



Newsletter

Fall 2007

Volume I

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Fire Safe Council at Work

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping our mountain safe from destructive wildfire through public education and fire abatement. Our education programs cover essential questions about fire abatement—why we should do it, what it looks like, and how it is connected to forest health. Our fire abatement work offers homeowners grant money to help with the abatement of their properties by professional contractors. In addition, we have an active volunteer group (*The Woodies*) that fire abates homes of those who are financially and physically unable to make use of contractors.

We also take an active role in representing community views on forest management, and we consult regularly with agencies such as CalFire and the US Forest Service.

Overall, we have been successful in obtaining and using grant funds, and in developing and maintaining our volunteer group. This success comes from the support of the community, represented by people who have dedicated many hours of service to physical and office work, as well as



The Woodies stopped momentarily for the above photo. Pictured left to right: Joel Palmer, a local property owner, Janice Fast, Mike Esnard, Ron Bowles, Jeri Bowles, Jim Taylor, Susan Taylor. Ron Perry and Doris Lombard (See Page 4)

everyone who has given moral and financial support. We are very thankful to all of you who have helped in countless ways, large and small, and we hope we can count on your support in the future.

Mike Esnard
President

From the Desk of Reba

Great News! We have received the first \$100,000 of the nearly \$1.5 million in grant funds that are designated for MCFSC fuel reduction projects. Also, after a rather lengthy approval process, beginning in September, we will begin use of \$500,000 of these grant funds that were provided by NRCS through a cooperative agreement with

Riverside County. More Great News! Since beginning our membership drive starting in mid June, we now have 347 new members along with the addition of nearly \$2,000 in donations. This response is most gratifying. Your membership dues and donations help to fund our continuing educational and volunteer activities for the mountain communities.

If you have not already done so, please consider becoming a member.

Reba Coulter
Executive Director

MCFSC's Website:
www.mcfsc.org



July 4th photos. Above: Jim (front) and Susan (rear) Taylor, Woodies, proudly carry the Fire Safe Council banner in the parade. Below (lt to rt): Ex. Director Reba and Pres. Mike are ready to march.



Educational Program

Larry Kueneman, Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) Board Member and his wife, Roberta Corbin, began an educational program at the Idyllwild School sponsored by the MCFSC in 2003. This year, forty-four sixth graders in two classes at the Idyllwild School participated in the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council education program. The program covered the history of fire suppression in the United States, what constitutes a healthy forest, what individuals can do to contribute to fire safety/healthy forests, and what communities can do to contribute to fire safety/healthy forests in their areas. The first day was a classroom presentation and video covering the history of suppression in the United States. The second day Rich Fairbanks of the Wilderness society gave a talk and PowerPoint presentation on "Fire Behavior in the Mixed Conifer Forest" which he geared toward twelve years olds. The third day the students used an interactive computer program called "Burning Issues" to learn what it takes to

conduct a successful prescribed burn by contacting local agencies and affected residents and then measuring the fuel moisture content, humidity, wind speed and direction. The final day consisted of a field trip to the Riverside County Nature Center where they learned about the native plants and trees and explored the new garden of native plants which are drought and fire resistant.

On the fifth day, the classroom teacher (Lenore Sazer-Krebbers) had each of the students write an essay about what they had learned during the four day program. The MCFSC sponsored a contest for the students to submit their essay and optionally an educational poster demonstrating what they learned. The two instructors from the MCFSC judged the posters and essays. The prizes for the contest were awarded separately for posters and essays to provide the largest number of awards. There were two 1st place prizes of \$20.00, three 2nd place prizes of 2 tickets to the local theater (there was a tie), and three 3rd place prizes of 10.00 gift certificates to the local candy and

ice cream store (another tie). Students submitted 44 essays and 10 posters for the contest. Each winner was also presented with a certificate of achievement from the MCFSC. The prize winners for their essays were:

- 1st place – Liana Spano
- 2nd place – tied were Mitchell Biley and Justin Stephens
- 3rd place – Tyla Friemoth

The prize winners for their posters were:

- 1st place – Danika Hitchcock
- 2nd place – Jacob Swanson
- 3rd place – tied were Georgia Reeves and Erec VonSeggern

Coverage of the event was provided by the Idyllwild Town Crier which included a description of the program, a picture of the winners and publication of the winning essays. The posters were displayed in the Idyllwild Pizza Company for a week and then in the MCFSC booth during the July 4th parade.

The winning essays and posters may be view on the MCFSC web site:
www.mcfsc.org.

