little to remember him.

Born near Shipton, Canada in 1814, and raised in New Hampshire, Galen Clark, much like General U.S. Grant, was mostly a failure in his early life. He tried farming, furniture making, painting and storekeeping. When his wife, Rebecca, died from consumption in 1848, Clark was left with five young children and little in the way of income. In desperation, and failing health, he left his children with relatives and went west to California in 1853 to seek his fortune.

Unfortunately, Clark found very little gold, and, to add insult to injury, was told by a doctor he only had a short time to live. Fortuitously, in 1855 Clark visited Yosemite Valley with some friends and fell in love with the area.

He filed a land claim in 1856 under the 1841 U.S. Preemption Act in the vicinity today known as Wawona, and hoped the mountain air at his new home would help him recover his health. How he survived the first year is unknown, but the next year he built a cabin, became a permanent resident and also a big proponent for the Valley's protection. So much so, in fact, that along with others, he helped persuade California Senator John Conness to introduce a bill in the U.S. Senate on March 28, 1864 to have the U.S. Government grant to the State of California the Yosemite Valley “…upon the express conditions that the premises shall be held for public use, resort and recreation; [and] shall be inalienable for all time;”

Conness’ bill was signed into law by President Lincoln on June 30, 1864, and was accepted by the California legislature on April 2, 1866. Clark became one of the 8 men to be appointed by Governor Low to the unpaid Commission to oversee the Grant, and on May 21, 1866 the Commission appointed him the Grant’s first Guardian. In effect, Clark became California's first State Park Ranger at $500/year - California's lone park ranger. Clark served two appointments as Guardian of what was to become recognized by 1890 as Yosemite State park until it was ceded back to the Federal Government in 1906.

Clark resigned his appointment at the age of 82 in 1896 claiming he was too old for the job. At the time of his death in 1910 he was widely known and beloved as “Mr. Yosemite” – including his very good friend John Muir. Today Clark is little known or remembered other than a mountain that bears the name of Mt. Clark. California’s first state park ranger did his job, did it well and faded into history and now we ask, “Who was that masked man?”

Long live Galen Clark.
The Rim Fire and government shutdown have had a major impact on our area, reducing visitor counts for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2013.

The Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau (TCVB) has taken a number of actions to let visitors know the Park and gateway communities are open for business.

Using our community partnerships we’ve provided matching funds with the Yosemite Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce (YCC) for a ½ page ad in a National Parks publication called the, “Yosemite Journal” and cooperative financial support for a publication called, “Discover Groveland” distributed in the Central Valley and the Bay Area as well as the Ranger Program placing a Park Ranger in the YCC office in Groveland throughout the summer.

Thanks to a great relationship with Visit California, the Yosemite region has been the beneficiary of a special disaster program to help us recover from these 2 major events. Visit California has allocated a grant of $250,000 to specifically promote tourism to the gateway and Yosemite National Park. They will place advertising and media buys, however we are able to make recommendations.

In the past fiscal year, a partnership with the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA) has led to some creative brainstorming and new initiatives. Larry Cope, the executive director of the TCEDA hosted a post-Rim Fire, “Tourism Rebuilding Task Force” which included all of the community Chambers of Commerce (including the Yosemite 120 Chamber), the Tuolumne County Business Council, Black Oak Casino, Dodge Ridge Winter Sports Area and of course, the TCVB. The goal was to jumpstart tourism and bring more visitors here now!

That partnership led to the revival a very successful holiday season visitor promotion we ran a few years ago called, “Small Town Cheer.” Small Town Cheer focuses on activities and special events in and around the Mother Lode during the holidays with a special website: www.smalltowncheer.com as the primary marketing tool. All the local communities are represented individually in this program which was very successful in the past.

Working together with our community partners, we’re confident of a bright future and we’re actively working on new promotions for 2014 to continue to grow tourism to the region.
You can smell excitement permeating the air. The sun slowly sets in the azure sky as it deepens in color. Alpenglow casts its gold mantle over the White Mountains above the outdoor arena. The hip-hop dance music blares through the open field energizing the crowd, and then — a young cow staggers into the main event area from a holding pen. Nano-seconds later, two hulking horses carrying youthful cowboys bear down on the animal. With lariats in one hand, horse reins in the other, these wild west gladiators race the clock.

