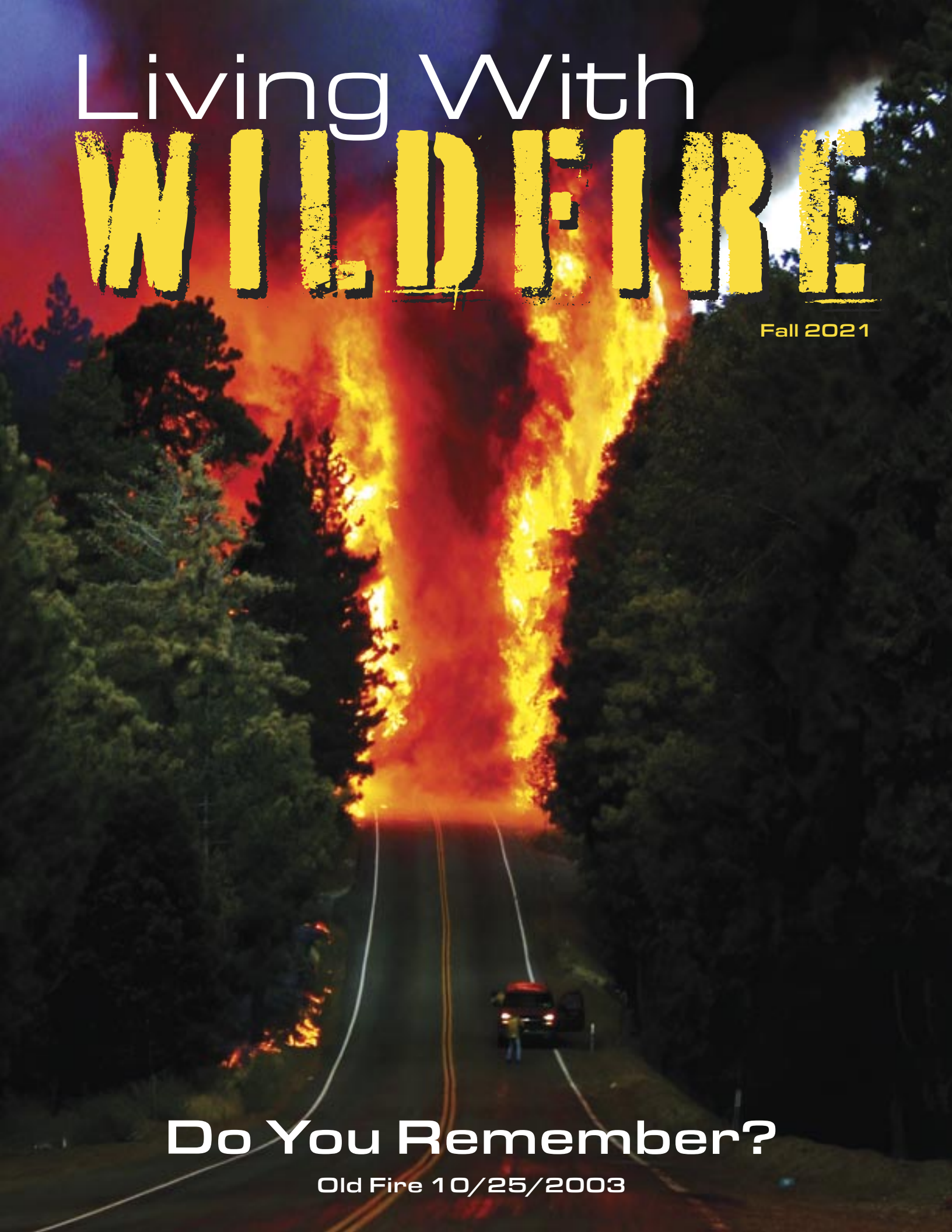


# Living With **WILDFIRE**

Fall 2021

**Do You Remember?**

Old Fire 10/25/2003





# TOGETHER

**We Can Make a Difference!**

Photo by Glenn Barley, Lake Arrowhead

# PRESENTED BY

Photo by Glenn Barley

Photo by Glenn Barley

Mountain Rim Fire Safe Council thanks its partners in fire prevention, preparedness and response.

