



# Newsletter

Volume 2, Summer Issue

Summer 2008

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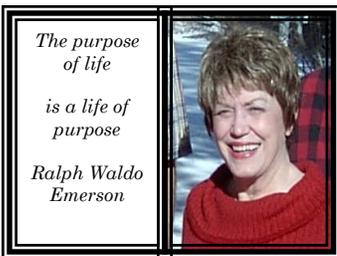
- Jeri Bowles            Norm Walker
- Blair Cenicerros    Doris Lombard
- Tom McCullough    Jim Taylor
- Cindy Davis         Lois Henson

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- Reba Coulter, Executive Director
- Mary Carroll, Office Assistant
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- Don Patterson, Project Manager
- Pat Boss, Project Manager
- Mike Kellner, Project Manager

**Editor's Corner**

**Reba Coulter, Exec. Dir.**



*The purpose of life is a life of purpose*  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**Pay 100% or 25%?**

MCFSC still has funds for fuel abatement in the communities of Idyllwild, Pine Cove, & Mountain Center. The fuel abatement program has been so successful the past two months that the grant funds received to date were rapidly depleted. We are awaiting receipt of the balance of the awarded funds so that work may continue in the remainder of the mountain communities. MCFSC wishes you safe & happy holidays.

**If you are thinking a year ahead, sow a seed.**

**If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree.**

**If you are thinking one hundred years ahead, educate the people.**

**Chinese Poet, 500 BC**

Dear Mountain Property Owner,

Fire season is in full swing again and according to all reports the drought still persists regardless of the welcome moisture received during the winter. One season of moisture is insufficient to compensate for the past several years of drought. It merely served to insure a proliferation of grasses and other fuels. The threat of fire is greater than ever! MCFSC is requesting that you partner with us in limiting this threat to the greatest extent possible.

Our primary mission has been assisting property owners creating defensible space around their home as mandated by PRC 4291. A second, but extremely important, function is community education focused on fire safety of homes and vacant parcels. Educational outreach is through our quarterly newsletter, the President's monthly column in the Town Crier, both which present relevant fire safety topics, and programs conducted with school age children. Special public meetings



**Uncle Sam?-- NO! MCFSC Wants You!**

convene as need arises.

Over the past five years, MCFSC received nearly \$2.15 million in grant funds which were used to pay 75% of property owners' costs for needed fuel abatement. Thus far, 720 projects covering 755 acres have been completed. An additional \$1.24 million was awarded but has yet to be received. These funds will be used in part to reduce fuels along arterial roadways leading to the major evacuation routes and to monitor existing fuelbreaks.

We invite you to attend our monthly board meetings held at 1:30 PM the second Tuesday of each month and our public meetings which are held at dates announced in the Idyllwild Town Crier. Our website, [www.mcfsc.org](http://www.mcfsc.org), provides up-to-date information.

Please help protect our community by joining our

public-spirited group and becoming a member of the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council. The dues are only \$10 per year or \$20 for a family membership. All memberships as well as even the smallest donations help us to protect the mountain communities from wildfire. Also, if you enjoy working outdoors, our hard-working "Woodies" always welcome volunteers. The "Woodies" and other volunteers have donated in excess of 26,000 hours helping homeowners meet fire code requirements. The work is a lot of fun, and the food isn't bad either

Thank you for your continued support. You may contact our office at (951) 659-6208 with any questions regarding our organization or fire abatement.

Sincerely,  
 Reba Coulter



## Cal water crisis brings forest health to focus



Earlier this month, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an Executive Order declaring drought throughout California. The report outlined several directives to confront the state's water crisis including more than \$11 billion in projects and funding to address the drought.

According to the Department of Water Resources, even with the big snow of this past winter, final snow survey of 2008 showed snow pack water content at only 67 % of normal and the runoff forecast at only 55 % of normal.

Along with the drought, state officials are anticipating that less water will usher in more and bigger fires.

Did you know you can help keep both the water and wildfire crises at bay by thinning the trees on your property to a more natural and healthy level? A properly spaced stand of trees allows each individual to get enough water and nutrients to better tolerate native bark beetles and other diseases as well as wildfire.

