

# We Are Woodies!



Clockwise from left: Mark Hunt, Norm Walker, Chris Kramer, GiGi Kramer, Janice Fast, Elliott Taylor, Kaye Strickland (center)

If you happen to go by the Help Center on any given Friday morning, you will probably see a lot of activity in the yard. People clad in bright orange shirts, splitting wood into burnable sized pieces, others racing around with wheelbarrows piled high with firewood and yet others wielding chainsaws cutting large logs into manageable sizes for splitting.

We are Woodies: a group of dedicated volunteers who process 2 to 3 cords of wood a week to provide Help Center clients with firewood to get through the cold months. Wood, otherwise destined for the landfill, is donated to the Woodies and Help Center through local tree companies or other sources such as the many educational camps in Idyllwild. Through this generous partnership, the Help Center is able to provide wood to a weekly average of 30 households in need.

When weather improves and the need for firewood is not as demanding, Woodies shift their focus to assisting low income, disabled and seniors requiring fuels reduction (fire abatement).

Weed whacking, raking and hauling debris is essential in keeping our community fire safe and Woodies are up to the challenge! We average 1 to 2 abatement jobs a month during the spring and early summer and requests are already coming in.

We are a diverse group of retired and active firefighters, nurses, school teachers and administrators, social workers, law enforcement, hairdressers, authors, art historians and illustrators. The longest reported tenure as a Woodie is 17 years!

Woodies are always looking for volunteers. If you can push a wheelbarrow, you can be a Woodie! Of course, if you want to "branch" out to help split or cut wood, we can help train you.

**Inquiries about abatement help or to volunteer with Woodies, call MCFSC 951-659-6208.**

**For qualification for the firewood program through the Idyllwild Help Center, call 951-659-2110.**

**Thank you to our contractors and their crews for their hard work, keeping our mountain fire safe!**



## US Forest Service: SJRD Update



**Salvador Reyes**  
District Fire Management Officer  
Division 5 Forest Service San Bernardino  
National Forest, SJRD

The San Bernardino National Forest and the San Jacinto Ranger District (SJRD) are preparing for the start of fire season. This includes the start of our seasonal workforce on May 10th, 2020. Firefighters will engage in annual training and drills to hone their skills and be ready for response as needed.

The SJRD has been able to accomplish several of the fuels treatments that were planned this winter and is continuing to observe fuels and weather conditions in order to evaluate opportunities for additional fuels reduction on the district. The San Bernardino National Forest and the San Jacinto Ranger District remain committed to caring for the land and serving the people.

Color portion of Fire Safe News is provided at no additional cost to the Fire Safe Council...  
...best wishes from Kevin  
**951.654.9101**  
1400 Mountain Ave • San Jacinto, CA • 92583

A Healthy Forest is a Healthy Habitat



# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26 ▲ SUMMER 2020

951.659.6208

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## MCFSC, Fire Season, Abatement and COVID-19

As I sit in my den writing this article for our newsletter, I have no idea whether the information I'm passing on will be relevant or accurate by the time it gets out to our members. Circumstances change quickly in these times as you all know. However, here is what's happening with the Fire Safe Council and our relationship with our cooperating agencies as I know it today.

Fire season is coming. Like COVID-19, we can't stop all wildland fires but we can slow them down in our neighborhoods by keeping our yards cleaned up and roofs clean. MCFSC is following the county guidelines for COVID-19 even though we have been determined (by Supervisor Washington's office) to be an essential service. Spring has brought an uptick in requests for abatement and we're getting to them as soon as possible.

One factor in our decision making is that we applied for a Cal Fire abatement grant but were denied this year. Subsequently we are operating on limited funds which requires prioritization by primary home owners and homes in areas that the fire agencies designate as most vulnerable to wildland fire. Between last year and this, requests for abatement have been up substantially, which has caused us to spend most of our current three-year Cal Fire grant in about two years.

Donations are very important to us this year but we also know that these are tough financial times for most people.

Our Woodies group, which are all volunteers, have also been deemed essential by the Supervisor's office and are working on a limited basis in order to keep firewood in the storage cage for the Help Center to distribute to low income families. The work routine has been modified to cutting on one day and splitting on another to keep the work parties to a minimum number of PPE equipped individuals. The Woodies are also doing property inspections in preparation for Team Rubicon's arrival.

Team Rubicon will be in town from June 20 – 27 to do some abatement jobs for low income families. These abatement jobs will be coordinated by our Executive Director and her staff at MCFSC.

