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## Woodies Mark Five Years

On November 2 we were happy to celebrate five full years of the Woodies, our volunteer group that fire abates homes and prepares and donates wood for those in need. We were also happy to have as our guest County Supervisor Jeff Stone, a good friend and supporter of the Fire Safe Council and the Woodies. We briefed the supervisor on all aspects of Woodie activity, using photographs taken through the years, a survey of our tools, and a demonstration led by Vivian Larson on the fine art of splitting wood. We also gave the Supervisor a packet including the much-coveted Woodie T-shirt, as well as an accounting of the money he donated to us in 2005.



Riverside County Supervisor Jeff Stone (3rd from left and insert) honored the Woodies by attending their 5-year celebration of service.

Without exaggeration, I can say that my membership in the Woodies is a gift in my life. Group activity is an essential part of the human experience, but as we all know too well, it is often less than delightful. Yet a morning with the Woodies is most often just that. Work that is of great benefit to the community gets done in a spirit of humor and mutual support. And we are pretty good at it, too. We know the work, the tools, and each other, and as Janice Fast would say, we are darn good for a group where most of us qualify for the senior discount. People help each other without being asked and no one is jockeying for a promotion. I think everyone should be in a group like that at least once in their life. I look forward to the next five years.

By Mike Esnard

## Where On the Hill Did \$78 Million Go???

Since the emergency proclamation of March, 2003 78.2 million has been spent by NRCS (\$22 M), U.S. Forest Service (\$25.7 M), CAL FIRE/RVC Fire Depart. (w/NRCS & USFS), MCFSC (\$1.6 M), and Southern California Edison (\$28.9 M). The funds were spent removing dead trees, creating fuel breaks, clearing evacuation routes, and creating defensible space. In addition, many proactive homeowners fuel abated their own properties at an unknown cost while others added \$1.1 M in cost share through BLM or USFS grants. MCFSC has funds for fuel abatement assistance for some areas. We are awaiting funds that will include the entire hill.

## Editor's Corner

Reba Coulter, Exec. Dir.



Don, Mary, Mike, Reba, Pat

### "Happy Holidays"

from the MCFSC staff

*As we count our many blessings this holiday season, let us be thankful that we have been spared from the devastation of wildfire for one more year. May our good fortune continue throughout the coming year.*



# Assessment Of Fires Provide Valuable Lessons.



In the aftermath of the devastating Lake Tahoe fires last June and the more recent Southern California Wildfires, valuable information on reducing the impact of these catastrophic fires are coming to light. The U. S. Department of Agriculture recently made public a report documenting the impact of fuels reduction programs on fire behavior (*Report title: An Assessment of Fuel Treatment Effects on Fire Behavior, Suppression Effectiveness, and Structure Ignition on the Angora Fire, available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/angorafuelsassessment>*). In the majority of cases, areas which had undergone fuel treatment showed altered fire behavior, from destructive crown fire to less intensive surface fire.

"The overall effect was a significant reduction in radiant and convective heat and a reduction in the number of houses impacted by firebrands as the fire entered the residential area," contends the report, which evaluated

the effects of fuel treatments and fire behavior in treated vs. non-treatment areas. "The reduced intensity allowed firefighters to extinguish spot fires and allow safe 'close-in' engagement."

Likewise, urban lots which had been treated saw greatly reduced ember production and reduced heat and smoke allowing firefighters to be more effective in protecting the structures present. Firefighter accounts indicate many structures were saved because landowners had removed fuels on the property. The report noted that even some properties which had received fuel treatments burned at higher intensity because they were adjacent to untreated areas.

"These fires have presented a harsh verification to the fact that thinning programs such as Forest Care can make a significant difference in our ability to protect houses and effectively fight fires," says Shawna Meyer, Director of the San Bernardino National Forest Association's Forest Care Program, a grant-funded program which can reimburse eligible landowners for up to 75% of the cost of thinning their properties. "Hopefully this news will encourage people to take advantage of the funds available".

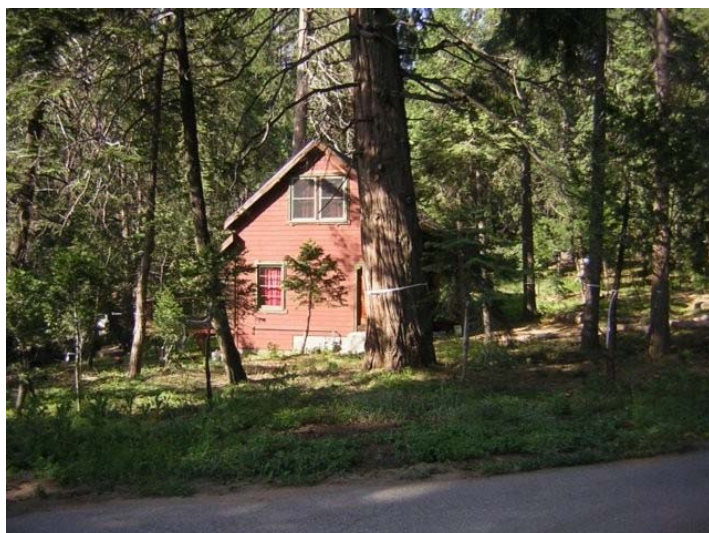
Forest Care can fund the removal of trees that are smaller than 12" in diameter, pruning, and brush removal. A professional forester assists the landowner with marking their trees and creating a removal plan. This program is available to landowners with less than 5 acres of property and a high tree density.