Roberta Corbin
Educational Project Coordinator



Photo: On June 1, **Larry Kueneman** and **Roberta Corbin** (back right) from Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council presented awards to the 8 best fire-prevention essays and posters in an annual competition. From left, teacher **Lenore Sazer-Krebbers**, **Justin Stephens** (2nd-place essay, tie), **Erec VonSeggern** (3rd-place poster tie), **Mitchell Biley** (2nd-place essay, tie), **Jacob Swanson** (2nd-place poster), **Danika Hitchcodk** (1st place poster), **Liana Spano** (1st-place essay), **Georgia Reeves** (3rd-place poster, tie) and **Tyla Friemoth** (3rd-place essay).

Wilderness

Wilderness is a system of interrelationships, intricately interdependent. Locally we are witnessing the encroachment of huge human populations, which are interrupting the functioning of these systems, systems, which have survived through eons of time and change sustaining life on earth. What we do here will serve as a model for the rest of the world. What will we choose?

The choice comes down to this. Which species are able to think and adapt? Which are endowed with the brainpower to envision the outcomes of the continued patterns of human population encroachment? Not the flora and fauna that depend on the habitats, the cycles, the genetic pools that have sustained the gifts of life on earth over millions of years. Who can make a choice? Only we human beings can choose.

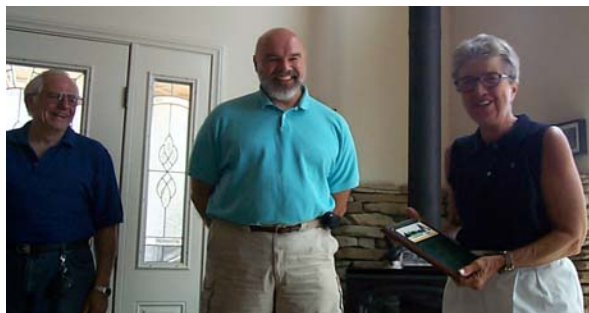
I have heard the argument that there is a choice between human well-being and that of the rest of the living biosphere, usually pointing out a species with the unfortunate situation of being in the way of "human progress". I think of the self-importance that characterizes such a narrow-minded human-centered view of the situation. Scientists, who have made it their life's work to observe, study and know the interworkings of the ecosystems that support and sustain our biosphere tell us what they have learned. Listen and act on these findings based on

reality. We are endangering our own existence when we disrupt the ecosystems that support life on earth. Because we might not see and understand how this complex system relates, for instance to the survival of a species such as the spotted owl or the legless lizard, our ignorance should not be the basis of our choice. Listen to the Geary Hunds, the Rich Fairbanks of the world. It is their passion for the truth and a background in science that has the power to save us along with the wild world that sustains us all.

Does the protection of people in the wildlife urban interface matter? Yes, **and** it matters that wilderness be preserved in great enough quality and quantity that it can be sustained. Who is encroaching on what? Southern California is a great model of what development unchecked is doing. Who can change? Can the plants and animals comprehend what needs to be done and do it? Can they make the choice to notice that the gene pool has diminished to the point of re-

production reduced to dangerously low populations, which amounts to inbreeding, genetic weaknesses multiplied, and death of the species? Scientists know that wildlife corridors to ensure breeding genetic variability are vital. Can people see that the choice to continue the encroachment is an irreversible process? Can we see that there needs to be a way to set limits and that only we can set and maintain those limits? What does it mean to say that we can no longer protect this community of people? Can we weigh the value of the continued functioning of the life-sustaining ecosystems that have been in place over millions and millions of years with the inconvenience of having to re-dedicate some of the land back to nature? Well, who has the courage and the capacity to make such a choice? I leave that to you. I choose to accept the gifts of nature and dedicate my life to their protection, even when it involves major human inconvenience.

Doris J. Lombard
B.A. Biological Sciences CCLA 1967



Janice Fast (right) receives the MCFSC Citizen of the Year Award for her service to the community and the MCFSC. Presenting the award were Mike Esnard (center), President and Ron Perry (left), 1st Vice President of the MCFSC Board of Directors.

4th of July Parade

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council was represented in the 4th of July Parade by 12 of the hardworking Woodies in their bright orange shirts. In the center of town, members of the Board and family had a booth providing information on the Fire Safe Council and Cal-Fire abatement and fuel reduction programs.

This years theme was **"Have a Rake? You Can Abate!"** The goal was to emphasize the fact that 85% of most required abatement can be done by a simple garden tool. The Woodies marched with rakes from 6 to 36 inches in width to demonstrate the variety of rakes available. The Woodies are proud

to have volunteered 852 hours in 2007 and a total of 10,962 hours since our founding in 2003. During the summer, these volunteer hours help elderly homeowners bring their homes into compliance with the Fire Safety Codes and during the winter, cut and split fire wood donated to the Idyllwild Help Center for low income and disabled households.

One added highlight of this year's parade was the skill with which Veda Roubideaux twirled her rake, demonstrating hidden talent and a possible history as a drum major.

