Along with the great beauty of our mountains comes the risk of wildfire. We greatly lessen this risk by abating our properties and keeping them in compliance with "100' defensible space" codes. Given the extreme drought affecting all of California, it is likely we will see fires again this summer and fall, and we would be wise to prepare for them.

The goal of homeowner abatement is to prevent fire from traveling to one's home or other structures and to reduce the risk to fire fighters.

The code divides the 100' area around a building into two zones. The inner zone within 30' of the building should have the least amount of vegetation and nothing that is easily flammable, such as manzanita and juniper. There should be no dead or dying trees or shrubs, and vegetation should be well pruned and spaced. Contrary to some interpretations, the code does not call for a ring of bare earth around the house, but leaves and needles should be raked at least 10' from the structure. Mulch can be used around tree roots but not greater than 4" deep.

In the 30-100' area, called the "reduced fuel zone", the code seeks to prevent fire spread by separating fuels both horizontally and vertically. We often miss the potential danger of "fuel ladders" which is an arrangement of bushes underneath trees that easily carries fire up into the canopy. To prevent this, branches should be pruned to at least 6' and, if there are shrubs underneath, there should be a clearance of three times the height of the shrub (a 5' bush should have 15' of space between it and the lowest tree branch). Ground spacing should be twice the height of the bush (a 4' shrub should have 8' between it and the next shrub). As in the inner zone, all dead and dying vegetation must be removed.

There is a wealth of expertise on the hill regarding fire abatement. The licensed contractors are excellent, as are our project managers. Call them if you need help. Because of the drought, both Cal Fire and Idyllwild Fire are beginning their inspections early this year, so homeowners should begin their work earlier as well.
Ron Perry tackles the task of sawing a mountain of wood at The HELP Center.

Janice loads rounds into a splitter at The HELP Center.

Moving the splitter at The HELP Center, as the team continues cutting, splitting and loading.


RUIZ MEETS WITH MCFSC

US Congressman Raul Ruiz of the 36th District, along with staffers Shelley Martin and Greg Rodriguez, met with the MCFSC Board and staff on January 22. We were very pleased to have his undivided attention regarding our fire prevention programs.

After meeting for an hour in the office to describe our work, we drove to Inspiration Point to show Dr. Ruiz where homes meet the national forest in the southwest corner of the community. We discussed abatement, fuelbreaks, hardened homes and federal funding. We look forward to seeing him again this spring, when it is rumored he might join the Woodies to cut some timber!

Norm Walker, MCFSC board member, points out fuelbreak area to Ruiz, with Mike Esnard and Don Patterson looking on.

Some of the equipment used by the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council Woodies volunteers has been partially funded through the generosity of the Idyllwild Community Fund.
FIRE SAFETY MUSTER

For Fire Season Preparedness

When:
Saturday, April 26, 2014
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Where:
Idyllwild Community Center Site
In the center of town!

Come and see the:
Vintage Fire Engines ~ 9-1-1 for kids
Hoselay and Auto Extrication Demonstrations
USFS K-9 Demonstration

FUN AND INFORMATION FOR EVERYONE!!

SPONSORED BY:
Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council – U.S. Forest Service – Idyllwild Fire Protection District
CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department – Pine Cove Water District – Idyllwild Rotary

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ANZA LANDMARK TO RECEIVE FACELIFT

Bob Giffin, President of Anza Civic Improvement League (ACIL), is working with the MCFSC’s reroofing program to replace the hazardous shake shingle roof on this historical building (left). The schoolhouse will mark 100 years of service this September with a month long celebration. We are eager to see what type of Class A roofing material they will select to enhance this treasured structure, making the building and nearby community safer from a wind-driven fire. Thanks to Bob and the ACIL for being proactive about the fire safety of their community! You can contact Bob and the ACIL at www.anzacivic.org.

MAKING THE COMMUNITY SAFER—ONE ROOF AT A TIME

MCFSC began a shake and wood shingle roof replacement program last September. (See below for before and after examples.) Accomplishments to date include: 35 wood roofs replaced with Class A fire-resistant shingles, 5 homeowners in various stages of work, 19 are getting bids from contractors, and 20 will have received notification by the end of March to begin replacing their roofs.

Post-fire studies show homes with non-flammable roofs and proper vegetation clearance survived 86-95% of fires.

Thanks to our partners Cal OES, Riverside Co. OES, Cal Fire/Riverside Co. Fire, Idyllwild Fire, and our terrific contractors. We especially are grateful to FEMA for funding this project.

Color portion of Firesafe News is provided at no additional cost to the FireSafe Council.
Best wishes - Kevin Walker

Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council appreciates the support of everyone who has sent in membership dues and/or donations. Memberships are valid for one year. We do not send membership reminders, but include a registration form in all newsletters. You are welcome to make a donation or pay membership dues by using PayPal. Just log on to our website (www.mcfsc.org), click the How to Join link, then the Donate link at the bottom of the page. THANK YOU! Only by working together can we keep our communities fire safe.