

Great Southwest Council/Yucca Council Merger Information

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Background

The Great Southwest and Yucca Councils have provided Scouting programs and served the youth of New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas for over 100 years. However, Scouting has faced significant challenges not only in these areas, but nationwide, in the past few years. The combined effects of the LDS Church withdrawal from Scouting, a worldwide pandemic, and the BSA bankruptcy have impacted the ability of the two councils to deliver Scouting in their respective areas. For example, in 2013, the Great Southwest Council had over 8200 youth in 464 units. Likewise, the Yucca Council had almost 6700 youth in 273 units. By July of this year, Great Southwest Council had 1366 youth in 99 units. Yucca had 964 youth across its 70 units. This decrease in membership led to leadership from both councils starting discussions in early 2022 about possible avenues and ideas for sustaining and growing Scouting in their councils. By early 2023, it appeared that a merger of the two councils was a possible approach to ensure the youth of New Mexico, except its southeast quadrant; far west Texas; and southwest Colorado could continue to receive outstanding Scouting programs. We believe that by expanding and merging our respective service areas, we can improve Scouting and better serve our youth. In effect, we'll be stronger together.

In anticipation of a possible merger, we've asked for questions from unit- and council-level adult leaders. Responses to those questions are provided below. Additional questions can be sent to:

- Mark Yarbrough, Great Southwest Council President, gswcbsa.president@gmail.com
- Jim Libbin, Yucca Council President, jlibbin@nmsu.edu

Great Southwest Council/Yucca Council Merger Frequently Asked Questions

As of 9/1/2023

- Q: Why is the merger necessary?
 - A: As we evaluate how to best serve the youth in the area covered by both councils, we believe we can best do so by merging. It allows us to lower costs and use that money to hire more professional staff that can support units, interact with the community, and attract more youth to the Scouting program.

- Q: Is the merger being driven or required by the National Council?
 - A: No. The leadership of both councils believe that merging is the best way to serve the youth of our councils. The decision to merge is not being driven by the National Council or by any BSA professionals. It is entirely driven by volunteers in the councils who are looking for the best solution to serve the most youth in both councils.

- Q: What are the benefits of a merger?
 - A: In general, smaller councils across the country are having a difficult time of finding a critical mass of adult leaders and Scouts to hold leadership courses such as Wood Badge or NYLT, or to fill critical positions that help units succeed. Combining councils will give us the ability to hold these critical youth and adult leadership courses in the future and fill positions that are critical to our units and Scouts succeeding.
 - Also, a merged council will eliminate redundancies and by doing so, have a significant cost savings. For example, as non-profit entities, both councils are required to conduct annual financial audits by an outside auditing firm. These audits cost over \$15,000 per year for each council; it's anticipated that an audit for a merged council would be less than the cost of two separate audits. There is also an opportunity to optimize the work of the back-office functions such as accounts payable, Eagle package processing, advancement, and the registration of events. By combining, the merged council can become more efficient and better utilize its human employees to serve our members. It's currently anticipated there will be no loss of employees due to a merger, but there may be a realignment of roles and responsibilities.
 - There are other anticipated cost savings areas from redundant areas such as insurance, accounting, registrar, accounts payable, BSA service and licensing fees, BSA IT fees, etc. The Vice Presidents for Finance for both councils are working to better quantify these savings