**“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”**  
— Henry Ford

Cover Photo Courtesy: **Troy Whitman**, Senior Fire Management Officer, Emergency Response, Southern California Edison Co., Hwy 18, Lake Arrowhead, CA



*Debbie Strong*  
PHOTOGRAPHY

All photography, articles and cartography by **Debbie Strong** [unless otherwise noted]

**Debbie Strong** retired from CAL FIRE in 2018, after a rewarding 30-year career in the fire service in the CAL FIRE San Bernardino Unit. She began her fire service career in 1986 as a Volunteer Fire Fighter in the Devore community. She worked through the ranks of firefighter, engineer and fire captain. Her diverse career ranged from various assignments as a fire captain including working at a fire station, the Emergency Command Center, City Fire Marshal and Pre-Fire Engineering, which works closely with Fire Safe Councils in San Bernardino County. Debbie studied sports medicine, fire science, geographic information system (GIS), and earned a bachelor’s degree in Public Administration from Cal State University, San Bernardino.



**DuPlain Designs**

Design and layout completed by **Marianne DuPlain**.

**Marianne DuPlain** Originally from Seattle, Washington, Marianne graduated from the Seattle Art Institute in 1997. After several career choices, including 911 dispatching, forklift operator, marketing director at a flying club, real estate agent as well as coffee shop owner, she finally decided on graphic design and publishing. She then relocated to California and gained extensive experience over the last 23 years in design work. Now residing in Southern Utah, Marianne continues to work as a freelance graphic designer as well as a Jeep tour guide for Zion Jeep Tours.

## ... and YOU!

This informative magazine would not have been possible without the contributions of the following: DuPlain Designs, Debbie Strong, CAL FIRE, and MRFSC’s Board of Directors: Laura Dyberg, Robert Tiberi, Terisa Bonito, Marlene Kiemel, Jim Taylor and Brenda Meyer.



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# 2003 - THEN

18 Years Ago –  
Fire and Destruction  
Do You Remember?

October 25, 2021, marks the 18-year anniversary of the horrifying wrath of the Old Fire in the San Bernardino Mountains. The firestorm, fanned by extreme Santa Ana winds, devastated the San Bernardino Mountains. The raging fire ultimately caused six deaths, destroyed 993 homes, scorched 91,281 acres, and forced the evacuation of 80,000 residents from their homes.

The Old Fire started near Old Waterman Canyon Road and California State Route 18 in the San Bernardino Mountains and threatened valley communities including

**ff**  
Proper clearance  
around structures  
is critical for  
survivability during  
a fire storm like the  
Panorama and  
the Old Fire.

– Dave Golder  
CAL FIRE Battalion  
Chief (Ret.)



San Bernardino, Highland, Devore, as well as the mountain communities including Cedar Glen, Lake Arrowhead, Crestline, and Running Springs. The Old Fire was one of 15 wildfires that raged throughout Southern California in October. Among those wildfires, the Grand Prix Fire west of the Old Fire scorched 69,894 acres and destroyed 194 homes. The Cedar Fire in San Diego ravaged 273,246 acres, killed 14 people, and destroyed 2,232 homes. The fires within the

"2003 Firestorm" and "Fire Siege" were haunting. The Old Fire caused \$1.2 billion in damages. Arsonist Rickie Lee Fowler was sentenced to death for starting the fire. Fortunately, the harrowing inferno was fully contained due to a change in the weather, rain and snow on November 2, 2003.

Dave Golder, retired CAL FIRE Battalion Chief was assigned to the Grand Prix Fire along with a CAL FIRE strike team of engines.

"We engaged in structure protection from Upland, Rancho Cucamonga to Lytle Creek," said Golder. "We conducted a large fire operation from behind the homes and the fire stopped at the 210 freeway. My Strike Team was reassigned to the Old Fire.

I have been retired for 10 years. I started in fire service in 1968. The Panorama Fire (1980), which started in Waterman Canyon, was similar to the Old Fire. However, the Old Fire was significant because there were 13 major fires burning in a three-day period. Most of the resources were depleted. That was a first in my career."

Golder said the fire behavior was erratic and the Strike Team had to pre-treat structures before sunrise for the best chance of survival.

Photo by Glenn Barley, Lake Arrowhead



Photo by Glenn Barley

"Proper clearance around structures is critical for survivability during a fire storm like the Panorama and the Old Fire," said Golder. "This was valuable in saving structures. While on assignment to the Grand Prix fire, my residence in Crestline was under mandatory evacuation. I had horses and dogs that needed to be evacuated. Fortunately, my brother-in-law moved my animals to the high desert to safety. I continuously maintained a defensible space around my property. I always made a conscious effort to remove dead trees, ladder fuel - the live or dead vegetation that allows a fire to climb from the landscape or forest floor into the tree canopy and grass that would pose a threat during a fire."

