

# YOSEMITE STANISLAUS SOLUTIONS COLLABORATIVE CHARTER

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*Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) is a collaborative group of diverse interests working together to assist the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Yosemite National Park and private land managers in achieving healthy forests and watersheds and in developing recovery and restoration plans for the Rim Fire and other areas in need of rehabilitation.*

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## A. Introduction

In spring 2010, U.S. Forest Service staff and interested stakeholders participated in a joint field trip to view previously burned areas with restoration needs in the southern half of the Stanislaus National Forest. As a result of that field session and subsequent discussions, in December 2010 nearly 30 stakeholders agreed that forming a collaborative would aid the potential for increasing the pace and scale of restoration efforts within the southern portion of the Stanislaus Forest and on adjacent Park Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private lands. The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) was identified as an early restoration funding opportunity. When the viability of that opportunity diminished due to limited national funding, the stakeholders determined that there would still be reasons to continue working together on restoration efforts. With the support of the Forest Service, the stakeholders collectively formed the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) collaborative group.

During 2012 and 2013, YSS held field trips and resource discussions to promote restoration treatments across areas burned in the 1987 Complex Fires and other large fires. YSS expanded its membership and built a strong cooperative relationship with the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and private land participants. Common goals and concerns led to a desire to coordinate even more broadly with county leaders, resource user representatives, businesses, and other interested parties in an “all Lands” approach.

In August and September of 2013, the scope and intensity of the devastating Rim Fire severely damaged much of the landscape that was the focus of YSS. Due to the massive amount of

restoration planning that was needed, the value of collaborative support became even more evident. With so much national attention being given to Rim Fire recovery planning and actions, YSS and the Forest Service agreed that it was the appropriate time for YSS to either become fully independent or to work through the lengthy process of complying with requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The YSS group unanimously chose to be an independent group so as to be best positioned to address the expansive restoration and recovery needs resulting from the record-setting Rim Fire and still unmet restoration needs on other burned and unburned lands.

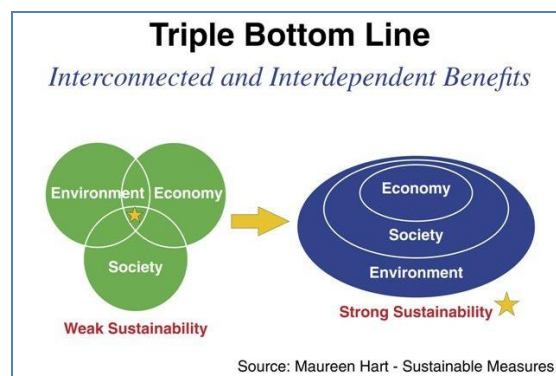
In January 2014, the YSS launched as a fully independent and diverse, multi-stakeholder collaborative group striving to achieve “all lands” restoration and sustained landscape health.

## B. Mission & Deliverables

The mission of the YSS is to restore and maintain healthy forests and watersheds, fire-safe communities, and sustainable local economies using a science-based approach.

The purpose of YSS is to raise awareness and to help identify, develop, and support projects that contribute to the mission of the collaborative. This will be accomplished by:

1. Identifying guiding principles and strategies that promote ecological, social, and economic sustainability as illustrated in the following U.S. Forest Service diagram



2. Implementing a landscape strategy based on the best available science and technical tools
3. Prioritizing recovery and restoration projects across the landscape
4. Seeking resources to support ongoing recovery and restoration efforts
5. Multi-party monitoring of project performance in support of adaptive management
6. Coordinating with adjacent, interested agencies and private landholders

