

Strategic Plan

2023-2027



YOSEMITE
CONSERVANCY.

Providing For Yosemite's Future

OUR VISION

*Ensuring Yosemite's
grandeur through the ages.*

OUR MISSION

*Yosemite Conservancy
inspires people to support
projects and programs
that preserve Yosemite
and enrich the visitor
experience for all.*



YOSEMITE
CONSERVANCY

A Century of Conservation





A CENTURY OF CONSERVATION MEETS
YOSEMITE OF THE 21ST CENTURY:

A Strategy for the Future

AS YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY celebrates a century of support to Yosemite National Park, the need for this time-tested partnership is as vivid as it was 100 years ago. Yosemite National Park welcomes more than 4 million visitors annually. People come from all over the world to experience the refuge, inspiration, and beauty of the park.

While the endurance of Yosemite's famous landforms is reassuring, there is a visible need on the ground for Yosemite Conservancy to support Yosemite National Park in dynamic and innovative ways. For example:

- Traffic congestion and crowding in Yosemite Valley impair the guest experience in this World Heritage Site.
- Adequate wayfinding and orientation are lacking in key visitor sites.
- Education exhibits and materials need to be created or updated to better serve our diverse guests.
- Drought and increased wildfires are imperiling species as global temperatures climb.
- Hiring and budgetary constraints within the National Park Service — coupled with a regional housing shortage — create significant gaps in our partner's operational capacity.

Through this strategic plan, Yosemite Conservancy will partner with the National Park Service to address important needs of Yosemite over the next five years and beyond.



To meet the needs of a 21st century Yosemite National Park, Yosemite Conservancy will focus on the following strategic themes:

PLACE

Yosemite is among the great treasures of the world. Rich in natural beauty, Yosemite inspires people in myriad ways. By focusing on our core mission, we will leverage people's connection and love of place into addressing the dynamic changes the park faces. From improving trails to supporting sound science and modern-day conservation measures, the Conservancy will positively impact this unique territory within the Sierra Nevada.

PEOPLE

In recognition of Yosemite's first people and their centuries-old commitment to stewardship of these lands, the Conservancy will strive to grow the park's relationship and commitment to Yosemite's traditionally associated American Indian Tribes.

Yosemite does not lack for visitors, but access to the park is not equal for all. The Conservancy will support programs and services that aid inclusion and reduce barriers for people seeking connection to their public lands.

By proactively addressing issues of access, crowding, orientation, and education, the Conservancy aims to steward the experience of all visitors and provide a positive connection to this powerful and inspiring place.

Supporting and appreciating the people who make the mission of Yosemite Conservancy possible is no less important. The Conservancy will address important needs of our staff, including accessible and affordable housing and Yosemite Valley workspace.

PARTNERSHIP

Working with the National Park Service to care for Yosemite is an honor and a privilege. The Conservancy is entrusted to provide a range of visitor services and education, as well as critical funding for everything from biological research and conservation to new facilities. Running even deeper than the Conservancy's strong financial support for the park is the dedication, creativity, innovation, and reliability the organization brings to support Yosemite's excellence. With the changing needs of a 21st century Yosemite, the Conservancy will evolve our partnership and methods of support:

- Helping with hiring gaps and housing to augment operational capacity.
- Utilizing technology to provide innovative and inclusive experiences for visitors with diverse backgrounds.
- Reaching beyond the traditional boundaries of the park to forge new and important connections, including with land management agencies, local government, nonprofit organizations, and the regional business community.



SUPPORT FOR OUR AREAS OF FOCUS —
PLACE, PEOPLE, PARTNERSHIP — IS WOVEN
THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING GOALS AND STRATEGIES.

Inspiring Dedication to Place

Focus people's connection and love of Yosemite into support for iconic projects and participation in programs.

Offer meaningful pathways for people to create enduring bonds with Yosemite.

- Cultivate a wide range of grant projects to inspire engagement with Yosemite, generous giving from donors, and care for the park and its natural, cultural, and historic wonders.
- Feature forward-looking projects in a centennial fundraising campaign focused on improving the experience of current and future generations of visitors, supporting environmental resilience, and sustaining Yosemite and its people.
- Supplement National Park Service efforts to implement policies for sustainable visitor use and traffic management to enhance the visitor experience and foster donor support.
- Utilize marketing and cultivation tools and creatively leverage technology to create clear and varied pathways for people to support Yosemite and channel their interest in the park.
- Offer deep and enriching volunteer and educational programs for people to connect with and learn about Yosemite and find ways to reciprocate their affection for the park.