"Whoaaa!" roars the crowd as the two teenagers stealthily rope the calf in record time — first around its neck, then its hind legs. The young men deftly guide their horses through quick twists and turns as the cow kicks away from the oncoming ropers. The adrenaline charges up the crowd as the team's performance mesmerizes them.

This is team roping — one of several breathtaking events at the California State High School Rodeo in Bishop, CA scheduled for mid-June of 2014. Each night, over a dozen rodeo events create thrills, chills, and enthusiasm for its devoted audiences. International tourists who visit this unique mountain town flock to the rodeo to savor America's cowboy traditions.

Bishop has hosted this exhilarating activity for the past several years. Each year, some 250 high school participants along with family, spectators, and sport officials gather in this frontier town nestled in California's East Sierra. Traveling from every corner of the golden state, these cowpokes represent their region's best and range from 15 to 18 years old.

These gladiators are the last vestige of a sport that saw better times decades ago. As ranches have morphed from family operations to big business, these youth form a last line of defense in keeping a vanishing sport alive. Many rodeo events stem from old fashioned ranch work such as roping, breaking horses, etc. Others are designed for speed, horsemanship, or bravado such as barrel racing, pole bending, and the most “hair raising event of all” — riding the wild bulls!

The kids are exposed to well rounded and balanced lifestyles. They perform community service projects during the rodeo including raising money for the Eastern Sierra Breast Cancer Association and other local charities. Reinforcing the value of education and academics, the students' grade point averages are announced before they begin their events. Like their families and ancestors before them, these kids learn to work hard, do their best, and respect others.

For information on Bishop, the high school rodeos, and other adventures in "The Other Side of California", check out www.bishopvisitor.com and www.chsra.org
Three Main Events

By Lisa Cesaro

Start the New Year with Chefs’ Holidays at The Ahwahnee

Winter in Yosemite is all about snow, skiing, and gourmet dining! The Ahwahnee will host the 29th Annual Chefs’ Holidays event showcasing top chefs representing the range of styles, personalities and trends that characterize the American culinary scene. Chefs’ Holidays consists of a series of eight sessions from January 12 to February 6, 2014 where attendees and chefs celebrate the pleasures of food with cooking demonstrations, a small private reception to meet the chefs in person, and behind-the-scenes kitchen tours of The Ahwahnee’s impressive 6,500-square-foot kitchen. On the final evening of each session, the Gala Chefs’ Dinner provides a fitting finale with a memorable five-course feast highlighting the specialties of one or more of the celebrity guest chefs with thoughtful wine pairings.

The 2014 participants include Elizabeth Falkner of Food Network’s “Next Iron Chef”; Hosea Rosenberg and Harold Dieterle, winners of Bravo TV’s “Top Chef”; vegetarian wonder-chef Annie Somerville of Greens in San Francisco, Peggy Smith & Sue Conley of Cowgirl Creamery and the ever-popular Kent Rathbun of Abacus in Dallas, Texas.

DNC Parks & Resorts at Yosemite is pleased to offer a local discount to attend the 2014 Chefs’ Holidays series. Look for information regarding a discounted rate in an upcoming Yosemite Daily Report. For more information on Yosemite Chefs’ Holidays at The Ahwahnee or to make reservations, call 801-559-4949 or visit the Chef’s Holiday webpage.

What’s New at Badger Pass Ski Area!

Let the skiing and boarding begin! Savings and fresh snow are certainly upon us with the 79th season of Badger Pass Ski Area in Yosemite. Season passes are available for a low rate of $149 (adults), $129 (ages 13-17) and $69 (children) now through December 25, 2013. Badger Pass is also offering new benefits for season pass holders including free lodging at Curry Village in an unheated tent cabin, bring-a-friend discounted lift tickets and a 10% discount on other park lodging, ice skating, food and beverage and more.

Badger Pass continues to support our troops! U.S. active military personnel and veterans receive a free lift ticket, free equipment rental, and group lesson every day of the season at Badger Pass. Immediate family members also receive 50% off lift tickets, equipment rentals, and group lessons.

Did you know that Badger Pass Ski Area recently completed a multi-million dollar refurbishment of the deck and Day Lodge? Interior upgrades include new windows and flooring, remodeled restrooms and renovated locker rooms.

DNC’s Fryer Truck Wins NPS Environmental Award

This summer Delaware North Companies was awarded one of The National Park Service’s Environmental Achievement Awards for its waste vegetable oil (WVO) vehicle Fryer Truck.

