Meeting with Congressman Dr. Ruiz

On March 13, Congressman Ruiz and his staff visited to the burn area of the 2013 Mountain Fire. Representatives of the U.S. Forest Service and CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire directed the tour and explained the current status of the rehab and restoration of the area.

Following the tour, Dr. Ruiz requested to meet with the fire safe council. The group discussed several incentive type programs to encourage people to create defensible space on their properties.

Congressman Ruiz, closed by describing his bi-partisan bill H.R. 1009, the Wildfire Prevention Act of 2015. This bill will amend FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. If passed, it will award states mitigation dollars after major wildfires, recognizing the importance of mitigation fire like other natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods and tornadoes. View the bill in it’s entirety at https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/114/hr1009 or view the summary at our website: www.mcfsc.org.

On April 1, local fire agencies began making fire inspections.

Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) has trained project managers to help you develop a plan to reduce the threat of wildland fire to your home and pass your fire inspection. Together, you and a project manager will walk your property and identify fire risks. Call today for this free consultation. Grant funds may be available to help.

Remember, the most critical person in preparing and protecting your property from fire is not the firefighter; it is you, the property owner.

Photo of Pat Boss and Don Patterson, project managers.

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council Newsletter is funded by a a grant from the Cooperative Fire Program of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Pacific Southwest Region, through the California Fire Safe Council and donations. Donations to Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council are used to further public awareness and support fire prevention and hazard fuels reduction objectives.
WOODIES AT WORK
Doris Lombard

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.
CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department/County Office of Emergency Services is committed to providing the best public protection possible and to always work to improve community life and property safety. We will analyze what is best to reduce risks for a community, report what is best and work hard to implement what is best for life and property risk reduction. This is just what we have always done and will continue to do for the San Jacinto-Santa Rosa Mountains area.

We support collaborative private-public partnerships that jointly work to reduce risk from all types of hazards, person or naturally caused. County Fire/County OES will work very closely with citizen volunteer organizations including the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) and the Woodies, the Mountain Disaster Preparedness (MDP) organization, the Idyllwild HELP Center, the Mountain RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services), the Mile High Radio Club (MHRC)/WNKI AM 1610, the Mountain Community Patrol and the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit (RMRU).

As such last year, I implemented a public-private working group, the Fire Code Committee, to look at the oft repeated community concern requesting community fire hazard reduction particularly vacant parcels interspersed between developed parcels. Initially, the Fire Code Committee set collaborative goals. The goals as originally created and remain the same today are as follows:

- Determine and recommend the best practices application of fire statutes and codes for the reduction of fire hazards on occupied and vacant properties.
- Review and evaluate the fire statute or fire code authorities available to reduce the fire hazard. This includes the application of Public Resources Code § 4291 to occupied parcels and the application of Riverside County Ordinance 695 et al to vacant properties.
- If warranted, provide recommendations for the improvement of existing fire statutes and fire codes.
- Provide recommendations for the elimination of natural vegetative waste created from hazard reduction efforts.

The Fire Code Committee to date has only had time to conduct fact finding and to determine what statutes and regulations exist allowing or regulating community fire safety. The Committee will continue due diligence fact finding and transparent actions before making any recommendations to elected officials. The community will be involved once recommendations are developed.

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council is a great organization and one that has stood tall and strong in the best interests of community fire safety. They seriously care about community safety as witnessed by the commitment of their citizen volunteers who literally give thousands of hours to reduce the risk of fire through dooryard fire inspections, surveys for the extension of the Goldenspotted Oak Borer and much more.

I am honored to serve as the County Fire Chief and will always strive for the best community life and property safety. The public deserves and expects the best; I am continually committed to that outcome. Since I first came to Riverside County in early 2004 and became an incident commander for the MAST, I have worked hard to implement hazardous fuel reduction projects including dooryard and community hazard reduction, grant acquisition and execution for fuels projects, pre-planning for evacuation including developing a very comprehensive evacuation plan that was successfully tested on the July 2013 Mountain Fire and execution of multiple training exercises to ensure our first responders play the way they practice and that they, indeed, do train. I will continue the same commitment throughout my tenure as the Riverside County Fire Chief.