## C. Collaborative Focus

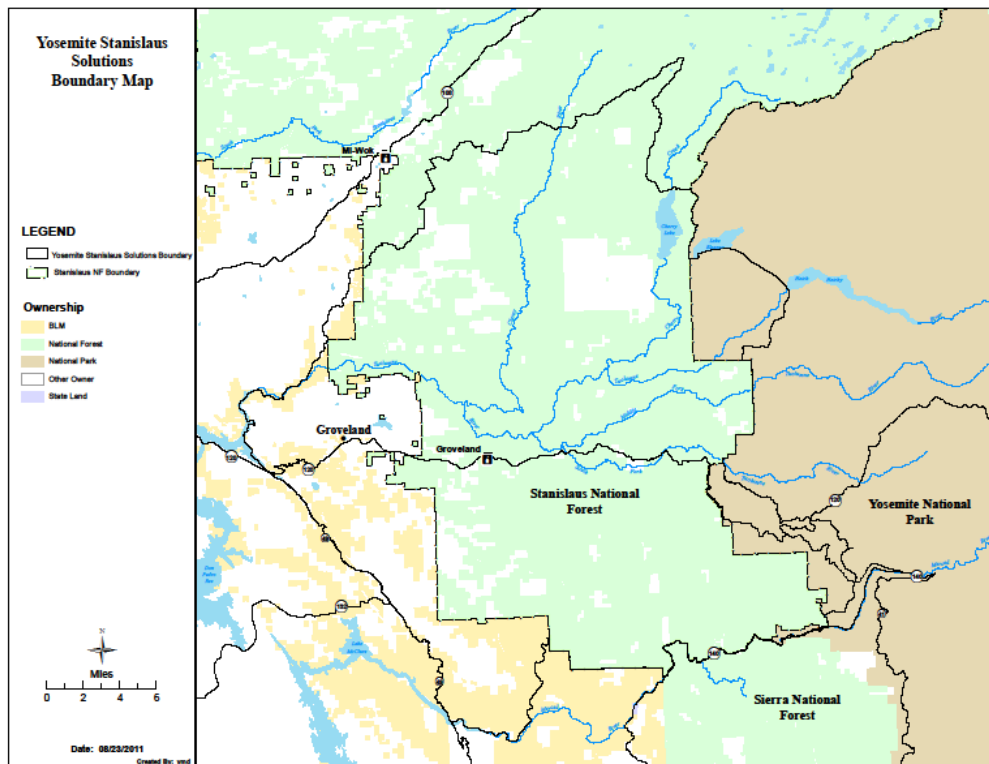
The YSS is a collaborative group of diverse interests formed to assist in planning, prioritizing actions, implementing projects, and monitoring outcomes of efforts designed to restore areas of the southern portion of the Stanislaus National Forest and adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Yosemite National Park (YNP) lands. YSS will actively cooperate with the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, YNP, other agencies, and landowners with lands within the landscape boundaries.

There are many areas worthy of focus within the collaborative landscape area. Specifically, one

large swath is that of the Rim Fire. The fire started on August 17, 2013, and burned for weeks across a total of 257,314 acres in Tuolumne and Mariposa counties. With 402 square miles contained within the fire's perimeter, the Rim Fire became the third largest wildfire in California's history and the biggest wildfire on record in the Sierra Nevada. The fire was contained on Thursday, October 24, 2013. The fire was named for its proximity to the Rim of the World vista point located along Highway 120 in the Stanislaus Forest. The fire destroyed 11 residences, three commercial buildings, and 98 outbuildings. Significant damage was done to habitat, wildlife, livestock, timber, and rangeland resources.



While the area of the Rim Fire (above) is the most recent and the most dramatic in size and degree of burn intensity, there are other areas of the forest that are also in need of restoration. Previous fires such as the 1987 Complex Fire, Rogge, Pilot, Early, and Ackerson wildfires all torched substantial areas of conifer forest, degraded oak woodland habitat, and diminished watershed health across significant areas. Because of the great need across the landscape, stakeholders agreed to a more expansive focus area boundary than just any single wildfire area. Part of the charge of the YSS is to collectively coordinate with public and private land managers to identify and prioritize restoration projects and help find funding for specific projects.