Building a Stronger, *More Resilient Yosemite*

Protect, preserve, and enhance Yosemite's natural and cultural resources.

Fund and implement efforts to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate.

- Fund efforts to protect and conserve biodiversity — focusing particularly on species, communities, and habitats impacted by climate change.
- Fund climate mitigation initiatives, such as water and energy conservation, electric vehicle chargers, and alternative transportation options.
- Fund research focused on landscape-scale connectivity and conservation, including watershed and forest health, wildfire fuels assessment and mitigation, and ecological restoration.
- Support the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition.

Prioritize environmental sustainability and park and planet stewardship in Conservancy operations.

- Assess the organization's carbon emissions and ecological impacts related to purchasing, publishing, production, and operations.
- Establish targets for reducing the Conservancy's environmental footprint.
- Create policies and standard operating procedures that embed sustainability goals in all Conservancy-funded planning, design, and construction projects.
- Add additional environmental stewardship elements to the volunteer and education program curriculum.

Connecting Park & People

Help all Yosemite National Park visitors feel welcome and enjoy a positive experience in a World Heritage Site.

Create educational programs that elevate visitors' connections to the park and its people.

- Expand publications that highlight science and important park history.
- Implement training curriculum for volunteers and retail staff to become docent-level interpreters.
- Grow Yosemite Field School offerings to a dozen programs per year for higher-level learning opportunities.
- Foster professional development of naturalists and steward the next generation of intellectual capital of Yosemite.
- Train in-park staff to communicate with diverse audiences.
- Ensure volunteers are working in every district of the park.
- Expand art classes and outdoor adventures to offer accessible and enriching connections to Yosemite for a diverse visitor population.
- Support planning, funding, and development of a state-of-the-art museum and education center that is a dynamic hub of learning, research, and thought in Yosemite.
- Grow fee-free public programming, educational resources, and literature.



Expand the ways people learn about and experience the park.

- Assess the Conservancy’s public-facing brand, messaging, and storytelling to determine whether it reflects the diversity of current and future park visitors.
- Add multilingual messaging, online exhibits, and other elements to welcome diverse park visitors, supporters, and stewards.
- Expand distance learning and virtual experiences to bring the park to people who may not be able to visit in person.



Improve access and mobility in park.

- Support expansion of bikeshare, shuttles, and other innovative in-valley transportation options that are easy to access, intuitive to use, and enjoyable.
- Develop and fund signage and wayfinding that enables visitors to find their way easily to all park destinations.
- Deploy new technology and continue multilingual outreach about entry requirements to decrease wait times at park gates.

Make Yosemite more accessible and welcoming to all.

- Expand low-cost educational programming.
- Create a plan to address access to transportation and outdoor gear.
- Partner with organizations aimed at increasing Yosemite access for marginalized communities and people of color.
- Foster a pathway for naturalist training and leadership within Central Valley communities of color.
- Consult and collaborate on projects and in-park meetings and events with Tribal groups that call the park their home.
- Focus on accessibility and ADA standards in all projects.
- Adapt publications for diverse learners where possible.

Growing Partnerships *and Impact*

Be a prominent leader and collaborator inside and outside the park to support the long-term resilience of Yosemite's land and people.

Expand the Conservancy's partnership role in consultation and coordination with the National Park Service.

- Implement one or more projects or initiatives on an annual basis that help Yosemite fill an NPS-identified need that is beyond the Park Service's capacity to address.
- Evolve the grant proposal and selection process to include more collaboration, participation, and ideation by both NPS and Conservancy staff.
- Explore more effective approaches to grant and program implementation.





Strengthen partnership with NPS.

- Co-create with NPS a shared plan for more integrated stewardship of the park.
- Fund volunteer coordination positions to augment Yosemite's volunteer programs.
- Explore consolidation of Conservancy's processes for volunteer recruitment, registration, and project implementation.
- Partner with NPS to determine ways to help address our housing issues and resultant hiring limitations.

Connect with groups that are innovators in their fields.

- Support and fund initiatives and elevate the voices of Yosemite's traditionally associated Tribes.
- Collaborate with conservation organizations to restore landscape-scale connectivity and species conservation in the region.
- Partner with UC Merced field stations, natural reserve system, faculty, and students to elevate scientific understanding, education, interpretation, and applied management in the park.