Remember that SoCal Edison is still removing trees that threaten their lines and Cal Fire is removing dead and dying trees whatever the cause (bark beetles, GSOB or drought). Call us. If we can't do the job, we will try to direct you to an agency that can.

Stay safe everyone,

Norm Walker  
President of the Board  
Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council



Left to right: Norm Walker, Pete Coy, Chris Kramer, Doris Lombard, Robert Yturralde, Erin O'Rourke and Kevin Kothlow

MCFSC would like to thank the following for their support:

- CAL FIRE and the California Climate Investments program
- U.S. Forest Service and the California Fire Safe Council 3rd District County Supervisor
- The Idyllwild Community Fund
- The many MCFSC generous members

## Pine Cove Roads Project: Details and Abatement Progress Update

In partnership with



As stewards of the community, our goal is to provide emergency access during a disaster while also preserving the natural beauty of Pine Cove; creating better access for Fire & Rescue equipment during medical emergencies, residential structure and wildland forest fires. Funding is provided by Riverside County, as a recommendation from CSA 38.

MCFSC is implementing the project and working with local contractors who are performing the work. Thus far, 2 zones (both West of Highway 243) of 7 have been completed. Abatement on the remaining 5 zones will resume at the end of June and continue through summer 2020.

Codes and regulations being utilized: 2020 CA Fire Safe Regulations—Section 1273, CA Public Resource Code—Section 4290.5, CA Fire Code Chapters 5 & 45, Sections 503, 4906 & 4907, CA Vehicle Code—Section 35250, County of Riverside—Ordinance 787, EMD & Local Hazard Abatement.

## Preparedness and Defensible Space—What MCFSC Can Do for You

By Pete Coy, MCFSC Project Manager



**Before Work**

Here is an example of an overgrown backyard at a mountain residence. The house cannot be seen from the street, making it an unlikely candidate to be saved in a fire.



**After Work**

Here is the same home after MCFSC assistance with hazardous fuels abatement. The house can now be viewed from the street and has a greater chance of being saved.

### Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council has Grant Funds to Help You Prepare Your Property for Fire Season

We have been assisting residents living in the San Jacinto Mountain WUI for 18 years. We may be able to help you with your hazardous fuels abatement and dead tree removal within the defensible space area of your dwelling.

- ▲ If your property needs more work than you can handle, grant funds are available to help you hire a licensed, insured contractor.
- ▲ If you have dead, dying or diseased trees, grant funds are available to help you remove them.
- ▲ Funds are also available to help low-income and senior citizens with their fuels reduction, thanks to our 3rd District Supervisor.

**For more information on free abatement consultation, call 951-659-6208!**

## Facing the Fight for Our Oaks, a Goldspotted Oak Borer Update

By Dr. Tom Scott, Natural Resource Specialist, UC Berkeley and UC Riverside

Black oaks across the mountain have set their first flush of new leaves; reclaiming their place in the forest canopies of Idyllwild and Pine Cove. This annual burst of bright green serves as a reminder of the contribution these oaks make to mountain communities: shade, wildlife habitat, beauty and a sense of place. But every year, however, a number of oaks fail to leaf out, killed by the Goldspotted oak borer (GSOB), an exotic invasive beetle that was accidentally brought to the mountain in firewood about 10 years ago. GSOB larva girdle the trunks of black oaks and canyon live oaks, damaging the ability of oaks to grow new vessels and leaf-out this spring. Girdling occurs from June to September when oaks are often stressed by summer drought.

GSOB tends to attack the oldest and largest oaks in a woodland. Initial attack may only be a few dozen larva, but can rapidly increase, producing thousands of beetles in a single tree in one year. The good news is that GSOB only attacks Black and Canyon Live Oaks; and it doesn't seem to attack oaks smaller than six inches in diameter.

GSOB damage is an annual process, with adult beetles emerging every June. They mate during a two-month flight season, and females then lay eggs onto the bark of oak tree trunks. In October and November, they move to the outer bark and remain dormant over the winter months. The larva turn into adults when temperatures warm in the late spring and summer and the process is repeated.

The only way to stop the cycle is to destroy the bark before the beetles can emerge, or to treat the bark surface with barrier pesticides that kill the adults as they emerge. After years of research, entomologists have found no biological control for this pest.