## D. Importance

The collaborative process will enable responsible agencies to develop a science-based recovery and restoration approach that will have strong support, beyond that which any one group could accomplish on its own. YSS will provide a venue within which multiple agencies, diverse interest groups, and individuals can contribute to elements of recovery and restoration efforts being proposed by public agencies and private land managers. The YSS process is intended to provide an opportunity to capture and document various ideas and perspectives from state, federal, tribal, private, local, regional, and conservation and business interests to gain widespread support and timely implementation. Coordination with other landowners and managers within the project boundary will support an “all-lands” recovery and restoration approach.

## E. Supporting Restoration and Sustainable Management

As indicated in Collaborative Focus (Section C), part of the charge of the collaborative is to identify, prioritize, and support sustainable projects that help restore degraded resources while simultaneously boosting the region’s economy and social well-being. To this end, the following are responsibilities defined to achieve the mission and purpose:

- YSS will work with the Forest Service, BLM, and other agency staff to understand the proposed projects and actions that agencies or private land owners are already moving to implement. Based on that information, in order to fill needs or to address restoration objectives, YSS will provide input, cooperate with the agencies to develop proposals for

enhancement and recovery projects, and, where feasible, locate funding for approved projects.

- Technical advisors from the agencies will provide relevant scientific information, review key technical information (e.g. wildlife habitat, watershed), and provide status updates about proposed actions.
- Where consensus exists, YSS will issue its support and recommendations for projects and plans affecting lands within the boundary of the area of interest.
- YSS members can also engage individually or through their own organizations in the traditional NEPA or CEQA processes, submitting comments, attending meetings, and filing objections or support.

## **F. Organizational Structure**

YSS Collaborative: The core group for YSS will be the full collective membership of the collaborative. Meetings of this group will be open to the public and materials will be available to the public. Members will have the opportunity to review and comment on all products of YSS. Highlights, decisions, and action items will be recorded in meeting summaries. All products from work groups and the YSS Leadership Team will come to the full YSS collaborative for final consideration and approval.

Officers: Officers will be a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and finance officer as selected by the Leadership Team.

Leadership Team: The YSS Leadership Team will select officers and any other positions that may be deemed-necessary.

The Leadership Team will provide guidance and support to help accomplish the work objectives of the full collaborative. It will sustain regular ongoing communication with the federal agencies, identify funding to sustain YSS activities, and provide direction for any projects for which the YSS assumes the leadership role or fiscal responsibility.

Workgroups/Subcommittees: To advance its work, the YSS Leadership Team may choose to create workgroups and/or subcommittees to conduct specific tasks. Highlights, decisions, and action items produced by workgroups or subcommittees will be recorded in meeting summaries. In addition to regular progress updates, materials developed in these groups will be brought back to the Leadership Team and/or the full collaborative group for discussion, refinement as necessary, and adoption, as appropriate.

Voluntary & Balanced Representation: YSS members may volunteer to participate in work groups or subcommittees when time availability and schedules allow. To the extent feasible, the YSS Leadership Team will aim to provide balanced participation and representation of diverse interests in work groups or subcommittees.

Technical Support: Forest Service staff or other federal agency staff may provide technical support to help inform YSS and integrate YSS work products where appropriate into planning processes and projects.

Fiscal: Funding provided to support the collaborative or any necessary financial transactions connected to YSS projects will be managed by the group's designated fiscal agent. YSS will accept financial support from individual members and from individual public donations, and

private, state, and federal grants and contracts.