Code Committee Update from Chief John Hawkins

GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR
by CHRIS KRAMER

While last year’s abundance of green waste at the Transfer Station made it difficult at times for residents to off load additional material. This was an indication that our message to be proactive and abate was heard. It would be encouraging to see a consistent amount of green waste this spring and summer at the Transfer Station. I think this shows property owners continue to be responsible and aware of the need to perform fire hazard reduction work before there is a threat of wildland fire.

Our grant to assist residents in replacing their combustible wood shingle roofs is well on its way to completion this year. We have finished to date over 80 roofs and have roughly 30 remaining. Those should be completed in several months.

An updating of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was started last year. This plan is an overall view of fire prevention efforts in our community and surrounding area. This original document was written several years ago with input from participating groups and local agencies. Completion of this work should be final this year.

Another project that we are hoping our “Woodies” will be participating in is the “Shaded Fuelbreak” on the southern edge of Pine Cove. This will be maintenance of an existing fuelbreak that they worked on over 10 years ago.

This work will be in cooperation with and at the direction of the U.S. Forest Service.

Our volunteers continue to be involved in the inspection and identification of oak trees that are impacted by the Gold Spotted Oak Borer (GSOB). Their work is in conjunction with Cal-Fire and the scientists at the University Of California at Riverside (UCR). Remember, do not bring firewood from off the mountain. This is a common means of travel for the GSOB.

The efforts and hard work of our staff along with the backing and direction of our board, help make this organization run efficiently. The support of the community is also what makes being involved with this group a pleasure.

The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the California Fire Safe Council or the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the California Fire Safe Council or the U.S. Government.
Project Updates

Fuels reduction on three properties that will help stop the spread of wildfire to neighboring communities.

Santa Rosa tribal lands (left photos) have a high potential of wildfire because of their proximity to BLM, USFS, and State lands. This project reduces the threat considerably. Working with the Tribal Administrator, the project managers coordinated fuels reduction jobs on 17 individual parcels.

Astro Camp (photos on right) is located south of Idyllwild. The camp’s goal is to create and maintain a fire safe condition, allowing the staff and students to have the option to shelter-in-place and offering shelter to evacuees. The camp borders the Saunders Meadow Community and together they are creating safety zones.

Lia Hona Lodge is north-west of Pine Cove. Riverside County Fire encouraged MCFSC to work with the lodge to provide defensible space for neighboring structure on the periphery of the lodge’s property. This work combined with previous work further enhances a shaded fuel break and ties in with CAL FIRE’s Red Hill fuelbreak. The photo on the left is a good example of a shaded fuelbreak.

Community Town Hall Meeting

Learn from experts what we can do to stop the spread of the Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB)
Saturday, April 18, 2015, 10:00 AM
The Idyllwild Nature Center, 25225 Highway 243, Idyllwild, CA 92549

Only by working together can we protect the oaks on the San Jacinto Mountain.

Roberta Corbin and Dan Dever

Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council is very fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers. In addition to the Woodies, two individuals help keep the council organized.

Roberta Corbin (photo on left) manages the MCFSC Website. She is responsible for posting project up-dates to the website. Periodically, Roberta checks the links to verify they are valid and current. Roberta and her husband Larry Kueneman have been active members of MCFSC from its inception. They always volunteer to help wherever needed; staffing booths, baking, or helping with crafts for the children.

Dan Dever (right photo) works in the office, developing and managing the databases. Using his experience in Information Technology, Dan takes on the responsibility of creating the necessary reports for the Woodies hours and the number of cords of wood processed by them. He also tracks the location and findings of all oaks inspected by Early Detection Teams. This information is shared with CAL FIRE and the University of California for follow-up, when needed.

Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council is an equal opportunity provider and employer.