- In anticipation of a possible merger, a detailed project plan's been developed to address issues identified by these FAQs and planning sessions involving the leadership of both councils.
- Q: What's the name of the merged council?
 - A: A new name will be developed for the new council. The new council's name will be selected by a committee consisting of both youth and adults from each council based on entries from registered youth in both councils. The Scout who submits the winning entry will earn a Campership to Gorham Scout Ranch. Any name will need to be approved by the BSA National Office.
- Q: Will there be a new Council Shoulder Patch (CSP) for the new council?
 - There will be a contest for youth members to submit design ideas for a new Council Shoulder Patch. The CSP will be selected by a committee consisting of both youth and adults from each council based on entries from registered youth in both councils. The youth who submits the winning entry will earn a Campership to Gorham Scout Ranch. CSPs may be modified from the submitted design to comply with BSA CSP standards and patch manufacturing requirements.
- Q: What happens to the Partnership program in the Great Southwest Council?
 - A: Each Council has a slightly different working model. Over the next few months each model will be evaluated to determine the best model for the new council. This could include components from both models or something that is entirely different. The goal is to create a model that best serves youth and allows the Scouting Program to grow in the new council's area.
- Q: Related to the Partnership Program, what will be the Program Fee in the new Council?ⁱ
 - A: BSA National announced on May 31st, 2023, that new registration fees and policies will be effective on August 1st, 2023. For most youth, the registration fee will be \$80. Council Program Fees can be increased to match the new registration fees. The merged council's Executive Board will have to determine what program fees are appropriate. Currently, the Program Fee is \$70 in the Great Southwest Council, and \$60 in the Yucca Council
- Q: What happens to the Order of the Arrow Lodges in each council?
 - A: The Order of the Arrow lodges from each council will combine into a new lodge. Youth representatives from each council's lodge will meet to determine things like the lodge name (which must be approved by the national council) as well as things like chapter alignment, lodge leadership structure, and other topics. We have contacted the

Gateway Region Chief who will work with the youth leadership of each lodge through this process.

- Q: Can I keep my unit number after the merger? What happens if units in both council's use the same number?
 - A: A review of the active unit numbers in both councils shows there are seven duplicate numbers, that impact 20 individual packs and troops. We expect that every unit, whether Pack, Troop, Crew, Ship, or Post, can retain its current unit number. Council registrars will develop an internal numbering system to distinguish between any two units that happen to have the same number.
 - The third and fourth paragraphs of the article at this link give further insight into this question: <https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2019/08/28/17-interesting-poignant-or-clever-reasons-behind-pack-troop-and-crew-numbers/#:~:text=In%20the%20BSA's%20early%20days,%2D%20to%20four%2Ddigit%20number.>
- Q: Will the merger mean any of our scout camps will close?
 - A: GSWC has two camps, Gorham Scout Ranch and Campbell Ranch. Yucca also has two camps, Camp Dale Resler and Camp Tyler Francis. Due to their locations, features, and legal agreements regarding their operation, it is anticipated that all four camps will remain active after the merger. As the new council matures it will be up to the Council Board to continue to evaluate the camping needs for the new council and adjust as necessary. More details on each camp can be found below, in the Camp Descriptions section.
- Q: Will the merger mean our scout shop and scout office will close?
 - A: Both GSWC and Yucca Council currently operate a council office or service center and a co-located National Scout Shop in leased buildings. GSWC's is in Albuquerque, Yucca's in El Paso. Due to the geographic size of the merged council, the plan is to have a physical office and Scout Shop presence in both cities.
- Q: What will be the new council's policy on YPT completion?
 - A: Currently GSWC suspends an adult Scouter's membership immediately when their YPT expires at the end of the two-year certification. Yucca suspends an adult Scouter's membership after one year from the date of training (effectively requiring an annual YPT Certification). As the council's merge, the council leadership will develop one process that is the same across the new council and consistent with the national council's focus on creating a safety culture.

- Q: What happens to the Wood Badge Associations in each council?
 - A: The GSWC has an active Wood Badge Association, and the Yucca council has a Wood Badge Association that is currently inactive. As with all components of the new council, these two associations will merge to better support Wood Badge within the new council's geographic area.

- Q: What will happen to the El Paso office when its lease ends in 2025?
 - A: As is done with council property at any time a lease approaches renewal, leadership will review the needs of the council as well as the financial arrangement associated with the lease and make a business decision on what is best for the council. We fully expect to continue to have a service center in El Paso for the foreseeable future, whether it be at the existing location or at some other location

- Q: What about the TX DOT property lease?
 - A. Yucca Council no longer plans to utilize this property and the council will exit the lease shortly. Additional details on this location can be found in the Camp Descriptions portion of this document.

- Q. What will be the makeup of the new council's executive board/executive committee/advisory council (size, composition, and structure)?
 - A: The two councils' executive board/committee are similar in structure and are based on BSA National guidelines. The new council's structure is being designed by a team of current board members from each council. Per bylaws, the board must consist of representatives from the area it serves. The board members will be nominated by a nominating committee made up of volunteer Scouters from both current councils and will be elected by voting members of the merged council.

