

## WORK WEEK CREWS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This program involves working shoulder to shoulder with National Park Service work leaders to help maintain, improve, and restore Yosemite. Typically, work is at elevations ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 feet. Participation for each work week is limited to 15-20 people. Volunteers are required to provide their own camping equipment, including a tent, sleeping bag, and pad as well as appropriate outdoor gear. Work tools, equipment, and materials are provided by the National Park Service. Food is provided by Yosemite Conservancy and prepared by our cooks. Volunteers camp in group campsites that do not accommodate trailers. Participants work four days and have one day off to experience the park. The information below will help you envision what it would be like to be part of a work crew.

### REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. What are the important qualities of work week volunteers?

Serving as a volunteer in Yosemite National Park, a World Heritage Site, is an honor and a privilege. Our volunteers recognize this and are passionate about preserving and protecting this extraordinary place. They enjoy working and camping with each other. They work as a team and are flexible. They are excited about the work they are doing, follow directions cheerfully, work diligently, and share campground chores. These hard working men and women are in good health with strong stamina. They take their role in the park seriously, support the mission of the National Park Service and Yosemite Conservancy, and abide by the rules and regulations of both agencies.

#### 2. Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to participate?

U.S. citizenship or possession of a green card is required. International visitors are allowed to volunteer by obtaining a J1 Visa. Refer to the [National Park Service's International Volunteer website](#) for further information.

#### 3. How old do I have to be to participate?

Participants need to be a minimum of 18 years of age. 18 year olds must be accompanied by a parent/guardian who also volunteers.

#### 4. Do I have to be a donor to apply?

While your work as a volunteer is a wonderful contribution to Yosemite, the administration of the program is funded by donations. Yosemite Conservancy relies on the generosity of our donors to support this program and dozens of park improvement projects each year. We encourage all participants to make a monetary donation to the Conservancy but it is not a requirement or a determining factor in the selection of applicants.

#### 5. How do I make a donation?

Online: Visit [Donate-Yosemite Conservancy](#).

Phone: Call 800 4MYPARK (800 469-7275) to donate with a credit card.

Mail: Send a check to Yosemite Conservancy, 101 Montgomery Street, Suite 1700, San Francisco, CA 94101.

#### 6. What is the schedule of opportunities for the season?

The [Work Week Crews Schedule and Descriptions](#) provides this season's opportunities.

## **7. How do I apply?**

After reading this information use the Work Week Crew Application Form to apply.

## **8. How does the application process work?**

We had an initial application period from Jan 4- Jan 31, 2019. Applications received after January 31 will be placed on a first come first served basis into the slots still remaining.. Applicants submitting during this period should expect to receive email notification of their status within a week.

Applicants will be able to indicate all the work weeks for which they are available, as well as indicate their preferences for first, second, and third choices. They can also request participation of a family member or a friend to join them in their work week. To make this work smoothly the family member or friend should also request the same weeks, in the same order, and also request the same family member or friend who is requesting them.

## **9. What happens after I am accepted?**

The email acceptance notification will include an online payment link, requiring a credit card. Because of the popularity of the program, work weeks fill up fast, so payment should be made in a timely manner. Delaying payment could jeopardize participation. Once the fee is paid, placement is confirmed. Emails are sent at later dates with all the information needed to volunteer.

## **10. Are there waiting lists?**

Yes. Applicants can ask to be placed on waiting lists if none of their choices are available and will be notified when availability occurs.

## **11. Can I participate in more than one work week?**

Yes. You can indicate this preference on the application form

## **PAYMENT**

### **12. What is the fee?**

A \$325 fee covers administrative and logistical costs, covers the salaries of the cook and assistant cook, the cost of the food, and a commemorative t-shirt and ball cap.

### **13. When do I pay the fee?**

Fees are paid after notification of placement in a work week.

### **14. How do I pay the fee?**

When applicants are notified of a placement they are provided with a link to pay for the work week with a credit card on a secure website in the same way that products are purchased online. Credit card payments only are accepted.

### **15. Can I pay anytime up until the work week?**

Accepted applicants should pay within two weeks of being placed in a work week. Failure to pay within this deadline may result in the loss of a guaranteed spot in the assigned work week.

### **16. What is your cancellation policy?**

Significant events such as fire, flood, park emergencies, or government shutdowns can cancel a work week. Volunteers are notified by the Conservancy if a trip has to be cancelled and full refunds are provided. The Conservancy is not responsible for travel costs or expenses if participants do not receive notification of a cancelled project prior to their arrival.

If after paying for a work week, an applicant is unable to participate and the Conservancy is able to fill the vacancy, all of an applicants' fee, less a \$25 processing cost, will be refunded. Cancellations that cannot be filled are not refundable.