Judging by the billions the governor is spending, you may think thinning the trees on your property will drain your pocketbook too, but with Forest Care you can be reimbursed up to 75 % of those costs.

Don't wait for this year's drought to take its toll on your property. Call Forest Care at 1-888-883-THIN and let one of our foresters guide you through the process of making your property and our mountain forests healthier and more drought tolerant.

**Megan Foucht**

**Forest Care Coordinator,**

## Work Goes East

The Fire Safe Council works for the safety of the entire mountain, not just the towns where we began. On the mountain's eastern side, wonderful things have been happening in Pinyon. Thanks to the influence of our own Jeri and Ron Bowles, we were able to gain the support of the Pinyon Crest Property Owners Association, resulting in over 30 homeowner abatement projects, together with an important 8-mile road project. (They own and maintain their roads). This was also made possible by the skill of our project managers, Pat Boss in this case, who worked hard to make sure homeowner environmental concerns were reflected in the abatement work. Pinyon Flats and neighboring areas have also joined the abatement cost-share program, with 27 homeowners having had work done, and more certainly to follow.

To the south, Cindy Davis is leading the Anza chapter to create a road project similar to Pinyon's that will drastically reduce the fire threat along well-used and overgrown roads.

What is remarkable about this is that many held a belief that Pinyon and Anza would never support abatement work. "Too environmentally sensitive, too private", was often heard. But I think the record shows that we can find solutions that satisfy peoples' needs for fire safety as well as their concerns for how their property looks and maintains animal and plant life. We think that in the near future we can partner with many homeowners in Anza as the word gets out, and eventually with homeowners on the north side of the mountain in areas like Twin Pines and Poppet Flat. The way things are unfolding, we think we have a good chance of improving the safety of every community on the mountain.

**Mike Esnard**

It is one of the most beautiful compensations in life...we can never help another without helping ourselves.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Amendment to County ordinance expedites rubbish abatement on vacant land

Riverside County Board of Supervisors recently amended the ordinance (Ord 541.5) that regulates the removal of rubbish including green waste. This ordinance was amended to protect the health and welfare of residents from possible fire hazards by expediting the process in which potential flammable material can be removed from vacant parcels.

Two communities that will be affected by this change are Pine Cove and Idyllwild. These mountain communities have recent drought conditions that have resulted in tight water conservation and a high fire concern.

Notices are still necessary and required, but the time frames have been significantly reduced for the owners to clean the properties themselves. This ordinance will allow county officials the ability to move quickly and abate these violations. All of residents in Riverside County and even our neighboring counties will benefit from this; fires do not have boundaries.

Rubbish is defined as, but is not limited to, any items consisting of trash, litter, garbage, waste, junk, debris, discarded items, refuse, construction, landscape or demolition materials, cans, bottles, barrels, bricks, boxes, crates, cartons, containers, packaging, wood, plastics, metal, visqueen, paper, cardboard, appliances, vehicle parts, tires, discarded mattresses, equipment, furniture, carcass of a dead animal, ordinary household garbage, discards, green waste, or other dangerous, nauseous or offensive material of any kind.

The Code Enforcement Department for the Idyllwild / Pine Cove areas can be reached by telephone at 951-791-3600 or fax to 951-791-3606. Complaints can also be filed through the internet or general information can be found at [www.rctlma.org](http://www.rctlma.org).

**Michael Sanders**

**Code Enforcement Officer**



## Mulching:

### Benefits, Problems and Methods

By Deborah Geisinger

ISA Certified Arborist

The use of mulch in managed landscapes is increasing rapidly. Mulches are commonly used to reduce soil erosion, enhance the beauty of landscapes, suppress weeds, conserve soil moisture, and help buffer plants from the damaging effects of traffic. Mulch can also help moderate soil temperatures and maintain proper pH while improving soil aeration, structure & drainage. Ultimately, mulch enhances soil nutrition improving tree and plant vigor and reducing our dependence on fertilizers and other chemicals.

Mulch can be broadly categorized as organic or inorganic. Inorganic mulches such as crushed stone and gravel offer low maintenance because they decay, slowly if at all, while controlling soil erosion. However, they offer little in terms of plant health and therefore will not be expanded on here.