- Q: We should discuss making the territory of each current council a district in the new one, not to function as a district, but to be used to delineate the territories in case that is needed to specify makeup of executive board and other committees. Under each district could be the zone structure currently being implemented
 - A: There will be a method to delineate and organize units based on location. The exact format is one of the tasks of the merger plan and will be developed as the councils move towards merging.

- Q: Where will District Executives be located?
 - A: Our goal is to have several District Executives who will each serve defined areas within the council. It makes sense that District Executives should live in close proximity

to their defined area. The role of a District Executive is such that they spend much of their time in the field in the defined area that they serve. However, they could serve from any location (i.e. local service center or remotely from home) when not in the field.

- Q: What will be the policy on leader training?
 - A: Both councils believe that Scouts deserve trained leaders. We believe that by merging we will be able to increase the number of training classes that are offered to leaders. The exact policy on training requirements is on the project plan and will be announced when they are approved.

- Q: What will be the policy on unit size?
 - Yucca currently requires 10 youth at recharter; GSWC follows BSA policy, which is requiring 5 youth (unless waived by the Scout Executive). Both councils believe that Scouting works best when the Guide to Safe Scouting and the patrol or den method is followed. Policies such as unit size are being worked through the project plan with members of each council on the team.

- Q: How will this impact council-level committees such as program, membership, camping, advancement, and the like?
 - A: We believe a combined council will make these committees stronger as we will have representation from the best of both councils. The two council's executive board/committee are similar in structure and are based on BSA National guidelines. The exact structure and how they will be staffed are a work in progress. The structure will ensure ongoing representation from both geographical areas that make up the existing councils

- Q: How will we coordinate special events such as fundraisers or recognition?
 - A: Some events such as the annual awards celebration may be combined while other events like golf tournaments and Eagle Scout Luncheons may be held by region. The goal is to do what is best for our units, the members of the council, and our communities.

- Q: Will we have a single popcorn campaign?
 - A: Both councils currently use the same popcorn vendor making it easy to combine efforts to conduct a stronger campaign that generates more revenue for the units and the council. Dates and timing may be adjusted slightly to meet the needs of each geographic area.

- Q: What would be the timing for implementing a merged council?
 - A: Our goal is to have the merger take place on January 1, 2024. This will save significant funds and give us the structure we need that allows us to succeed. It is important to note that many merger activities cannot take place until the new entity is created. This means there will be merger activities that occur throughout 2024 with the full merger being completed by the end of 2024.
- Q: What will happen to the GSWC's uniform bank?
 - A: We fully expect the Uniform bank to continue to work with Scouts to provide uniforms to those who are in need.
- Q: How will the change to zones be impacted by a merger?
 - A: Currently, both councils use some variation of the Zone approach but all council structures are being considered to best serve our members and our units. Council structure is an item in the merger project plan, and it is being considered by volunteers from both councils.
- Q: How will the merger help with zone implementation?
 - A: We believe that we can take what we have learned in the two existing councils' experience with Zones to implement a structure that best serves our units.
- Q: How will outlying areas (ex: Durango, Los Alamos, Silver City) be better supported with a larger geographic area to support?
 - A: We believe that merging will eventually allow us to hire more professional field staff. This could allow areas like the Four Corners, southwestern New Mexico, Los Alamos, and Gallup to have district executive and development support that they have not had in several years.
- Q: How will we try to merge the different groups and cultures in the two councils? Will there be meetings or other activities?
 - A: Yes, starting with a Joint Board Meeting in August, we've hosted and will continue to host events such as fireside chats and other events. Our goal is not to have a Yucca or a GSWC culture but rather to create a new culture that best serves the youth of our new council.
- Q: Units in northern New Mexico are closer to the Pathway to the Rockies Council. Have you considered moving the units in Northern New Mexico to the Pathway of the Rockies Council?
 - A: The Pathways to the Rockies is a new council resulting from a merger of the Pikes Peak and Rocky Mountain Councils in 2021. They are headquartered in Colorado