Janice Fast
Parade Coordinator

Citizen of the Year

This year the MCFSC Board of Directors wanted to create an annual award to recognize people who exemplify the service mission of the Fire Safe Council. At the July 4th get-together at the Lombard-Perry home in Mountain Center, we were very pleased to make Janice Fast the first MCFSC Citizen of the Year recipient. Janice has been an inspiration to us all with her dedication and remarkable commitment to the community regarding fire safety, and we are happy to have the opportunity to honor her.

Mike Esnard
President

Woodies at Work

The spirit of volunteerism, so much a part of everyday life in Idyllwild, is alive and well at the Fire Safe Council, and there is no better example of that spirit than the “Woodies.” Week after week, in summer heat or winter cold, this group can be found helping neighbors with fire abatement. Mostly serving the elderly and/or physically disabled, their efforts help to make our community safer from the threat of wildfire. Additionally, these abated properties serve as demonstration models for the “do it yourself” residents. In the past 5 years, over

500 properties and 425 acres have been abated.

While we are all aware that abatement is a year round job, there is less to do in the winter months. For the “Woodies,” however, the nature of the work merely changes: from raking, trimming and hauling, to cutting and splitting firewood. With the help of our local tree service contractors, who provide logs that would otherwise be ground up, the “Woodies,” through deliveries of split firewood to the Help Center, are able to help many who are totally depend on their wood burning

stoves for winter heat.

If you are willing and able to donate 4-6 hours per week to help your neighbors, there is a spot for you with the “Woodies”.

If you are interested in volunteering, please call the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council office at 951-659-6208 and leave a message for Don Patterson, Woodies’ coordinator.

Don Patterson,
Woodies’ Coordinator

**Protect your home and
community.
Abate your property.**

MAST Update

On May 23rd of this year the Mountain Area Safety Task Force (MAST) conducted a Table Top Exercise simulating a wildfire driven incident involving the Mountain Communities of Riverside County. The exercise allowed Command and General Staff to work through a complex evacuation scenario in a tabletop discussion format. Additionally, the exercise afforded those cooperating and assisting agencies that are likely to support an evacuation the opportunity to discuss their roles and responsibilities for this scenario. As a result of the Table Top exercise after action items were identified, one of those being the need to update contact information and recreation camp emergency

operation plans. On August 1st a meeting was held with CAL FIRE/ Riverside County Fire Dept, Idyllwild Fire Department, United States Forest Service, Riverside County Sheriff Department and Mountain Community Camp representatives to aid in accomplishing this task. This meeting proved to be beneficial to all parties involved. We would like to take this opportunity to give recognition and appreciation to those Camps which have taken the necessary steps to better protect their visitors and staff. We look forward in continuing to build a cooperative and beneficial alliance.

Submitted by
M.A.S.T.

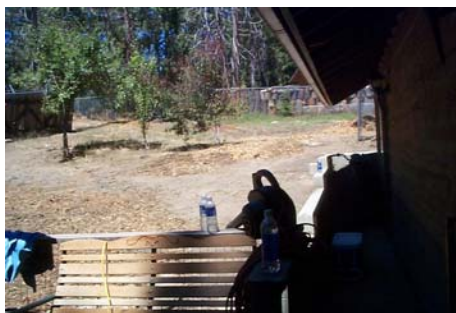
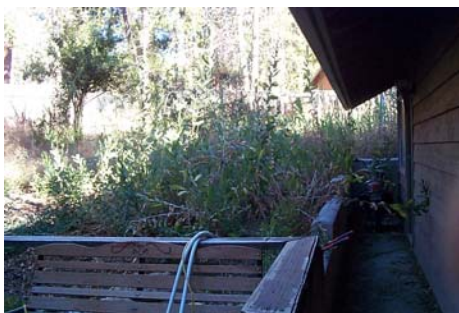
Demonstration Garden

Need help landscaping your mountain yard? Come and see the new Nature Center firescaped garden. People from several agencies got together to plan, fund and create a drought resistant garden that incorporates terracing and water harvesting, shows how to manage erosion in drainages, and addresses how and what you can plant on slopes, in sunny and shaded areas, and around a water feature.

MCFSC members Ron Perry and Doris Lombard met with Shelley Kibbee and Charleen Chinlud of the Nature Center and Garden Club, Paul Laustsen representing NRCS, and Ken Mello, Ken Twardowski and Dominik Schwaub from Cal Fire who collaborated to create an educational brochure “A Homeowner’s Guide for a Healthy Forest” and came up with the idea to demonstrate how a forested yard can be abated and attractive by developing a local garden site. Shelley accepted the challenge and the garden is now in place around the Nature Center building.

Doris J. Lombard, B.A.
Biological Sciences CSCLA 1967

Before & After



This is an example of good fire abatement done by the Woodies. The brush was removed 30’ back from the house. Fruit trees are now visible and there is defensible space around the house.