North San Bernardino residents Tom and Terri Hoak share their harrowing personal experiences during both the Panorama and Old Fire.

"At the time of the Panorama Fire, we were one of the first streets that had tile roofs in north San Bernardino area," Tom. "Our new home construction fell under the new guidelines in the 1970's. When I noticed the Panorama Fire, I drove home from Pacific High School, where I was an educator (retired athletic director/ football coach). When I reached my home, within 30 seconds, everything around our neighborhood was on fire. I witnessed large tumbleweed fireballs blowing and being trapped in the eaves and engulfing homes. There was nothing we could do to stop the inferno, except protect our face and body from the intense radiant heat."

Meanwhile, Terri also left work to check on the family house.

"Everything around us was on fire, so I went to pick up my kids from school," said Terri. "The wind was howling, and the air was filled with smoke. The fire beat me to the school. Tom returned later and stayed behind to defend our home."

While making a phone call home, the call was interrupted and crossed with another line. She was told nothing remained above 53rd and Mayfield, which was where their home was located.

"I thought my husband died in the fire," said Terri. "Communication was limited without the convenience of a cell phone. I waited for several hours at Pacific High School for my husband to meet us. Two of his football players came running up to my car with news that my husband and house were both okay. They had run many miles, as the roads were closed to traffic, to bring me the news. I still suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome from the Panorama Fire."

The Old Fire hit the area again 23 years later. It overlapped the footprint of the Panorama Fire.

"It started on a Saturday, rather than a work day," said Tom. "Everyone was home

in our neighborhood. The fire threatened our street much like the Panorama Fire did, where I watched my neighbor's home become engulfed. I could not stand on my front porch because the radiant heat was too intense. During the Old Fire, I remember my son and I started putting out small bush and eucalyptus tree fires. After the Panorama Fire, the major mudflow on our street was a nightmare. There were times when we could not leave our home because a wall of mud was four feet tall."

Sadly, the Hoaks knew a lot of people who lost their homes in both of the fires.

"Homes were burned to ash, with only a chimney standing," said Tom. "They lost everything. We were fortunate that our home survived the wrath of the Panorama and Old Fires."

Photo Courtesy: Tom Hoak, North San Bernardino



Photo by Glenn Barley



## Grass Valley Fire and Slide Fire



Photo by Glenn Barley



Photo by Glenn Barley

Since the Old Fire, there have been numerous large destructive fires in the Inland Empire (see map — notable fires in the last 18 years). In close proximity to the Old Fire footprint, Grass Valley Fire (Lake Arrowhead area) and Slide Fire (east of Green Valley Lake and the Old Fire footprint), both started on October 22, 2007, three hours apart, and charred 12,759 acres. The fuel and weather conditions were extreme due to drought, dry Santa Ana winds, and chaparral on steep terrain. More than 100 homes were lost in the Grass Valley Fire.

The Slide Fire destroyed 272 homes, three outbuildings in the Running Springs and Green Valley Lake communities. These fires caused evacuations across Hwy 18 to Crestline, including Mountains Community Hospital in Lake Arrowhead, as well as voluntary evacuations in the city of Highland. Approximately 1,359 firefighters were assigned to the fire. The estimated cost for suppression was \$1.2 million.

Mountain resident Luke Granger recalls the Grass Valley Fire. “My grandparents lived across the street from our house in Lake Arrowhead, and my mother packed her car and helped my grandparents,” said Granger. “She turned her ignition off on her car and it stalled, due to the thick smoke. It choked it out. She transferred all the belongings to my grandparents’ vehicle and evacuated down the hill. I met my father at our house. It was extremely windy. We were able to take a few things, including an American Flag that my brother sent while he was overseas. We left behind photos, Christmas ornaments, our pet cockatoo and other family heirlooms. We did not believe the fire was going to affect our home.”



Photo by Glenn Barley

**“We did not believe the fire was going to affect our home.”**

— Luke Granger  
Lake Arrowhead resident

The Grangers evacuated to a family friend’s home in the Reche Canyon area.