Contact Forest Care at 1-888-883-THIN or visit [www.sbnfa.org](http://www.sbnfa.org) to schedule an appointment.

*Forest Care is one of 6 programs managed by the San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA), a 501(c) 3 nonprofit. The mission of Forest Care is to help create forest-friendly communities through reducing fuels in the short-term and instilling stewardship values for long-term change. Forest Care partners with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and is funded through a U.S. Forest Service grant. For more information or to find out how you can support Forest Care or SBNFA, contact Shawna Meyer at (909) 382-2697.*

## Experanza Fire Costs

When final figures were calculated, the Experanza Fire claimed 40,200 acres, the lives of 5 firefighters, and 34 homes. Fire suppression costs exceeded \$10 million. The home of Pat and Glo Smith survived solely because they had regularly invested in fuel abating their property.



*Before and After Forest Care – Thinning and pruning vegetation to create a healthy and fire safe properties.*

## Disaster Preparedness Partnership at Work

What began as a casual conversation between Mike Esnard and myself during our CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training a year ago, has emerged as a cooperative venture that allows us to share our organizations' resources to benefit the communities we serve during an emergency. We know that in a major disaster such as an earthquake or heavy winter or windstorm, falling trees and limbs will cause power outages and road-blocks. During the critical, initial response period, our professional responders and CERT search and rescue teams would be seriously delayed getting to people who need help.

Recognizing this and knowing that MCFSC has tree-handling equipment and volunteers who know how to use it, as well as access to professional tree crews, we developed a Memo of Understanding between our two organizations. We issued two of our Kenwood 3160 radios to MCFSC - currently kept by Mike and Ron Perry - so we can have contact even if the phones are down. Ron and I attend most of each other's board meetings and Ron and Mike are both CERT trained and participate in our MDP classes and drills.

I'd like to see every volunteer and director who works with MCFSC complete the basic 20-hour CERT course sometime in the next two years. MDP is working on a training program to provide a CERT course once a quarter in the Idyllwild area. Together with my other goal of having 100 registered MDP volunteers CERT trained by the end of 2008, what a strong disaster response team our two groups would make here on the Hill. MCFSC is doing a terrific job spreading the fire abatement and forest health messages MDP's job is to get our communities ready to survive the next big disaster, whatever form that takes. Together, we can make Idyllwild the "Best Disaster Prepared Town in California!"

**By Nancy Layton, President MDP**

## Fire Ladders of a Different Sort

Those of us living or owning property on the Hill have heard about fire ladders those fuel links of ground level shrubbery that touch tree foliage, thus forming a ladder for fire to rush into the crown. Many of us have been dutifully trimming and removing this threat on our property.

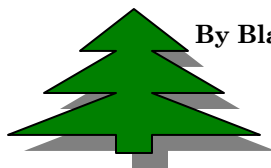
But how many of us have overlooked another ladder: our house? If a house catches fire, it can set off spot fires in adjacent shrubbery or brush, and ignite trees in close proximity, particularly those that overhang the house. Overhanging trees might be limbed up, but a roaring house fire could send flames high enough to engulf a nearby tree.

And how many of us know that fire fighters responding to a house fire will put out spot fires and tree fires on the property before putting water on the house? This strategy is to protect the forest and other houses nearby.

Driving around town, one can see numerous houses with trees growing through wooden decks built around them, or trees growing so close to the house that the eave was cut out to accommodate the tree. In more innocent times, saving a tree when a house was built was of great importance to the owner. Now, some of those trees have died and been removed, the cut-outs and hole in the deck mute testimony to what was.

We must shift our thought that we live in houses with trees in the yard, to the reality that we live in a forest with houses in it. Walk around your house and imagine it on fire, trying to visualize whether it would set any trees ablaze. If your house were on fire, it would be nice to have it be the first place the fire hoses are aimed.

**By Blair Cenicerros**



## Water Harvesting



With the promise of winter will come rain and snow. Where will the run off from your roof go? Will it go into the thirsty ground, to the shrubs, trees and flowers surrounding your home, or will it stream unchecked down gullies eroding its way into the street?