Two years ago, DNC initiated a project to look into using relatively clean burning WVO – taken directly from our restaurant fryers – to power a diesel truck.

DNC purchased a Ford F350 diesel truck and a WVO conversion kit from a California company specializing in WVO technology. The truck was converted by DNC’s mechanics in winter of 2012. During this period, a WVO dispensing station — the first of its kind in the park — was set at DNC’s garage. Two WVO collection points were established at DNC restaurants: Curry Village Grill and Yosemite Lodge Food Court.

To promote the use of WVO and educate DNC staff, DNC invited employees to participate in a contest to name the WVO truck and create a logo. The winning name, “Fryer Truck”, and a specially designed logo were applied to the truck.

In 2012, 300 gallons of WVO were diverted to power Fryer Truck. DNC’s Recycling Department now uses the truck to collect recyclable materials at DNC operations throughout the park. In addition, WVO is provided to NPS Roads and Trails Branch.
Climate, Fire & Water: Natural Range of Variation
By Michèle Slaton

Eastern California, the region east of the Sierra Nevada crest from the Lake Tahoe to the Death Valley region is a natural laboratory to study the interactions of climate, fire, and water.

At this intersection of the Sierra Nevada, Great Basin, and Mojave Desert, a rich paleo-ecological record of climate and vegetation history is being used by the Inyo National Forest (NF) to understand the Natural Range of Variation (NRV) of ecosystems.

The NRV method compiles information from a reference period – the last 10,000 years, or Holocene Period – to assist in assessing integrity of ecosystem structure, composition, and function. Three Sierra Nevada forests, including the Inyo NF, are currently using NRV analyses in revision of Land and Resource Management Plans.

Warm periods such as we are currently experiencing have occurred during the Holocene which have some similarities to current conditions in vegetation, fire regime, and flooding frequency. However, the current warming trend is unique in that it is occurring in the presence of new, widespread drivers and stressors, including non-native species invasions, and human practices such as livestock grazing, recreation, timber harvest, and fire suppression.

Natural disturbances -- like fire, wind, and floods -- are important to the health of many ecosystems. These disturbances are the main ecosystem functions which land management can affect; appropriate disturbance frequency, intensity, and spatial patterning ensure that ecosystems and their services can be sustained.

The restoration of disturbance regimes is emphasized in forest planning, and ranges from re-establishing fire in Jeffrey pine ecosystems, where fire has been excluded, to protecting shrublands from increased fire frequency resulting from invasive annual grasses, to protecting refugial habitats where disturbance historically played a minor role.

By forces seemingly antagonistic and destructive Nature accomplishes her beneficent designs – now a flood of fire, now a flood of ice, now a flood of water; and again in the fullness of time an outburst of organic life...

John Muir
Satisfy your Winter Wanderlust

By Erica Schlesinger

Snow season has officially arrived at Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The route connecting California’s three national parks has been dubbed the Majestic Mountain Loop. Visit all three parks for snow play and festive fun this holiday season.

At Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite, put your decorating skills to work during gingerbread house workshops on December 21 and 22, or enjoy other holiday-themed activities throughout the holiday season and New Year’s Eve festivities. Guests can also relish the best of California’s great outdoors with a number of snow-centric activities and packages including snowshoeing, ice skating, s’mores and skiing at nearby Badger Pass.

Southbound on the Majestic Mountain Loop, explorers will find the world’s biggest Christmas tree in Kings Canyon National Park, which is home to the General Grant giant sequoia, or “The Nation’s Christmas Tree.” Green boughs, red bark and white snow create a postcard-perfect Christmas tree that’s more than 267 feet tall. The next stop on the loop is Sequoia National Park, where Wuksachi Lodge will host an ornament decorating workshop on December 18, as well as a cookie workshop and story time with Santa on Christmas Eve. The fun continues for outdoorsy guests who can enjoy a guided snowshoe hike with the Sequoia Natural History Association on December 28, departing from Round Meadow. New Year’s Eve celebrations will bookend the loop with celebrations, dining and dancing at both Wuksachi Lodge and Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite.

