

A Healthy Forest is a Healthy Habitat



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Newsletter

Shela Boynton, Editor

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The Wallow Fire, which took place in eastern Arizona in late May and early June of this year, was the largest fire in that state's history, burning 841 square miles of forest. Our own Idyllwild Fire Chief Norm Walker and his team were on the fire, and he has brought back important observations of great value to our communities.

If you looked at a map of the fire several days after it got going, it seemed to be headed toward three mountain communities—Alpine, Nutrioso and Greer. It was easy to assume that these communities would be lost to the fire, but all were saved. Why they survived is, of course, absolutely relevant to all of us concerned about western fires: it was as a result of fuel reduction projects, both within the communities as well as on their borders. This is one of the best examples ever seen of the effectiveness of fuel projects, one more great

experiment in which we can observe how fire behavior changes when fuel loads are decreased.

The Wallow Fire was a raging crown fire racing through tree tops as it approached these towns. When it hit the thinned out areas on the perimeters of the towns, it fell to the ground where firefighters were able to attack it and gain control. Because of fire abatement in and around the town buildings, firefighters also were able to prevent embers from igniting the structures.

You can see from pictures afterwards exactly how the fire burned towards the towns from the differently colored areas. Blackened areas show the fire at its worst, burning out of control and killing everything in its path. Browned areas show where the fire hit thinned areas and began to lose power, scorching trees rather than completely burning them. Green areas show where the fire, now on the ground and subject to firefighter attack, came to a halt before it could enter the town. (Google "How Fuel Treatments Saved Homes 2011 Wallow Fire" to read the USFS report.)

Three key elements—forest thinning and the creation of fuel breaks, residential fuel abatement, and prompt firefighter attack—all led to the protection of these towns. The Wallow Fire shows how the work of the Fire Safe Council, the US Forest Service and CAL FIRE will pay off when our next fire comes.



Photo courtesy of Jayson Coil, Battalion Chief Sedona Fire District

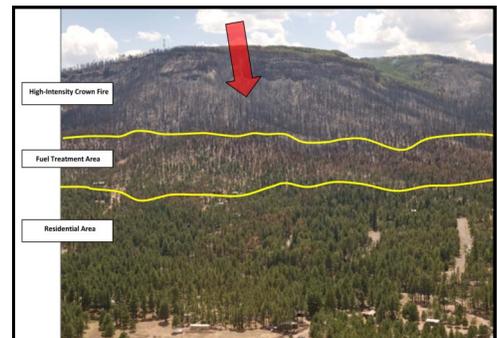


Photo courtesy of Tim Sexton, US Forest Service

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WOODIES HONORED AGAIN

Mike Esnard

The Woodies, MCFSC's volunteer group that cuts wood and helps with property abatement, were given The Town Crier's first annual **Ernie Maxwell Community Spirit Award** on July 8 at the Nature Center. The Woodies were chosen from nominees which included two other esteemed service groups, the Idyllwild Fund and the Mountain Community Patrol.

It was a gorgeous evening, replete with delicious BBQ and great stories about the legendary Ernie Maxwell, an extraordinary person who had much to do with creating the tradition of community service that is such a part of life on the hill. Ernie's niece, Laurie Corbett, who presented the award, said the Woodies were precisely the kind of group he would have joined, given his powerful love of nature and the mountain.

Congratulations to the Woodies! And, by the way, if you'd like to join this terrific group, call the



Ernie Maxwell's niece presents the first annual Community Spirit Award to The Woodies; Accepting for the group is its coordinator, Don Patterson. Ernie himself looks on from the front of the podium. Thanks to photographer JP Crumrine and The Town Crier for this photo.

CITIZENS OF THE YEAR

MCFSC was proud to give its internal **Citizen of the Year Award** to three members of the Woodies: **Doris Lombard, Ron Perry and Don Patterson**. Doris and Ron have been with the group since the early days of work on the Pine Cove Fuelbreak. Don has worked as the quiet and ever-reliable coordinator for several years. All three represent the dedicated, good-humored, and hard-working qualities that characterize the group. We are grateful to have them and happy to recognize their extraordinary service.



Top right: Woodies march in July 4 Parade

Bottom right: Ron Perry clears the way.

Bottom right: Pat and Jan Boss, Grand Marshalls



Proud Woodies: Don Patterson, Stacy Grant, Pascal Simon, Doris Lombard, Mike Esnard, Ron Perry, Jim Taylor, Janice Fast, Dennis Pahuta, Viv Larson, Chris Kramer, Vi Hallacy, Bill Baker, Leonard Keith, Larry Kueneman



Photo by Cyd Castillo, courtesy of The Town Crier.


The Community Foundation
Serving Riverside and San Bernardino Counties

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council Woodies volunteers have been partially funded through the generosity of the Idyllwild Community Fund.



Building Towards Our Future **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Mike Esnard



MCFSC has begun work on a strategic plan. I know some people think these are a waste of time, and I concede that often they are relegated to the far shelves and forgotten. But, to me, that just points out that most are poorly done. Good plans engage everyone connected to the organization and lead to useful insights about improvements and new possibilities. That, at least, is what we are aiming for with our efforts.

