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Media Contact:

Peter Bartelme, Yosemite Conservancy, 415-664-1503, pb@prstrategies.com

Yosemite Conservancy Names Cassius M. Cash as President & CEO

The current superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park will assume the role in January 2025

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. — [Yosemite Conservancy](#) today announced Cassius M. Cash as its new, incoming president and CEO. Cash will lead the organization into its second century of service — spearheading projects and programs that enhance the visitor experience and inspire donor support to protect and preserve Yosemite National Park for future generations.

Cash joins the Conservancy after 15 years of service in the National Park Service and 18 years of service with the U.S. Forest Service, most recently serving as superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for nearly a decade.

“Cassius is a remarkable individual — passionate, hard-working, and very approachable. He has a deep understanding of what’s happening on the frontlines of our national parks,” said **Yosemite Conservancy Board Chair Steve Ciesinski**. “From the moment we met Cassius we were impressed. And the more we talked, the more confident we felt in his ability to lead Yosemite Conservancy in a second century of service to — and partnership with — in Yosemite National Park.”

Cash began his federal career in 1991 as a wildlife biologist — moving up to deputy forest supervisor at the [Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest](#) — before joining the [National Park Service](#) in 2010.

“Being able to assist with the preservation of a natural wonder like Yosemite National Park ‘fills my cup of purpose’ in life and as a preservation professional,” **Cash** said. “Having the privilege to lead alongside with the amazing staff at Yosemite Conservancy strongly aligns with the belief that I share with young people and that is: ‘Be clear in your purpose, but flexible in how you achieve it.’ With this belief in mind, joining the Yosemite Conservancy’s legacy and community felt like a natural fit, which feeds my desire to continue working for a mission that will benefit future generations.”

In addition to Cash’s preservation and administrative backgrounds, he used his platform as superintendent at the Smokies to do notable community work, including embracing the natural world as a place of healing and to serve as the platform in creating the next generation of stewards. In 2021, Cash received the national Stephen Mather Award for creating [Smokies Hikes for Healing](#), which provided a space to have crucial conversations about race and diversity while hiking in one of the most diverse ecosystems in the National Park Service system.

“I felt compelled to create this initiative because I believe the path to a better tomorrow, on matters such as race and inclusivity, starts with conversations today,” Cash said.

Cash will officially assume his role with Yosemite Conservancy in early January 2025.

Cash follows Frank Dean, who stepped down after nine years of great success as president and CEO of the Conservancy.

“Cassius is a great choice to lead the Conservancy and to work with the National Park Service, donors, and many others to support the park in the years ahead,” said **Dean**, who joined Yosemite Conservancy in 2015 after serving nearly six successful years as superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and brought with him vast experience from top-level National Park Service positions in Yosemite National Park, Point Reyes National Seashore, and Saratoga National Historical Park.

Dean leaves the organization stronger than ever, having doubled annual donations to Yosemite Conservancy to more than \$20 million annually. Dean will work with Cash to facilitate a smooth transition.

“Frank Dean has been a major force and inspiring leader behind the extraordinary growth and continuing success of Yosemite Conservancy,” **Ciesinski** said. “Frank’s accomplishments are many: during his tenure our donor base and annual giving has soared. He’s led special campaigns to restore Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, Bridalveil Fall, the new Yosemite Welcome Center, and most recently, Ackerson Meadow. He’s an amazing and popular leader, and will continue to serve as chair of the Friends Alliance, which supports all support groups of national parks.”

The selection of Cash culminated a national search conducted by the Conservancy’s search committee and approval by its Board of Trustees.

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About Yosemite Conservancy

For more than 100 years, Yosemite Conservancy has been supporting the conservation of Yosemite’s natural resources and helping people develop deep ties to the park. Thanks to generous donors, in recent years, we have provided more than \$162 million in grants to Yosemite for more than 850 projects, and more than \$200 million in overall support in the past decade alone, including securing matching funds for major projects and in-kind donations of staffing, services, and park-based programming. In 2024, we are providing \$18 million in total support and funding around 60 new grants to the National Park Service for projects in the park. The Conservancy’s guided adventures and art classes, donor events, volunteer opportunities, wilderness services, and bookstores help people from across the country and world connect with Yosemite. Learn more at yosemite.org.