Springs and their council camp is Camp Alexander located in Lake George, CO. We believe that any unit in Northern New Mexico can be best served by a council with a New Mexico presence. Here are some distances for reference:

- Distance Between GSWC and Los Alamos, NM = 91 miles; 1 hr, 24 min
- Distance between PRC and Los Alamos, NM = 287 miles; 4 hrs, 36 min
- Distance between Los Alamos and Pueblo CO = 239 miles; 3 hrs, 55 min
- Distance between Cimarron and Pueblo, CO = 147 miles; 2 hrs, 4 min
- Distance between Cimarron and GSWC in ABQ = 210 miles; 2 hrs, 49 min
- Distance between Cimarron and Colorado Springs, CO = 195 miles; 2 hrs 46 min

Volunteers in that portion of New Mexico were asked several years ago about “moving” to the adjacent Council in Colorado. They were not at all interested in doing so, in part because of the difficulty in traveling north in the Winter months. They were firm about staying part of GSWC.

Council Property Information

Mileage Chart

Distance between GSWC and Yucca Properties (in miles)

	ABQ Service Center	El Paso Service Center	Gorham Scout Ranch	Campbell Scout Ranch	Camp Del Resler	Camp Tyler Francis
ABQ Service Center	N/A	277	87	26.6	227	266
El Paso Service Center	277	N/A	363	297	107	16
Gorham Scout Ranch	87	363	N/A	81	261	352
Campbell Ranch	26.6	297	81	N/A	66	150
Camp Dale Resler	227	107	261	66	N/A	117
Camp Tyler Francis	266	16	352	150	117	N/A

Addresses used for mileage determinations

- ABQ Service Center: 5841 Office Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109
- El Paso Service Center: 7601 Lockheed Dr, El Paso, TX 79925
- Gorham Scout Ranch: 44 Cerro Piñon Rd, Chimayo, NM 87522
- Campbell Ranch (use address for Tinkertown Museum, which is across the street from the entrance to Campbell; Campbell has no address itself): 121 Sandia Crest Rd, Sandia Park, NM 87047
- Camp Dale Resler: Used "Cloudcroft, NM 88317" as destination
- Camp Tyler Francis: Used address of "3400 Girl Scout Lane, Sunland Park, NM " from CTF website

Camp Descriptions

Camp Dale Resler (Yucca)

Camp Dale Resler (CDR) is located just east of Cloudcroft on about 80 acres leased from the US Forest Service (FS) and about 16 acres leased from the Village of Cloudcroft. At just under 9000 feet, CDR is mostly populated with Douglas firs, ponderosa pines, and quaking aspen. It opened in the summer of 1958 after the previous council camp, Camp Gila near Silver City, operated for two weeks of that summer.

CDR served as the council's long-term camp into the early 2000's with a short interruption in the 90's for the first attempt to work with Conquistador to share Camp Wehinahpay. CDR closed in 2010 with the

beginning of the Wehinahpay joint venture, which operated during 2011 through 2016. After being discussed to begin in 2012, fire danger closed CDR for 2011 and the venture began a year early of necessity. In late 2016, Yucca's board exited the joint venture citing mostly financial reasons.

The camp is in fair to poor shape. The cinder-block buildings (dining hall and health lodge on the village property, program lodge, shower house, ranger cabin, and three small program sheds on the forest service property) have been kept upright through efforts of the OA for many years. The dining hall is serviceable and licensed by the state to be operated through 2023. The rifle range structure is in a shambles and is not at all safe for use. There are currently ten rustic campsites; many of the tent platforms and other equipment migrated to Wehinahpay during the joint venture. Water is gravity fed through a mostly above ground pipeline system from a glass-lined former brewery tank installed at the camp's highest point in the early 1960's. Porta-potties of questionable condition can be located at each site; many of the current toilets are the same ones that were there in 1970. There is no ranger or caretaker and the village has grown out to the camp; homes can be seen from several campsites. One nearby resident keeps the keys for us and lets units use them in coordination with the service center.