Besides controlling soil erosion, organic mulches provide myriad benefits and span a wide variety of materials. Landscape soils are often compacted and lacking in organic matter, especially around buildings. Organic mulch can improve soil structure and increase soil fertility. Many woody landscape plants evolved in forests where the soil is typically covered by a moist layer of forest duff containing decaying leaves, twigs, and branches. Proper mulching of trees and shrubs can recreate some aspects of the forest's original soil environment and keep a moist, fire-safer environment in your landscape plants and trees.

Depending on the composition and how

they are used, mulches also can also create problems by fostering the growth of nuisance fungi, harboring insect pests, favoring some plant pathogens, and depleting soil nitrogen and oxygen. The picture shows a mulch "volcano" a common misuse of mulch. Wood chips, straw and sawdust can be blended with composted yard waste, wood or soft-wood bark blended with composted sewage sludge or processed compost to help resemble the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of high quality forest litter.

Recent research has taken much of the guesswork out of using mulches safely and effectively, although misuse is still common. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) recommends a 2- to 4-inch layer of mulch, pulled back several inches from the stems or base of the tree trunk so the root crowns are exposed. When properly used, mulches provide a practical way to help trees and woody shrubs thrive in maintained landscapes.

Details of appropriate mulching practices vary with differences in climate, tree and plant species and age, soil type, management objectives, and other factors that can vary widely, even among neighboring landscapes.

The ISA, [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com) is a non-profit organization supporting tree care research, education and certification programs around the world. The ISA maintains a web site: [www.treesaregood.com](http://www.treesaregood.com) designed to educate the public about general tree care. This site is a wealth of basic horticultural information for tree and plant health care including proper mulching techniques. If you've done all of the basics for your landscape and it still looks sad, you can find an ISA Certified arborist in your area for help by visiting the ISA site or e-mail: [isa@isa-arbor.com](mailto:isa@isa-arbor.com) or call toll-free (888) 772-8733.

*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.*

## Board Strengthens

The Fire Safe Council enjoys a strong board, by which I mean a board composed of talented people who are both deeply interested and involved in the mission and success of our organization. I am happy to say it just got stronger.

In the June meeting we will have on the board two new members and a new chapter. The new members are Doris Lombard and Norm Walker. The new chapter is Mountain Center.

Doris and Norm bring important and different gifts to the board. Both are well known to people who have lived here even a short while. Doris taught for most of her career at the Idyllwild School. Her husband jokes about how often she will greet an adult somewhere in Idyllwild and later drop that she taught him or her in grade school. She has a degree in biology and a passionate interest in the environmental sustainability of the mountain communities. Specifically, she seeks to balance fire protection with the preservation of animal habitat.

Doris has worked with the Woodies, the volunteer abatement group, since its beginning on the Pine Cove Fuel Break. (She is rather famous in some circles for having met her husband there.) She is known for expertise in field biology, her wry sense of humor, and her delight in and devotion to wildlife. Doris, along with her husband Ron Perry, will represent the new Mountain Center chapter.

Norm is also well known to mountain residents, having just retired as the district fire division chief for the US Forest Service. Norm has fought fires all over the west for the last 35 years, and so brings an extraordinary amount of experience in the dynamics of fire. He maintains his passionate interest in fire safe communities as well as forest health. He knows virtually everyone in any agency relevant to fire protection on the mountain, and wants to maintain contact regarding fire and fuels policy and funding. Norm will represent the Idyllwild chapter.

As we extend our work all over the mountain, we are proud to have the counsel of Doris and Norm, and look forward to a long association

Mike Esnard



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- Members of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)
- Members of the Western Chapter ISA- #CH-08164
- Members of the Associated California Loggers (ACL)

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If you would like to receive a newsletter via email, please send your email address to [exec-dir@MCFSC.org](mailto:exec-dir@MCFSC.org) 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, Mtn. Center, Pine Cove, Pinyon)

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**Mike & Emily Pearson**

Pearson (left) donated the tree used for the 1997 Tree Management. He also regularly donates firewood to the HELP Center for those in need.

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

June 2008