

# National Park Service offers Yosemite contract to new company

By Mark Grossi  
mgrossi@fresnobee.com

The National Park Service on Wednesday picked Philadelphia-based Aramark to run hotels, stores, restaurants and other services in Yosemite National Park, offering the company a 15-year contract worth nearly \$2 billion.

The Park Service did not extend a new contract to the current concessionaire, Delaware North Companies, Yosemite's main concession operator for the last 22 years. DNC had reportedly competed for the contract.

Last year, DNC maintained that if a new concession operator was selected, the company would have to pay more than \$50 million for "intangible assets," including names, such as the Ahwahnee and Wawona hotels. The Park Service's estimate was \$3.5 million.

The new concession operator will have to work out the cost of the assets with Delaware North, Park Service officials said on Wednesday. No further details were available.

Both Aramark and the Park Service said they looked forward to working together on Yosemite's controversial Merced River Plan, which will focus on managing crowds in Yosemite Valley.

Aramark, which has 30 days to decide on the contract, runs services in eight other Park Service locations, including Denali National Park & Preserve and Glacier Bay Park & Preserve, both in Alaska. Aramark has gross revenues of \$14.8 billion and employs more than 270,000 employees in 21 countries.

"We're honored and sincerely looking forward to working with Yosemite," said Aramark spokesman David Freireich.

The Yosemite contract is highly coveted. Exceeding \$120 million a year in gross revenue, Yosemite by far is the largest single national park concession contract in the country.

But much of the bidding process is not public. The Park Service would only say there was more than one bidder. The only name revealed to the public was Aramark.

In a prepared release, Delaware North said: "Although we are disappointed that Delaware North at Yosemite was not selected to continue its decades of service in Yosemite National Park, we would like to congratulate Aramark on being awarded the Yosemite concession contract. Delaware North is focused on providing a smooth transition for Yosemite associates and park visitors."

Delaware North won the 15-year contract in 1993. It was supposed to end in 2008, but extensions have been granted as park leaders wrestled with a lawsuit over the protection plan for the Merced River, which runs through the heart of sometimes crowded Yosemite Valley.

Delaware North, a hospitality industry titan, has since broadened its national park concession business. It has won park contracts at such places as Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Sequoia and Kings Canyon. The Buffalo, N.Y.-based company also owns the Tenaya Lodge in Fish Camp, just outside Yosemite's south entrance.

Late last year, Delaware North placed a \$51 million value on intangible assets, which include registered place names, websites, mailing lists and guest databases. Delaware North said a new company would have to pay to use the famous names, such as the Ahwahnee Hotel.

The Park Service's estimate was less than a tenth of the Delaware North figure. Neither side made a cost

breakdown available for the public.

Yosemite spokesman Scott Gediman said if Aramark agrees to the contract in the next 30 days, the contract would be sent to Congress for approval.

“The transition period would begin in late fall,” Gediman said. “The new company would begin on March 1, 2016. We don’t expect any interruption of service or impact on visitors.”

Mark Grossi: [\(559\) 441-6316](tel:5594416316), [@markgrossi](https://twitter.com/markgrossi)