For couples looking for a unique Valentine’s Day retreat, each national park offers plenty of opportunities for romance in the snow. From nature hikes and horse-drawn sleigh rides to seasonal dining at Wuksachi Lodge and spa treatments at Tenaya, a holiday in Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon will make for an unforgettable celebration. For additional information or subscribe to our news see http://onramp.dot.ca.gov/hq/maint/
The Rim Fire started on August 17 in a remote canyon off SR-120 in Tuolumne County. It resulted in the complete closure of SR-120 from Buck Meadows to the entrance of Yosemite National Park. At its peak, more than 4,840 firefighters were actively engaged in the effort. Among those was a group of approximately 50 District 10 (D10) maintenance employees. D10 knew there was extreme damage to the guardrail, signs, trees, and delineation along the route.

Plans were made and as soon as the Fire Incident Command would allow, D10 mounted an all out effort beginning on August 22 to repair the damages to SR-120 so it could be re-opened as soon as possible. The D10 Special Response Team consisted of Fence and Guardrail Crews from Stockton and Merced, the District Tree Crew, Vacuum Crews and the consistent (24/7) support and effort of the local maintenance crew located in Groveland, CA.

Working five days straight, including the weekend, the Fence and Guardrail Crews were able to restore the damaged rails, replacing 785 posts and blocks along with removing the charred remains of the old posts. Matt Connolly, Fence and Guardrail Supervisor in Stockton, noted that, “In a normal day we can replace 40 posts. On the Rim Fire, with combined crews, we were able to do in excess of 100 posts per day. Our crews were in overdrive!”

The D10 tree crew, with help from the Groveland maintenance crew, were able to remove 1895 hazard trees from along the highway. An additional 40 signs were restored and 400 delineators were re-installed.

Acting District 10 Director Amarjeet Benipal said, “Thankfully we are not in this situation often but when we are needed, Caltrans is there to help our communities.”

Both Tuolumne and Mariposa Counties were declared Emergency Disaster Areas by the Governor and D10 Maintenance Supervisors, Ken Weeks and Gaylen Wight, regularly attended Tuolumne County Emergency Operations Center and Rim Fire Command briefings to provide updates on Caltrans efforts.

When the road re-opened on September 6, Caltrans was ready. The Rim Fire has already consumed nearly 260,000 acres and was not expected to be contained until later this month.

D10 would like to thank all the employees that worked long hard hours in harsh conditions to make the necessary repairs and provide for the safety of the motoring public. It is efforts such as these that make us proud to be Caltrans and proud of our Caltrans family. Maintenance is fired up in D10!
The signature landmark of Yosemite National park is the iconic Half Dome. First summited in 1875 by George Anderson and first climbed by Royal Robbins in 1957, Half Dome has become a rite of passage for many climbers and hikers.

While the climbing routes are self-regulating, the hiking trail got overcrowded to the point that the NPS instituted a permit system in 2010. In its fourth year, the refined process allowed only 225 daily hikers via a lottery in March; 50 more per day via a 2-day mini-lottery; and 75 for those with Wilderness permits on trails near Half Dome. Cancellations were added to the mini-lottery.

The intent was to reduce the crowding on the cables to allow hikers time to get down during emergencies and fast moving weather systems. Peak loads of nearly 1,000 people per day in the pre-permit days made the hike very unpleasant. Lines of 45-minutes just to touch the 600 ft long cables were common.

A Protection Division Ranger was stationed at the base of Sub-Dome to check for permits. A key was that prior year scalping was eliminated by requiring that the buyer of the permits (or one alternate) be on the hike. Fatalities off of the cables of Half Dome are very rare and the 2014 season closed without a single one.

The cables are targeted to be up again in late May, weather permitting. Lottery applications are accepted any day during March, with awards in April. Consult the Yosemite website for updated information.
Regional Forester’s Honor Awards
By Brenda Kendrix

Employees and partners of the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) were honored at the Regional Forester’s Honor Awards Ceremony in Sacramento on November 20. Theme: “Awakening and Strengthening All People’s Connection to the Land.”

“We are proud to pay special tribute to those who demonstrated outstanding professionalism, excellent customer service, and exemplary leadership in advancing the mission of the Forest Service,” Regional Forester Randy Moore said. “We congratulate not just our winners, but all of the nominees for a job well done. I continue to be profoundly inspired by the work we achieve. Together we make a difference and the work we do matters.”