YOSEMITE VALLEY Ry. Co.



YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY





Building *Capacity*

Provide the systems and support needed to attract, retain, and empower the Conservancy workforce.

Expand affordable housing capacity for Conservancy staff.

- **Yosemite West:** Solidify the vision and continue to plan and invest for long-term staff housing on this Conservancy property adjacent to the park.
- **Mariposa:** Identify and implement the highest and best use of the Conservancy-owned property in the town center by working with partners.
- **El Portal:** Increase Conservancy-controlled staff housing and improve our system for maintenance and management of our housing.

Create staff workspace in Yosemite Valley.

- Identify and develop work and meeting spaces in Yosemite Valley for Conservancy staff to better collaborate with NPS and allow non-local staff ready access to the park.

Build internal infrastructure and management systems.

- Establish Human Resources manager position focused on staff recruitment, hiring, and development, and workplace equity and inclusion.
- Begin leadership succession planning conversations.
- Assess and address short- and long-term IT issues.
- Implement centralized relationship-management (CRM) system/database for enhanced performance and integration of development, programs, grants, and marketing.
- Implement new grants management software/database that is accessible to all facets of organization and selectively to NPS.

Fostering *Culture & Diversity*

Make the Conservancy safe, accessible, and welcoming to all.

Nurture a healthy staff culture.

- Elevate the work that Conservancy employees are doing in the park to equal visibility and status as NPS-led projects.
- Hold regular all-staff meetings and in-park staff gatherings.
- Increase opportunities for collaboration and communication across the organization.

Increase understanding and practice of diversity and inclusion within the Conservancy.

- Implement a process within grant review wherein the staff DEI committee reviews and recommends grant-making opportunities that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Conduct surveys of all staff, Board and Council, volunteers, and program participants to self-identify demographics (based on questions posed by GuideStar and other nonprofit rating organizations).
- Hire and begin work with a DEI consultant to support staff development and understanding of DEI issues, as well as hiring and recruitment practices.

Actively recruit and retain diverse Council, Board, and staff members, participants, volunteers, vendors, suppliers, and donors.

- Actively recruit new classes of Council members from diverse groups (including race, ethnicity, region, gender, age, disability, LGBTQ+) with a goal of better reflecting the representation of these groups within the population of California.
- Add Board and Council members with backgrounds and expertise needed to sustain a balance of skillsets and experience within both groups.
- Establish and grow Future Leaders Advisory Circle to engage a younger, more diverse donor base and volunteer leaders.
- Create policies that prioritize accessibility and equity throughout the Conservancy's human resource practices.
- Train staff to better communicate with and meet the needs of diverse populations.
- Examine stipends, shorter duration commitments, and value of professional mentorship in volunteer programs.
- Diversify recruitment and participation in education programs.
- Increase diversity of our contractors, suppliers, and vendors.



Building the Financial Foundation

Provide appropriate financial support for
Yosemite National Park's 21st century needs.

**Inspire Yosemite donors to provide more than
\$100 million in total philanthropic support between
2023 and 2027.**

- Grow fundraising for annual projects and programs from \$13 million in 2022 to \$18 million by 2027.
- Initiate ongoing and substantive internal allocations to grow our fee-free public programming, educational resources, and literature.
- Focus on long-term stewardship of Conservancy's broad base of donors giving in the range of \$100 or \$200 annually.
- Pursue innovative options — both high and low tech — for efficient in-park giving.
- Consistently appreciate and recognize donors.





Provide long-term philanthropic opportunities to enhance and maintain capital and project investments.

- Offer major donors the option to make gifts to endowment funds covering the range of Conservancy-funded projects in Yosemite.
- Add a three-year financial reserve in capital fundraising initiatives to provide protection and maintenance of significant Conservancy-funded Yosemite infrastructure upgrades.
- Bolster NPS staff capacity to secure all available funding opportunities for protection and enhancement of Yosemite's natural and cultural resources.

Launch Centennial Campaign.

- Plan and initiate a second-century fundraising campaign to include revitalizing the Mist Trail and John Muir Trailhead, improving safety throughout the Nevada and Vernal Falls areas and on the Half Dome cables. Significant wayfinding and programmatic enhancements to Yosemite Village and the Yosemite Museum would also be completed.
- Plan and implement an integrated communications campaign to celebrate the Conservancy's first 100 years and build broad awareness and support for the Conservancy's vision for the next 100 years.



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