

Yosemite Conservancy News Release

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Yosemite Conservancy Announces Leadership Transition

President and CEO Frank Dean to retire in summer 2024

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK. (January 8, 2024) — The Yosemite Conservancy today announced that Frank Dean, the leader of the nonprofit conservation organization, will be stepping down as President & CEO and retiring during the summer of 2024.

Yosemite Conservancy’s Board of Trustees has appointed a diverse committee of Conservancy board, council, and staff members to lead the organization in recruiting Dean’s successor. There will be a national search to identify a highly qualified executive to guide the organization into its next century of service to Yosemite.

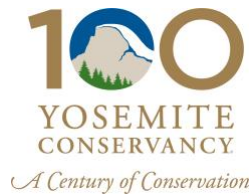
“The beauty of Yosemite National Park inspires us all. It has been a joy to help preserve this special place and to ensure it is more relevant for the next generation of park stewards,” said Dean. “The work of Yosemite Conservancy spans all aspects of the park, from the restoration of the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias to opening the new Yosemite Valley Welcome Center, increasing the diversity of our naturalist program, and growing our volunteer programs.”

Steve Ciesinski, chair of the Conservancy’s Board of Trustees, calls Dean “a trailblazer in national parks conservation and a true visionary.”

Prior to becoming President and CEO of Yosemite Conservancy in 2015, Dean served nearly four decades with the National Park Service — starting as a park ranger — in several management and executive positions across the nation, most recently as the superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. He also currently serves on several nonprofit and university boards that support national parks, including as board chair of the National Park Service Friends Alliance, and as a board member of the University of California–Merced Foundation, the regional council of the National Parks Conservation Association, and the Sonoma Land Trust.

“His innovative leadership over the past decade generated more than \$200 million in Conservancy grants and matching funds for project support to Yosemite National Park and assisted the park with 21st century challenges, such as increased visitor use and the preservation of park resources,” Ciesinski said. “Frank is widely admired for his creativity and dedication to sustainability and enhancement programs.”

Yosemite National Park Superintendent Cicely Muldoon credits Dean with strengthening the relationship between the two park partners.



“Thanks to Frank’s deep commitment to Yosemite and inclusive leadership, the partnership between Yosemite Conservancy and the National Park Service has never been stronger,” Muldoon said. “Frank is an inspiring leader and a great friend. I am so grateful to have served with him and am confident his legacy will continue in Yosemite National Park through the power of our partnership with Yosemite Conservancy.”

Former board chair and current Conservancy board member Phil Pillsbury said: “What makes Frank’s leadership extraordinary is his ability to work collaboratively with the Park Service, the donors to the Conservancy, the Board and Council, and especially his staff, which always seem fiercely loyal to him and to his direction.”

During Dean’s tenure, the Conservancy helped fund hundreds of projects in the park for trail and habitat restoration, wildlife management, scientific research, visitor education, and more.

“I am so appreciative of our Conservancy’s board of trustees, council, donors, staff, partners, and volunteers who enable our ideas to come to fruition,” Dean said.

The Conservancy’s donor-funded work is visible throughout the park, including at renovated overlooks, such as Tunnel View and Glacier Point; at Tenaya Lake; and at Lower Yosemite Fall. In 2023 alone, the Conservancy funded more than 50 new grants to help repair trails, restore wetlands and wilderness, study and protect wildlife, make Yosemite’s outreach more inclusive, inspire the next generation of park champions, and more. Additionally, major, multiyear Conservancy-supported projects opened this past fall, including a new Welcome Center in Yosemite Village and restoration work at famous Bridalveil Fall.

Major focuses for 2024 and beyond include research and projects to protect giant sequoias, restore Ackerson Meadow, and improve safety on the Mist Trail, one of the most popular National Park trails.

“Many Yosemite supporters are familiar with the transformative accomplishments that Frank Dean has overseen at Yosemite Conservancy,” said former Yosemite Conservancy board chair Bob Bennett. “Frank has developed an outstanding organization for our next CEO to lead. Our gratitude to Frank runs deep, and we wish him the best in his next life chapter.”

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About Yosemite Conservancy

For 100 years, the Conservancy has been dedicated to supporting the conservation of Yosemite’s natural and cultural resources and helping people develop deep ties to the park. Thanks to generous donors, the Conservancy has provided over \$152 million in grants to the park for more than 800 projects to restore trails and habitat, protect wildlife, provide educational programs, and more. The Conservancy’s guided adventures and art classes, volunteer opportunities, wilderness services, and bookstores help people from across the country and world connect with Yosemite National Park. Learn more at yosemite.org.