In 2018 four of our work weeks, two in Yosemite Valley and two in Tuolumne, had to be cancelled due to road closure and poor air quality caused by the Ferguson Fire (mid July – mid August). Yosemite Conservancy will err on the side of safety and the health of our volunteers and staff when it comes to cancelling a work week so please be aware that this is always a possibility. Participants from work weeks cancelled due to fire will receive a full refund or a guaranteed slot in the following year's work weeks.

## **WEEKLY ROUTINE**

### **17. What kind of work will I do?**

Our volunteers work with National Park Service staff on projects involving campground improvements, visitor protection, trail work, and vegetation restoration. They move soil and plant material, as well as carry rocks or small tree trunks. Our projects typically involve a variety of tasks including hiking, seed collection, planting, carrying equipment and containers of water for short distances, plant identification, invasive species and conifer removal, fence repair, painting, and light construction. In addition to working in the field, everyone takes turns helping with meal preparation and cleanup at the group campsite.

### **18. What kind of physical condition should I be in to participate?**

Most participants find this kind of work very satisfying and the surroundings inspirational. Days of manual labor as well as hiking to and from a worksite, especially at high elevations in high or low temperatures, can be very challenging. It is important to choose a project that matches your fitness level. In general, participants should be in strong physical condition and some projects require being able to lift 30-40 pounds. Each year the fitness level for our work projects changes, depending on the type of work the Park Service needs done. The [Work Week Crew Schedule of Dates, Locations and Descriptions](#) provide the information needed to choose a work project tailored to your ability.

### **19. What are the safety precautions?**

Volunteers are required to perform their tasks in a safe manner, use appropriate tools, and wear required protective gear. They should carry a day pack with two liters of water. Work tools and gloves are provided by National Park Service work leaders. Safety vests are provided when appropriate. Care must be exercised when working on and off-trail and/or near rivers and streams. Work takes place outdoors and working conditions are variable. Volunteers should dress appropriately for the work and weather with long pants, long sleeved shirts, and sturdy shoes/boots. Work typically involves hiking on uneven, potentially rocky and/or wet, slippery terrain. Potential hazards include exposure to biting or stinging insects, allergens, snake and other wildlife, irritating vegetation, and other hazards typical of outdoor work environments. Moderate to strenuous physical exertion may be required.

### **20. What is the routine during the week?**

Participants arrive at their assigned campground on Sunday after noon and set up their tents in a group campsite. Dinner is provided Sunday night and every night through Friday. Breakfasts and make your own lunches are provided each morning Monday through Saturday. Work with National Park Service leaders generally occurs Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The work day is from 6 to 8 hours with appropriate rest and lunch breaks. Wednesday is the usual day off. Some work weeks may stagger days off to allow for fewer volunteers working each day to gain a smaller crew size. After work, participants may want to go for a swim or take a short walk in the area. Each evenings there is a campfire. Our participants must work each scheduled work day. Making separate arrangements with work leaders to modify a work schedule to accommodate personal plans is not permitted.

### **21. How does the crew get to the work site?**

The crew either hikes in or carpools to the work site, depending on the project location.

### **22. Do I need to bring my own tools?**

Tools are provided by the National Park Service. Some participants like to bring their own work gloves.

### **23. What typically happens on the day off?**

Volunteers often explore other areas of the park, go hiking or climbing together, or simply relax.

## **CAMPING**

### **24. Can I bring an RV or camper?**

The campsites do not accommodate camping trailers or RVs. Participants may sleep in their vans or pickups with camper shell if they will be doing a Yosemite Valley work week and camped at Yellow Pines Volunteer Campground.

### **25. What lodging is provided?**

Volunteers enjoy the camaraderie of pitching their own tents in a group campsite. They provide their own camping equipment, including a sleeping bag, and pad. Campgrounds are equipped with bear-proof food lockers and restrooms. Previous camping experience is recommended. Pets are not allowed.

Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Everyone is expected to be respectful of those in their group as well as campers in other sites. Music must not be played loudly. Smoking should occur away from the camping area with smoking materials collected to prevent litter and fires. Valuables should not be left in the campground during the day. It's expected that participants adhere to a code of conduct the mirrors the standards of the National Park Service as well as cooperate with the cooks, NPS, Aramark, and Conservancy staff.

### **26. How do I know what to bring?**

A suggested packing list is provided prior to arrival.

### **27. When do I arrive and depart the campsite?**

Check in is after noon on Sunday and departure is by noon the following Saturday. Planning to help with camp set up as needed is appreciated.