You can use rainwater-harvesting techniques to help retain and return precious water into the soil and water table. Look where your gutter downspouts discharge. Is there a catch basin to slow the flow? Look at the slope of your yard. Can you envision a series of hollows and swales that will ease the water's flow into gentle pools and channels directing it to the plants that need it? It's fun to engineer your own home rainwater harvesting system. A shovel, some rocks to fortify and direct the water, some brain and back work is what it takes.

Come the first storm you will be rewarded with the sight and sound of water working for you, flowing as you planned, seeping into the soil, filling basins and soaking deep into the ground reviving drought stricken plants, instead of flooding the streets with what has become an all too rare gift, too precious to waste.

Jerry Holdber of the Pine Cove Water District adds that a modest amount of wood chips around the base of shrubs and trees will also help to retain moisture, and that PCWD has wood chips available. You can call the office for further information.

**By Doris J. Lombard**

### Prevention = Dollar\$ & \$ense

(Oct. 2007) Losses from the devastating Southern California wildfires are pegged at \$1 billion in San Diego County alone, and the tally will only go higher as other areas add up the costs to rebuild.

**AOL Money & Finance**

# EVERY SEASON IS FIRE SEASON IN THE FOREST

Our December snow has melted leaving the yard strewn with leaves and needles. It's time to continue abating. We go outside and check around the house in the 30 foot "lean clean" zone. Remembering the drying potential of the winter Santa Anas, we envision embers flying and settling. What could ignite and endanger our home?

We get the rakes, tarps and pitchfork. The jays watch from above in the branches of the pines. Maybe we'll stir up some tasty bugs. A rabbit beyond the 30 foot zone watches and returns to nibbling the

dead grass. We start at the foundation. Even though we've spread gravel around the perimeter of the house, pockets of windblown leaves, twigs and needles have accumulated. They'd make perfect little kindling bundles. We rake them out from the corner by the faucet, from under the wooden stairs and benches and tables. We rake out 30 feet. We load the debris onto the tarp, toss it in the truck and unload it at the transfer station. It's been an hour or so, and we have done enough.

We watch the birds at the feeder

come back as we are sitting quietly enjoying the cleaned up yard. We notice the nicely scratched and clear ground under the feeder. No dead grass or leaves and needles here. The birds have been doing their part to help us abate.

— — — — — **By Doris J. Lombard**

## Prevention = Dollar\$ & \$ense #2

When you compare \$78.2 million with \$1 billion, it's only a drop in the bucket—barely 8%! Doesn't prevention really make the most sense? You can help to keep our mountain communities safe from wildfire by fuel abating and by supporting MCFSC with your dues, donations, and your volunteer hours.

## ANZA ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Anza chapter of the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council is currently working with local state and federal representatives from several agencies to find funding to upgrade some of the roads that are in dire need of service. Reps from Congresswoman Mary Bono, California Assemblyman John Benoit and Cal Fire's Duane Chamblee, Ken Twardowski as well as members from the Anza chapter met with Riverside County Supervisor representative Vern Lauritzen concerning issues of roads and evacuations during an emergency. Several avenues were presented for receiving funding and the council is actively pursuing a solution.

consist of fire safe plants native to our area. The middle school science classes are designing the garden and a ground breaking ceremony will be announced soon. Anza Fire Safe received an educational grant to fund the project.

Those of us on the Anza Fire Safe Council would like to let the community know we are dedicated to fire safety in our area. We are working towards improving neighbor relations, and working closely with each neighborhood to improve contact procedures in case of a major fire. We are looking forward to more community projects in the new year

— **By Cindy Davis, Pres. Anza Chapter**

## PINYON NEWS

Environmental studies have recently been completed for the Pinyon area and fuel reduction projects can now proceed. Preliminary meetings were held with Pinyon residents on November 12th and 13th to acquaint them with MCFSC's 75% reimbursement fuel abatement program. A number property owners have already contacted MCFSC expressing interest in participating in the program. Environmental studies for our next target areas, Anza and Garner Valley, have also been approved.

Another important issue is the need for a fire station in the Terwilliger area of Anza. Since there is a building already established for a volunteer fire department in the area, The Anza Council is attempting to access a grant to equip the building for future operation as a fully manned station. Currently Cal Fire and Fire Safe are working on a plan to reactivate it on a volunteer basis and as a watch station during fire season.

And finally the Fire Safe Council is working with Hamilton Middle Schoolers to develop a community Fire Safe Garden. The garden will

**If you would like to receive a newsletter via email, please send your email address to [MCFSC@greencafe.com](mailto:MCFSC@greencafe.com). Please remember that your contributions are tax deductible.**

### APPLICATION FORM

(\$10 per person or \$20 for family)

(Name)

(Mailing AND Street Address) (Circle-Anza, Idyllwild, Pine Cove, or Pinyon)

(City State and Zip)

(Phone)

(Email address)

MCFSC

PO Box 507

25380 Franklin Dr.

Idyllwild, CA 92549

**Visit MCFSC's Website at [www.mcfsc.org](http://www.mcfsc.org) or call (951) 659-6208**