## G. Membership

YSS will strive to include representatives of a diverse range of interests who are active in public and private lands management within the collaborative's area of focus. These may include, but are not limited to the following interests:

- Air Quality
- Community Vitality and Local Economic Development
- Ecology and Wildlife
- Fire Safety and Community Protection
- Forestry, Mining, and Range Management
- Governmental: Community, County, State, Federal and Tribal
- Industry (including Biomass Processing)
- Individual Private Landowners
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Youth Education and Training

**New Members:** Membership to YSS is open. However, new members must represent an organization, agency, or some other constituency and must formally commit to uphold the spirit and guidelines of the charter. YSS aims for members to make informed decisions. Therefore, new members may participate in decision-making after attending one meeting and committing to understanding the information being analyzed as well as previous collaborative discussions.

**Attendance Requirements:** Members are encouraged to attend the majority of meetings per calendar year or to send an alternate. Members who are unable to attend and do not contact the facilitator to explain absences will be deemed "inactive" after three meetings.

**Alternates:** Regular attendance enhances the value and continuity of the YSS. When unable to attend, the member may choose to send an alternate to act on behalf of the member. The member and alternate should be adequately briefed so as to be able to work without causing the group to revisit items previously considered.

## H. Roles and Responsibilities

Specific roles and responsibilities are defined as follows:

**Officers:** The chairperson will preside and/or support the facilitator at meetings of the Leadership Team and YSS. The chairperson will report back to the full YSS concerning Leadership Team recommendations, communicate with the media upon approval of the Leadership Team, and perform other duties assigned by the Leadership Team. The vice-chairperson shall perform these duties in the absence of the chairperson. The finance officer will oversee the finances and records of accounts of the YSS, and provide timely written reports to the Leadership Team and the full YSS.

**The Leadership Team:** The Leadership Team consists of the immediate past YSS officers,

current officers, and a representative of the fiscal agent. The Leadership Team collectively decides on the order of business and nomination of officers of YSS and manage the general course of YSS operations. To this end, the Leadership Team will advise on agenda development, identify presenters to support meeting discussions, assist in budget preparation and other general fiduciary responsibilities, and provide general oversight and guidance for the work of the collaborative. Within the context of YSS stated objectives, the Leadership Team will oversee development of comments on issues and processes. Consensus will be used to develop overarching positions, understanding that specific positions will be vetted with the membership following the provisions in Section J. Decision-Making.

Members are composed of stakeholders who officially sign on to fully participate in the work of YSS and agree to support the mission and charter. All members are expected to act in a manner that will enhance trust among all partners and interested parties. Members are responsible for reviewing material in advance and being prepared to engage in substantive discussions during meetings. Members should attempt to attend as many meetings as possible to ensure continuity in discussions and decisions, and to ensure efficient workflow.

Liaisons provide a means of communication between an agency/organization and the collaborative. A liaison is a non-voting member of the collaborative.

Subcommittees: To advance its work, YSS may choose to create subcommittees to conduct specific tasks. the Leadership Team will craft a clear charge and scope of work for any subcommittee. As in the full group, subcommittees will seek consensus in their recommendations and work products. Highlights, decisions, and action items will be recorded in subcommittee meeting summaries. In addition to regular progress updates, materials developed in these groups will be brought back to YSS for discussion, refinement a necessary, and recommendation to the General Membership for approval.

The Facilitator provides impartial leadership to the dialogue process and meeting management. The facilitator is expected to be content neutral and to advocate for a fair, effective, and credible process – not a particular outcome. The facilitator will help YSS stay within scope and follow the terms of the charter. Specific duties include: (1) helping to formulate meeting objectives and agendas; (2) overseeing the preparation of meeting notes, including points of agreement and disagreement; (3) serving as a confidant for members who wish to express concerns privately, whether about the substance of discussions or the dialogue process. The facilitator will also actively suggest methods to accomplish tasks. If a member has a concern about the neutrality or performance of the facilitator, s/he should first speak with the facilitator. If the concern is unresolved, the member should discuss it with the Leadership Team.

## **I. Schedule**

YSS will meet quarterly with more frequent meetings as necessary to accomplish the mission. Meetings will generally be held on the third Friday of February, May, August, and November. If additional meetings are determined necessary, the YSS Leadership Team will attempt to schedule such sessions at times that are best for the majority of YSS participants.