The award categories and winners were: Ecological Restoration — All Lands, Watershed and Forest Health: Whiskey Ridge Ecological Project, Sierra NF — and Engaging Youth: KUPU, Hawaii Nonprofit Organization

Healthy Workforce/Workplace — Safety Leadership and Emergency Response: San Bernardino National Forest Air Tanker Base
— Cultural Transformation, Diversity and Inclusion: Tahoe National Forest Employees
— and SusOps and Energy Management: Karie Wiltshire, Tahoe NF

District of the Year: Groveland Ranger District, Stanislaus National Forest

Partner of the Year: Southern California Mountains Foundation

Leading in a Business Environment: Bob Knopp, Information Management Staff, RO

Leading in a Natural Resources Environment: RS Air Program

Other nominations from the Forests surrounding Yosemite (Stanislaus, Sierra, and Inyo) included:

All Lands, Watershed, and Forest Health (Runner Up): Stanislaus NF Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Team, Rim Fire

Cultural Transformation, Diversity & Inclusion (Runner Up): Sierra NF Tribal Relations and Heritage Resources Program

SusOps & Energy Management (Runner Up): Michele Slaton and Inyo NF Green Team

District of the Year (Runner Up): Bass Lake Ranger District, Sierra NF

Highlights of the evening included opening remarks by Regional Forester Randy Moore and keynote speaker Rue Mapp, CEO and founder of Outdoor Afro, an organization that works to reconnect African-Americans with the outdoors and one another through recreational activities.
Today the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board approved $1 million in grant funding to be awarded for projects that will help to restore areas affected by the Rim Fire. Projects will contribute to improving forest and watershed health in the burned area and will be funded by Proposition 84, passed by voters in 2006.

Preliminary estimates suggest that nearly 100,000 acres of the Rim Fire burned at high intensity, leaving little to no vegetation on the ground. Without vegetation, the forest loses its ability to filter water and slow runoff, resulting in poor water quality, increased erosion and higher flood risks during the rainy season. The impacts to habitat, recreation, air quality and grazing operations are also significant.

“The Tuolumne River watershed, where the Rim Fire burned, is a critical water source for numerous communities and agricultural producers,” said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. “Investing some of our limited resources will contribute directly to restoring this watershed and hopefully will leverage additional funding for the larger restoration effort.”

“Having this investment from the Conservancy is a wonderful example of a federal-state partnership that recognizes the important benefits lands managed by the Forest Service provide to all Californians,” said Susan Skalski, Forest Supervisor for the Stanislaus National Forest.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy staff will work closely with local collaborative groups, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, Tuolumne County and other stakeholders to determine how SNC’s contribution can make the greatest impact.

Tuolumne County Supervisor Sherri Brennan added, “We are certainly appreciative of this funding from the Conservancy and look forward to working with them to ensure that we maximize the benefits for our county and our forest.”

The SNC Governing Board meets quarterly around the Sierra Nevada Region, which spans 25 million acres, encompasses all or part of 22 counties, and runs from the Oregon border on the north, to Kern County.
For international college students, the idea of heading home for the Thanksgiving holiday doesn't have much potential and with classes paused and most of the local students headed to a turkey meal somewhere with family, the holiday leaves a void in their life.

Each year, for the past several years, the International Students Association at UC Santa Barbara has planned a Thanksgiving trip to Yosemite. They stay with The Yosemite Bug Rustic Mountain Resort in Midpines and choose YARTS to provide them with transportation to and from the park.

The Association does not limit participation on the Yosemite trip to only the international students and invites the entire student body at UCSB to join them on their trip. This year the group was a fairly typical 52 count.

Denise Lee, Vice President of the Association, was the person that worked with YARTS throughout the planning for the trip. Lee has been at UCSB for two years and is studying “Language, Culture and Society”. Born to Chinese parents in Malaysia, she speaks three languages.

According to Lee, the students that participated in the trip this year came originally from China, South Korea, Australia, Bulgaria and other European countries, Malaysia and more. “For many of the students, this trip is their first to Yosemite Park, or any National Park in the United States” says Lee.

The group included students at all levels, from undergraduate to graduate and also included some international exchange students, who are at UCSB for only a limited time. For most of the participating students, English was not their first language.

Of course, locally, we all know that the beauty of Yosemite transcends any language differences and the UCSB students prove it every year they come to the Yosemite region.