Downloadable photos of Cassius M. Cash at <https://yosemiteorg.canto.com/b/HB1RA>

Yosemite Conservancy Fast Facts

History

Yosemite Conservancy is the park's nonprofit partner — and the only nonprofit dedicated to supporting Yosemite National Park. It raises funds to improve trails, restore habitat, protect wildlife, and inspire the next generation of nature-lovers.

The Conservancy's philanthropic partnership with Yosemite goes back more than 100 years. Since 1923, Yosemite Conservancy been working with Yosemite National Park. The Conservancy established an early model for many of today's national park nonprofit partners. Read more at yosemite.org/our-history.

Support

Yosemite Conservancy receives support from a variety of sources, including:

- Individual donations, estate gifts, and memorial gifts.
- Grants from foundations and corporations.
- Yosemite license plates (issued by California Department of Motor Vehicles).
- Proceeds from our visitor programs, services, and bookstores.

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In 2024, the Conservancy will give more than \$18 million in support to the park for around 60 projects. This is around 20% of the park's operating budget.

Learn more about ways to support the Conservancy at yosemite.org/giving

Examples of projects that Yosemite Conservancy has funded ...

- Bridalveil Fall vista point restoration
- New Welcome Center in Yosemite Valley
- Mariposa Grove restoration
- Yosemite Valley Loop Trail improvements
- Junior Ranger program
- Bighorn Sheep species restoration
- Bear-proof food lockers
- Ask a Climber program
- Lower Yosemite Fall trails and facilities improvements

Volunteers

Yosemite Conservancy volunteers play an integral role in the park. They assist visitors, help with habitat restoration, support Preventive Search and Rescue, and more. Details at yosemite.org/experience/volunteer.

Webcams

Our four Yosemite webcams show El Capitan, Half Dome, Yosemite Falls, and the High Sierra. See the webcams at yosemite.org/webcams.

Sharing Our News

Yosemite Conservancy communicates through a variety of channels, including our website, social media, blogs, monthly enewsletters, a biannual magazine, an annual report, direct mail, events, and the media. Recent news at yosemite.org/latest-news

Leadership & Staff

Cassius M. Cash is the incoming Yosemite Conservancy President/CEO, beginning in January 2025 when Frank Dean retires.

Cash joins the Conservancy after 15 years of service in the National Park Service and 18 years of service with the US Forest Service, most recently serving as superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for nearly a decade. Cash began his federal career in 1991 as a wildlife biologist at the [Gifford Pinchot National Forest](#) in Washington State. Over his 18 years with the Forest Service, he served in various leadership positions. He served as an administrative officer at [Nebraska National Forest](#), district ranger at the [Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest](#), a civil rights officer at the National Forests in Mississippi, and was the deputy forest supervisor at the [Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest](#) in southern Oregon before joining the [National Park Service](#) in 2010.

In addition to Cash's extensive natural resources and administrative backgrounds, he has used his platform as superintendent at the Smokies to do notable work in the surrounding communities, ranging from using the natural world to serve as the platform in creating the next generation of stewards to using the outdoors as a way to heal after experiencing social or personal trauma.

Frank Dean became president of Yosemite Conservancy in 2015 after nearly six years as superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, part of a National Park Service career that spanned almost four decades. Since joining the Conservancy, he has overseen the completion of many noteworthy projects to benefit Yosemite, including a successful \$20-million fundraising campaign to restore Mariposa Grove. A board of trustees is responsible for overseeing management, activities and governance. A permanent staff of more than 50 manages day-to-day operations.

For a biography of Frank and list of our board and council members, visit yosemite.org/board-and-council

Media Contacts

Visit our online press room at yosemite.org/press-room or contact:

Peter Bartelme
415-664-1503
pb@prstrategies.com

OUR MISSION

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