There is no plan to resurrect CDR as a summer camp, nor is there a plan to abandon it, as ending the FS lease would require the removal of all structures and restoration to the conditions we found when initially leased. The village has indicated it would want the two buildings on their property should we cease using the camp; there are three large water tanks on the hill above the dining hall providing much of Cloudcroft's water supply, brought by pipeline from an adjacent Pumphouse Canyon up the central valley of CDR. It is our intention to continue the leases, having the property available for OA activities and troop camping, and the occasional camporee or klondike derby, some years with significant snow. It has been a good location for NYLT and Wood Badge, but it is not clear that it would currently meet the standards to host those events.

TX DOT Property (Yucca)

Through the work of several council board members, one of whom was also on the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) advisory board, a lease was signed in 2015 allowing Yucca Council to use a large tract of property between Interstate 10 and the border highway, adjacent to the international border, in west El Paso (between the Sunland Park and Executive Center exits) for 25 years with a mutual option to extend another 25 years. It was thought that this could be used for an in-town camp to replace the lost Zach White, hosting training, day camps, and similar events. It also offered a possible location for the relocation of the council service center at a time when the original (1984) 30-year lease had been extended with an agreement that provided for several exits between the extension in 2014 and the end of the extended lease in 2025; the location on the West Side would have been closer to the New Mexico part of the council and had good accessibility with Border Highway access. We have made the annual \$1,000 lease payments, but have not developed the property in any way, as the property now known as Camp Tyler Francis (see below) became available shortly after the TXDOT lease was signed. (There was a several year delay in the availability of the property to the council so TXDOT could use it to stage materials for a major freeway construction project which has only recently been completed.) It is our understanding that TXDOT now has another use for the property and intends to "buy out" our lease interest, but this is not confirmed in writing.

Camp Tyler Francis (Yucca)

Camp Tyler Francis (CTF) is an in-town facility in El Paso's upper valley on Girl Scout Lane. CTF was for many years Camp Pioneer, operated primarily as a day camp by the El Paso Girl Scout council. When the El Paso and Roswell GSUSA councils merged into the Midland council, all of El Paso and Roswell's facilities were disposed. Camp Pioneer was not owned by the GSUSA council, but leased to them by the Pioneer Neighborhood association. When the Girl Scouts left the facility, the association, having several members in common with the Yucca Council board, offered the camp to us. The camp has an old rock building, laid out for a kitchen but with no equipment, and two campsite ramadas. There were plans for a capital campaign for improvements, spearheaded by former El Paso mayor Rick Francis; the camp is now named for his son, an Eagle Scout and Yucca Council board member who died at a young age in a private airplane crash. These plans were postponed by first the BSA bankruptcy, and second by the pandemic. There is movement on restarting that process now, with some necessary construction being funded by Mr. Francis. It is anticipated that this will become our El Paso day camp facility and be used for unit events, trainings, etc.

Gorham Scout Ranch (GSWC)

Gorham Scout Ranch is an all-season resource located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains approximately 45 minutes north of Santa Fe, NM and 25 minutes east of Espanola. Elevation at camp is around 7,200 feet. Our camp is located on 2,650 acres of high-desert beauty with rolling hills of piñon and ponderosa pine, and juniper trees. Interspersed with the nature setting are dining, camping, group meeting, and other facilities, including a main dining hall with fully equipped commercial kitchen, swimming pool, a shower and laundry facility co-located with the swimming pool, climbing and rappelling opportunities, and a confidence course featuring a zip line. The camp property was deeded by the United States to the Kit Carson Council (GSWC's corporate predecessor) under three Land Patents between 1967 and 1970, which recognized full payment and granted the acreage for Kit Carson "to have and to hold...forever..." It is unclear if the BLM's records have been updated to reflect GSWC's succession in interest.

Campbell Scout Ranch (GSWC)

Campbell Scout Ranch is a rustic, wooded, undeveloped 40-acre property on the east side of the Sandia Mountains, conveniently located within a 30-minute drive from downtown Albuquerque. There are currently no restrooms or potable water available on-site. The council received the land in 2003 via a Quit-Claim Deed, conditional on the property being used for Scouting purposes for 50 years.