Since it was first discovered in 2013, CAL FIRE and local agencies have worked to slow and control GSOB in the San Jacinto Mountains. Last year, Riverside County Fire Department received a grant from the CAL FIRE Forest Health Program to survey and manage GSOB infested oaks in the San Jacinto Mountains. As part of California Climate Investments (CCI), the program seeks to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk by mitigating the damage caused by GSOB in mountain communities. County staff began surveying for GSOB last fall, and will start evaluating oaks on properties in Idyllwild and Pine Cove this summer.

**Program information can be found by calling the GSOB hotline 951-659-8328!**

Surveys will be conducted at no charge to property owners who join the program, with the opportunity for cost sharing for the treatment or removal of GSOB infested trees.



## Riverside County Accomplishments

Update by Chief Nochella Funes, Battalion Chief and Forester



The CAL FIRE Riverside Unit was successful in coordinating and implementing Unit funded projects that provided direct protection to the residents of Riverside County. Some of the completion accomplishments for projects in and around the communities of Idyllwild and Pine Cove are as follows:

**Astro Camp Upper Dry Creek:** this project is a multi-year entry fuels reduction project with a goal of creating safer ingress/egress on Highway 243 which is a major evacuation route for the communities in and around Idyllwild. The project consists of chipping onsite and piling fuels for future burning. The project is a total of 70 acres. This project was a major factor in preventing the Cranston Fire (July 2018) from entering the community of Idyllwild.

**Truck Trail Maintenance:** this project is an ongoing and important fire truck trail infrastructure project, completed via Riverside's Heavy Fire Equipment Operators (HFEO). The work included filling of riling/rutting portions of the trails and completing a final grade for the insurance of passage for fire equipment.

**Red Hill VMP:** this project is a fuel reduction project encompassing the Red Hill truck trail and beyond ranging from Alhatti to the Idyllwild Arts Institution. The project will create a 300' fuels modification project to help protect the citizens of Pine Cove and Idyllwild from a catastrophic wildfire.

**RRU Demonstration Forest:** this project is a fuel reduction and forest health project located off Franklin Drive in Pine Cove which aims to reduce tree density and fuel loadings on 6 acres. The area is intended to provide a demonstration to the local community on appropriate tree density and fuel loading for their properties. Work includes tree removal, understory thinning and broadcast burning.

**Point of Rocks Hazardous Fuel Reduction:** this project is a fuel reduction project located around the northeast perimeter of Idyllwild and Pine Cove ranging from Chipmunk Drive to the Thousand Trails Campgrounds. The project will create a 300' fuels modification project to help protect the citizens of Pine Cove and Idyllwild from a catastrophic wildfire.

**Dead/Dying/Disease tree removal program:** this project, coordinated by Riverside County, has assisted with the removal of numerous Dead, Dying, and Diseased trees in the community, many of which were infected oak trees with GSOB.

Riverside County currently has grant funding available to assist local residents with the removal of Dead, Dying, and Diseased trees on their properties. Individuals interested in learning more can leave a message on the GSOB Hotline at **(951)-659-8328**, and a project manager will reach out. With the fuels reduction efforts, it is still imperative that landowners conduct their annual defensible space efforts on their properties. These efforts will help make the mountain communities much more resilient to catastrophic wildfire.

## A Message from Idyllwild Fire Department



Together we will be successful. No fire agency can successfully provide for your safety without your continued commitment and support. Your emergency fire service partners are working hard to limit the overall exposure and fire threat to our communities, but without your diligence we will fall short of the goal. Fire hardening your homes and fully adhering to the abatement ordinance will provide the advantage needed to successfully manage fires which threaten our communities.

In 2019 your efforts were an extraordinary demonstration of your commitment to the safety of your neighbors, our community and support of your fire service cooperators. Together, in conjunction with the efforts of your emergency and fire service agencies the upcoming 2020 Fire Season is sure to be a success.

Looking ahead your Idyllwild Fire team is committed to providing you with continued exceptional service, focusing on the protection of lives, property and the environment.

As you know, very soon the weather and fuel conditions will change as summer approaches. Your diligence in home hardening, abatement and fuel reduction efforts in conjunction with continued planning, prevention and preparedness will be instrumental to our combined future successes. Maintaining and building on our relationships and open communications with our citizens and cooperators helps us to properly prepare and keep our communities safe. We look forward to the continued cooperation with each of our residents and property owners and our partners of the United States Forest Service, Riverside County Fire, Cal Fire and the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council.

Please contact us should you have any questions or comments and visit our website at [www.idyllwildfire.com](http://www.idyllwildfire.com) for updated and helpful information.

Thank you,

Mark LaMont