“In time we learned our home and my grandparents’ home were destroyed by the Grass Valley Fire, while watching the news on television,” said Granger. “One of our friends confirmed the devastating news. My grandfather suffered a minor stroke, because of the stress of losing our homes and the evacuation.”

Eventually Granger’s grandparents rebuilt their home, but his parents moved off the mountain.

“There was too much emotion to rebuild again,” Granger said. “I love the mountains and currently live by my grandparents above the footprint of the Grass Valley Fire.”

When you have a devastating fire, it impacts the entire community. It was great to see the community pull together and help each other out in a time of need.”

Dixi Willemse lost her family home in the harrowing wind driven Slide Fire in 2007, despite having defensible space around her property.

“Unfortunately, the Slide Fire destroyed our family home, that we lived in since 1985, where we raised our children, and the memories that went with it,” said Willemse. “Our home had good defensible space, but the wind-driven fire engulfed our home anyway. Fortunately, we were able to rebuild our home within a year. We found our silver lining and moved on.”



Historic Summit Inn

## Blue Cut Fire

The Blue Cut Fire is another notable fire west of the Old Fire footprint.

The fire started on August 16, 2016, at 10:36 a.m., in the Cajon Pass on the Blue Cut hiking trail, west of I-15. The fire quickly spread and threatened structures in the Cajon Pass, Lytle Creek, Wrightwood, Oak Hills and the surrounding areas, which prompted the evacuations of 82,000 people and 34,500 homes, including the entire community of Wrightwood, which has about 4,500 residents.

Michael Wakoski, Battalion Chief with San Bernardino County Fire, Wildland and Aviation Division, said the fire started during a red flag warning, with temperatures around 100 degrees.

“The fire spread in Cajon Pass and surrounding communities due to erratic winds and extremely dry vegetation,” said Wakoski. “The Cajon Pass acts as a natural wind tunnel, creating a funnel that can increase wind speeds by 20–30 miles per hour (32–48 km/h). These winds were causing the fire to spot upwards of a half mile (0.8 km) ahead of itself.”

The massive Blue Cut Fire consumed 24,119 acres the first day. The fire destroyed 96 homes and 213 outbuildings. Nearly 1,600 firefighters battled the 36,266-acre fire.

The Blue Cut Fire blew across the I-15 and Hwy 138 like a blowtorch, with embers and sparks flying, melted the McDonald’s

sign, but spared the business itself. The CHP inspection station located on the southbound I-15 was engulfed in fire. The historic Summit Inn, at the top of the Cajon Pass, was also lost in the devastating fire.

The fire destroyed multiple homes in west Cajon Valley, Phelan, and Oak Hills. The community of Wrightwood was spared from the wrath of the Blue Cut Fire.

In Lone Pine Canyon, the fire devoured the historic Earp Cabin, at Clyde Ranch, used by Virgil Earp, the brother of Wyatt

Earp and original owner Almond Davis Clyde back in the 1860s.

Gary Hopkins Sr., caretaker of Clyde Ranch, recalled the harrowing fire.

“During the Blue Cut Fire there was nothing left after the fire burned the Earp Cabin and shed, except a heap of ash,” said Hopkins. “The fire burned so hot that anything that was metal melted. I lost a lot during the fire. I am still recovering.”

John Aziz, Wrightwood resident, holds a historic relic.

“The Blue Cut Fire destroyed the Earp Cabin and shed at Clyde Ranch and ¼ mile next door, the entire Johnson Ranch,” said Aziz. “Most of the apple orchard at Clyde Ranch burned in the Blue Cut Fire. Not only did the ranch burn, but the packing shed for the apples and all the historical stuff in it, except the historical Clyde Ranch 1945 Dodge truck that had been housed at the ranch for years, until my wife and I purchased it 20 years ago.”

“At Clyde Ranch they used the truck to deliver apples to Los Angeles and other areas in southern California,” said Aziz. He currently uses the truck for events in Wrightwood, such as a stage for Music in the Pines.

The Johnson Ranch was the location of the lone pine tree for which Lone Pine Canyon got its name.

“The historical tree that was destroyed by the Blue Cut Fire on Johnson Ranch is dead and still hanging,” said Aziz. “Years ago, the lone pine tree, which sits on the San Andreas Fault, survived a major earthquake in 1812. When the tree began to recover from the earthquake, two branches started growing in place of the snapped-off top.”