“Yosemite Park was a great place to be during Thanksgiving for us as international students. Yosemite Bug prepared a traditional Thanksgiving dinner for us that helped bring in the atmosphere of Thanksgiving for those who don’t celebrate the holiday back home. The YARTS buses were convenient and the staff friendly, accommodating and informative, all at once. This trip was a memorable one for me and all the other students.” Denise, Malaysia

“YARTS drivers were extremely nice and patient! Definitely made any day better!” - Steven, Germany

“Thank you so much for the trip! You did a great job! Everything you did are perfect!” Best, Hui wang,

“Visiting Yosemite National Park had been on my bucket list. I am shappy to feel the great nature of Yosemite with fabulous people. Bugs resort served decent dinners and I enjoyed spa after hiking. I am sure that these 4 days trip might be one of my best memories in my whole like. I will definitely visit the park again. See you later Yosemite!” Yeoseol (Kate), South Korea

According to the YARTS drivers who transport them each year, these are “really nice young men and women”. YARTS is delighted to be a part of this annual holiday trip to the Yosemite region.
The Chukchansi Tribe of Coarsegold, Ca. has awarded $25,000 to the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation District for the clean-up of several large scale marijuana cultivation sites discovered in the Sierra National Forest. The funding will be used by the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew’s Environmental Reclamation Team to clean-up the pesticides, fertilizers, trash, water diversions and irrigation piping left behind when these sites are no longer in use. The High Sierra crew has been working in partnership with the US Forest Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife since 2004 and has reclaimed more than 400 grow sites throughout the state.

One of the many concerns with these illegal cultivation sites are the poisons used to protect the marijuana from hungry wildlife. Left behind in national forests, these chemicals continue to do their job of harming curious animals long beyond the growing season. From mice on up to top predators the poisons continue to move up the food chain causing death for some and sickness for many.

A wildlife research team from the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project (SNAMP) has been tracking a rare nocturnal tree dwelling forest weasel called the Pacific Fisher in remote areas around Oakhurst. They identified the first confirmed fisher death from rodenticide poisoning in 2010, believed to be a result of the poisons left on these sites.

What little we know of the incidental poisoning of wildlife in these illegal cultivation sites is alarming but even less is known about their effects on soils and streams. More than sixty percent of the state’s water comes from the Sierra to nourish our state, so it is time we learned more.

Representatives from SNAMP continue to work with members of the Integral Ecology Research Center and the Kings River Fisher Project to accurately identify and share the issues facing the fisher today. Many thanks to the Chukchansi tribe for completing the 7th of 10 years of the Million Dollar Grant Give Away and continuing to contribute to the challenges faced by the local communities. For more information contact Anne Lombardo from SNAMP’s outreach team at amlombardo@ucanr.edu.
Did you know that people from more than 100 countries visit the Sierra Nevada Geotourism website - www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org - each month to plan a trip?

Currently, there are 1,600 recommendations by Sierra Nevada residents featured on the website, with 600 in the Yosemite gateway region. Combined with the popular print map and free Sierra Nevada mobile app, these tools help travelers have a deeper experience while supporting local businesses and conservation efforts endorsed by National Geographic.

Tell us what is special about the Sierra Nevada.

Before making a nomination ask yourself, “Is this distinctive to our town, area or region, and is it authentic to the Sierra Nevada?”

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographic character of a place - its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. All assets nominated on the map must fit this definition.

Nominations can include:
- Festivals and Events
- Local Businesses
- Historical / Cultural Sites
- Local Artist, Musician or Craftsperson
- Natural Attractions
- Outdoor Adventures
- Volunteer and Stewardship Opportunities

Before you create your nomination, please check www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org to see if it is already active, and to find examples. At the website, go to Participate, create a free account or sign in, and make a nomination that meets the National Geographic geotourism definition. Nominations must include text that describes your personal connection to the place you are nominating, one large photo, public contact information to assist travelers, and a mapped location or route.

For assistance, please contact Becky Bell at bbell@sbcouncil.org.

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For on-line registration CLICK HERE – An automatic response and an email will be sent to confirm your personal information. Let us know if you need help to complete your registration

UPCOMING MEETINGS • JANUARY 9, 2014 – 9:00 AM TO 2:00 PM
APRIL 10, JULY 10 AND OCTOBER 9, 2014
GARDEN TERRACE ROOM, YOSEMITE LODGE, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

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