

Nonprofit Profile

MIKE TOLLEFSON

PRESIDENT, THE YOSEMITE FUND

HQ: San Francisco.

Mission: To provide broad-based private funding and resources for projects that preserve, protect or enhance Yosemite National Park.

Milestone: The \$13.5 million lower Yosemite Falls Trail project completed several years ago was our first really large capital campaign and it was incredibly successful and well-received. It put Yosemite Fund in a place to launch our second (\$14 million) capital campaign for trails in the park.

Annual budget: \$9.3 million.

Expense allocation: 76 percent projects; 24 percent fundraising and administration.

Corporate support: 11 percent.

Corporate supporters: Chevron, Herrick Corp., URS, McKinsey Consulting, Publicis Modem.

Board chair: Hal Cranston.

Board members: 18, including Bill Floyd, Ann Otter and Ward Wolff.

Council members: 80.

Employees: 12.

Volunteers: 300.

Events: Donors Day in Wawona in October.

Telephone: (800) 469-7275.

Web site: www.yosemitefund.org



Office issues

Recent challenge: Getting the word out that Yosemite Fund exists. There are so many folks absolutely in love with and committed to Yosemite, that once they learn of our mission they usually join us in celebrating the park and getting projects done.

Measures of success: Over the last 20 years, we've done 250 projects for over \$50 million, and they involve trail repair, meadow restoration, studies, protecting bears.

Smartest move: In partnership with KQED, we are underwriting Ken Burns' new documentary, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea." It comes out Sept. 27.

Missed opportunity: It always amazes me when I talk to someone who loves Yosemite, but doesn't know how they can help the park. ... We miss a lot of opportunities because we can't get the word out.

Misconception: That the federal government can and should fund all of the projects that are needed in the park. It's nice to say, but it's never going to happen. People who loved the park from the beginning of the park idea 100 years ago have been involved in philanthropy.

Professional insights

Personal path to nonprofit work: I spent 36 years with the National Parks Service (most recently as superintendent of Yosemite). From day one there were nonprofit organizations that helped the parks do special things. As I moved through my career and those organizations became more and more professional, seeing that value really impressed me and as I thought it was time to move on, it felt like a natural fit for me to help the national parks, especially Yosemite, from the other side of the boundary, so to speak.

Toughest aspect: The plus and the negative is we get a lot done because we have a lean and very good staff, but it also means we can't do everything we'd like to do.

Most surprising aspect: How much the donors care for the park and how much

they're willing to give of both time and their money, even in these lean times.

Biggest pain: Frustration that we can't do more because of resources.

Greatest pleasure: Seeing the projects completed and seeing how much it enriches the experience of visitors.

Introspections

Best recent moment: Completing the campaign for Half Dome overlook months early and under budget.

Worst recent moment: Seeing a project we'd really like to do, but don't have money for.

Dream for another life: As our country gets more diverse, that the parks remain as valuable to future generations as they are to ours. I've had a really good life, so maybe I'll be a sea otter next time.

Greatest inspiration: A snowy day in winter in Yosemite on cross-country skis.

Down time: I like being active: sea kayaking, dancing, hiking, anything that involves skis is good for me. On a day-to-day basis, delicious dinner and good wine with friends.

Causes: Most of the causes I give my own time and money to are related to open space. It's the one thing we're not going to get any more of, and every time we lose it, it's gone forever.

Most like to meet: If I could go back in time, I think it would be Abraham Lincoln, and not for many of the normal reasons. ... I'd be curious what would draw, in 1864, in the middle of the Civil War, Lincoln's desire to set aside Yosemite.

— Sarah Duxbury ■