To begin, we got our board and staff together to develop new vision, mission and values statements. Here is what we came up with:

VISION: “Fire Safe Communities in a Healthy Forest.” We want all communities in or near the San Jacinto Mountains to be safe from wildfire, but this can only happen if the surrounding ecosystems are healthy. Overstocked forests will always

pose a fire threat to the communities within or near them. Aside from loving the beauty of the forest, we need to keep it healthy to keep ourselves safe. Fire safety and forest health are inextricably linked. This is why we are such strong supporters of fuel reduction projects carried out by the Forest Service and CAL FIRE.

MISSION: “Educate our community members about their individual responsibilities and motivate them to become fire safe through awareness, advocacy and actions.” We believe we have a unique mission as residents to convince other residents and property owners that fire safety requires all of us to take responsibility for our properties.

Every resident or property owner is a part of the public fire safety effort. We are all partners with the firefighters; we

all share in the responsibility for community safety. People who have anything to do with the mountain have to know this and have to act accordingly for us truly to be fire safe. Getting this message out to all who live or visit here is the core of our mission.

VALUES: “We are stewards of the land who leave it better than we found it.” This is not a typical values statement, but it gets at our gut sense of who we are as a group.

Over the next several months, we will be talking to people and organizations that are deeply connected to what we do, seeking their views about fire prevention and how we might respond. When we feel we have enough information, we will meet again in the fall to map out our plans for the next several years.



Why YOU, Like Mycorrhiza, Are Essential! **OUR NEW TIERED MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**



Straight Talk from Doris Lombard

In the undisturbed soil, a living web of fungal filaments surrounds and interconnects the roots of our forest plants, absorbing and supplying each plant with water and nutrients. Oh...you thought roots did that!? Well, they do, and a healthy population of Mycorrhiza increases water and nutrient uptake efficiency by up to 10,000 times! They can also create 100% weed suppression.

You, an individual living in our healthy forest community, increase MCFSC’s ability to keep it fire safe by your financial donations, the lifeline of our efforts to educate our neighbors and keep the forest fire safe and 100% abated.

In the past, government grants have supported local contractors’ work to help homeowners keep their properties fire safe by doing the required abatement. The current state of our economy jeopardizes these grant funds. Now, more than ever, we look to you to do your part. Whether you donate as an **individual** (Mycorrhiza, the underground web of life that provides systemic support vital to our forest health), as a **family** (Fern, whose graceful beauty adorns the forest floor), as a **business** (Cedar, the prolific sustenance for our watersheds and wildlife), as a **corporate** donor (Ponderosa, the tall, majestic symbol of our healthy forest), or as a **benefactor** (Black Oak which provides an umbrella of shelter and support)... won’t you join us in making **YOUR** communities fire safe. Look for the new tiered membership form in this newsletter and please donate what you can. You can now use PayPal. Thank you.

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.

THE MOST FIRE SAFE HOMES ON THE HILL

2011 CONTEST WINNERS!

In April, MCFSC, in partnership with Idyllwild Fire, CAL FIRE/Riverside County, and the U.S. Forest Service, kicked-off a contest to identify the most fire safe homes on the hill. Property owners were encouraged to enter their homes in this contest to be judged on defensible space and ember resistance. Applications were received from the Pine Cove and Idyllwild areas, and one winner was selected from each community.

Congratulations to winners **Ron Kelly** from Idyllwild, and **Ian and Jean Tober** from Pine Cove, seen below accepting their awards from Edwina Scott, MCFSC Executive Director, Mike Esnard, Don Patterson, and Idyllwild and Pine Cove firefighters.

Our sincere thanks to event sponsors, Pine Cove Water District, Tom and Joan McCullough, and the The Town Crier.



Photo by JP Crumrine courtesy of The Town Crier



Photo by Cyd Castillo courtesy of the Town Crier

Notes from the Office:

Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council received the first installment of the 2011 grant in late May. We are pleased to report our accomplishments during this time include working with **87 property owners**, and **fuels reduction on 110 properties, representing 68 acres**. The amount of **biomass recycled as chips or firewood was 260 tons**.

MCFSC now has a **business Facebook page** and we are in the process of creating it. To have a look, go to www.facebook.com and search MCFSC.org. This addition will give all our members the ability correspond or check in with MCFSC and could be very important should we have a serious emergency here on the hill. Thank you, Ron Perry, for getting this set up for us.

MCFSC would like to acknowledge The Town Crier for several of the photos in this newsletter. Thanks especially to JP Crumrine and Cyd Castillo for their excellent photography.

Jayson Coil, Battalion Chief for the Sedona Fire District, graciously gave us permission to use his photo of the Wallow Fire. If you want to see some amazing photography, visit his website at www.jaysoncoil.com. Our other front page picture gave significant insight into how this fire behaved, thanks to Tim Sexton's (US Forest Service) photographic skills. Our appreciation goes to both.

And, all of us at MCFSC say thank you to *Honey Bunns & Joe Bakery* for generously donating the contents of their tips jar to us.

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.