The Leadership Team will meet bi-monthly, with more frequent meetings as necessary.

## J. Decision-Making

Both the full YSS collaborative and the YSS Leadership Team will use a consensus-seeking approach and work diligently to find common ground on issues and any decisions made by the collaborative. The definition of consensus spans the range from strong support to neutrality, to abstention, to “I can live with it.” If a participant disagrees with the rest of the participants, s/he will be given an opportunity to “stand aside” and let the group reach consensus. This will still constitute a consensus agreement and outcome.

If the Leadership Team believes YSS should take a position on a particular issue, and there is consensus to do so, the position will be considered the position of YSS. If, as part of the consensus position, a member “stands aside,” the position will go forward as the position of YSS. However, the member’s entity will not be included in the letterhead for that particular position letter. If a member cannot stand aside, then the position will not be submitted on behalf of YSS.

**Timeframe:** The collaborative will agree to general timelines for decision-making on discussion topics. The Facilitator and YSS members will make every effort to reach agreement on discussion topics. However, in the absence of agreement and when the given timeframe has elapsed, the collaborative will formulate its recommendations, consistent with the collaborative’s decision-making and move to other discussion topics.

## K. Protocols & Standing Rules

### Process Agreements

- **Members agree to act in good faith in all aspects of this process and to communicate their interests.**
- **Members agree to address the issues and concerns of the participants.** All members have a stake in the issue at hand. Members agree to validate the issues and concerns of other parties, and work to develop agreements that include all the issues under consideration. Disagreements will be viewed as problems to be solved, rather than battles to be won.
- **Members agree to only make commitments they intend to keep.**
- **It is expected that individual members will express concerns and support at YSS meetings, and sharing of differing views is one of the ways that YSS will help raise awareness of member perspectives.**
- **Outside of YSS meetings, members will represent comments made in these meetings as organizational or general group comments. Personal references should be avoided.**
- **Meeting notes will be prepared with a focus on key points, ideas, and action items rather than as transcripts.** Unless needed to understand the content, references will generally be made to the content rather than the members. Meeting notes will be circulated within two weeks of meetings. Approved meeting notes will then be made publicly available.

### Meeting Ground Rules

- **Electronic courtesy.** Most of the participants have demanding responsibilities outside of the meeting room. Members are asked to give full attention during the meeting. Please turn cell phones, or any other communication item with an on/off switch to “silent.” If



you do not believe you will be able to participate fully, please discuss your situation with one of the facilitators.

- **Be comfortable.** Please help yourself to refreshments or take personal breaks.
- **Humor is welcome** and important, but humor should never be at someone else's expense.
- **Stay focused on the charge and deliverables.** There are many related topics that people care about. YSS cannot address all of these. The facilitator will help the group stay focused on the deliverables.
- **Use common conversational courtesy.** Don't interrupt others. Use appropriate language. Avoid third party discussions.
- **Treat each other with respect.** People are passionate about these issues and in many cases have invested their careers in this work. People offer their time, expertise, insight, and resources in these discussions. Please respect the work people do to advance the conversation and create common ground.
- **All ideas and points have value.** You may hear something you do not agree with. You are not required to defend or promote your perspective, but you are asked to share it. All ideas have value in this setting. If you believe another approach is better, offer it as a constructive alternative.
- **Avoid editorials.** Please avoid ascribing motives to or judging the actions of others. Please speak about your experiences, concerns, and suggestions.
- **Honor time.** In order to achieve meeting objectives, it will be important to follow the time guidelines provided by the chairperson or facilitator. Always strive to be as brief as possible.
- **Beware of the 3 C's Disease:** Do not criticize, complain, or condemn.

## L. Amendments

YSS may amend this charter as desired or to respond to a specific need. The charter will be reviewed every two years to assure continued relevancy and appropriateness.