### **28. Can I arrive early or leave later to extend my stay in the park?**

Yes, but you must make your own camping or lodging arrangements.

## **MEALS AND HYGIENE**

### **29. What meals are provided during the week?**

Three hearty meals a day are provided, starting with a Sunday arrival dinner and concluding with breakfast before departure the following Saturday.

### **30. What sort of menu can I expect?**

Meals are hearty, healthy and delicious. Breakfast usually includes the choice of a hot dish or cold cereal, along with fruit and meat. Participants make their own lunches from provided supplies and take them to the work site in their own containers and day packs. Typical dinners include appetizers, carbohydrates, meat, vegetables, salad, and dessert. Nonalcoholic drinks such as milk, juice, coffee, and hot teas are included. Accommodations are made for vegetarian and other diets. Participants with dietary restrictions can also bring their own necessary food items.

### **31. Are there alcohol or marijuana restrictions?**

Alcoholic beverages are not provided, however some adults bring beer or wine to share with the group in the evenings. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted for those under 21 years of age. Responsible, polite behavior is expected of everyone when alcohol is consumed. The Conservancy expects those who drink alcohol to act responsibly, not drink and drive, and be able to do required work each day.

Although marijuana is legal in California as of January 1, 2018, it is still illegal to use or possess in Yosemite National Park due to the park's federal jurisdiction. [36CFR 2.35](#)

### **32. What bear precautions should I take?**

All items with a scent, including canned goods, drinks, and toiletries, must be stored in bear-proof food lockers. These lockers must be closed and latched at all times, even while in the campsite. Following these regulations and precautions decreases personal injury/property damage, and keeps Yosemite's bears wild. For more information visit:

<http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/bears.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/scarebears.htm>

### **33. Will I have access to showers, toilets, and running water?**

There are no showers in Yosemite campgrounds, however, free showers are provided nearby. Campgrounds have either vault or flush toilets and potable running water; in the case of Yellow Pine Campground, the volunteer campground in Yosemite Valley, a potable water tank is provided.

Participants bring their own towels, toiletries, and a tote bag to pack what they need for showering after work.

## **FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

### **34. Can my family come with me while I volunteer?**

Volunteer campsites are provided by the National Park Service free of charge. In order to stay in the site family members must also be part of the work week volunteer team, and have gone through the application process.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **35. Will more information be provided to help prepare for the work week?**

Prior to arrival, participants are emailed a gate pass, map, campground directions and rules, a packing list, bear information, and required forms.

### **36. What is the emergency contact procedure?**

If an emergency situation happens to you, the person you provided as the emergency contact in your online registration form will be contacted if you are unable to do so. Emergency contact information is treated as protected information that is maintained by the Conservancy and Park Service.

Depending on your service provider, there is limited cell phone coverage in the park. In case of a serious, life-threatening family emergency, your family can reach you by calling the Park Service dispatch center at (209) 379-1992. Callers should state the emergency, provide your name and campsite location, and request a relay of a message to you. Please use this procedure for emergencies only as dispatch services more than one national park.

### **37. How can I reach Yosemite Conservancy's volunteer program?**

Mark Marschall, Volunteer Program Manager

Best form of contact is via email: [MMarschall@yosemiteconservancy.org](mailto:MMarschall@yosemiteconservancy.org)

Phone: 209 379-2317, extension 14; fax: 209 379-2486;

P.O. Box 230, El Portal, CA 95318

FedEx or UPS: 5020 El Portal Road, El Portal, CA 95318

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **38. How do I get to Yosemite using public transportation?**

For information visit [Yosemite Public Transportation](#)

### 39. What do I do about camping gear if I am traveling by air?

Camping gear can be shipped to Yosemite Conservancy's El Portal Office. Arrangements will be made to bring the gear to your campsite. If delivery is to Wawona or the High Country, it must arrive two weeks in advance to ensure delivery from the El Portal office in a timely manner. Send to Yosemite Conservancy, 5020 El Portal Road, El Portal, CA, 95318, Attn: Volunteer Program

### 40. How do I get to the park?

From San Francisco/Bay Area:

Distance: 195 mi /314 km; time: 4-5 hours

Take I-580 east to I-205 east to Highway 120 east (Manteca) or Highway 140 east (Merced)

From Sacramento Area:

Distance: 176 mi/283 km; time: 4 hours

Take Highway 99 south to Highway 120 east (Manteca) or Highway 140 east (Merced)

From Los Angeles:

Distance: 313 mi/504 km; time: 6 hours

Take I-5 north (or I-405 north to I-5) to Highway 99 north to Highway 41 north (Fresno)

There can be vehicle restrictions to enter the park.

Please see this NPS website: [Yosemite National Park](#)