I-15 Cajon Pass



# Know Before You Go!

Fire restrictions on Forest Service lands change with the seasons. Check them before you head out and enjoy your visit!

Arson investigators examine a site of an illegal campfire that caused a small wildfire (Forest Service photo by Lisa Cox).

## California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection



Since 1885 the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has protected the people, property, and natural resources of California. The men and women of CAL FIRE are dedicated to the fire protection and stewardship of over 31 million acres of California's privately-owned wildlands. The heart of the Department's emergency response and resource protection capability is a force of approximately 8,000 permanent and seasonal employees that help fulfill the department's mission to serve and safeguard the people and protect the property and resources of California.

### FIRE PREVENTION

Preventing wildfires in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) is a vital part of CAL FIRE's mission. The Department responds to nearly 6,000 wildland fires that burn on average over 260,000 acres each year. Beyond its wildland fire fighting role, CAL FIRE is an "all-risk" department. The Department is always ready to respond - medical aids; hazardous material spills; swiftwater rescues; search and rescue missions; civil disturbances; train wrecks; floods, earthquakes and more.

### OSFM

Since 1995, the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has supported the mission of CAL FIRE by focusing on fire prevention. Through major program elements that include engineering, education, enforcement, and support from the State Board of Fire Services, OSFM has a wide variety of fire safety responsibilities.

### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Through its foresters and other natural resource professionals, CAL FIRE is responsible for the management and protection of California's natural resources under its Forest Practice, Urban Forestry, Fuel Reduction, Demonstration State Forest, Pest Management, Landowner Assistance, Environmental Protection and Regulation, Archaeology, Fire and Resource Assessment, and Nursery programs. CAL FIRE foresters promote conservation and the importance of our trees and forests to Californians of all ages.

[WWW.FIRE.CA.GOV](http://WWW.FIRE.CA.GOV)  
[WWW.READYFORWILDFIRE.ORG](http://WWW.READYFORWILDFIRE.ORG)

Lauren Blake, USFS Fuels Specialist, said, "Fortunately, the Blue Cut Fire held on Boundary Ridge because of the fuel modification project that was completed. It burned along the western side of Lone Pine Canyon. Fuel modifications and fuel breaks assist fire fighters with an anchor point to suppress the fire."

Wakoski said San Bernardino National Forest utilized masticators, crushed the brush and used a Heli torch to remove the vegetation.

"During the Blue Cut Fire, the contributing factors that were instrumental in keeping the fire out of Wrightwood were the existing fuel modification projects, previous burns, and existing fire breaks," said Wakoski.



Residence off Hwy 138



Helicopter drop off Cajon Blvd.

Fortunately, the Blue Cut Fire held on Boundary Ridge because of the fuel modification project that was completed. It burned along the western side of Lone Pine Canyon. Fuel modifications and fuel breaks assist fire fighters with an anchor point to suppress the fire.

— Lauren Blake  
USFS Fuels Specialist

John Aziz is also one of the directors of Wrightwood Fire Safe Council, which is a liaison between the San Bernardino National Forest, Angeles National Forest, CAL FIRE and San Bernardino County Fire regarding fuel reduction projects in the Wrightwood community. Aziz explained many of the dozer lines have been there for decades and are reestablished during wildfires or fuel reduction projects.

"In the past 10-12 years a lot of pre-fire planning and fuel modifications have taken place in Lone Pine Canyon and Boundary Ridge area that helped protect the communities of Wrightwood and Lytle Creek," said Aziz. "The Lone Pine Canyon Fuel Reduction was completed 10 years ago, with the Boundary Ridge Fuel

Reduction work mostly done in 2007. The Sheep Fire burned a good portion of Lone Pine Canyon on October 3, 2009 and was stopped before entering the community of Wrightwood because of the dozer line, put in at the base of Circle Mountain, in conjunction with the Boundary Ridge Fuel Reduction project, in the same area."

"Homeowners can take a proactive approach to living with wildfire in the ecosystem by practicing proper clearance and home hardening. This information can be found at [readyforwildlandfire.org](http://readyforwildlandfire.org). Each homeowner also needs a plan preparing to evacuate utilizing the Ready, Set, GO method," said Shane Littlefield, CAL FIRE Unit Chief.



Historic "Lone Pine" succumbs to Blue Cut Fire

## HOW DOES SMOKE IMPACT YOUR COMMUNITY?

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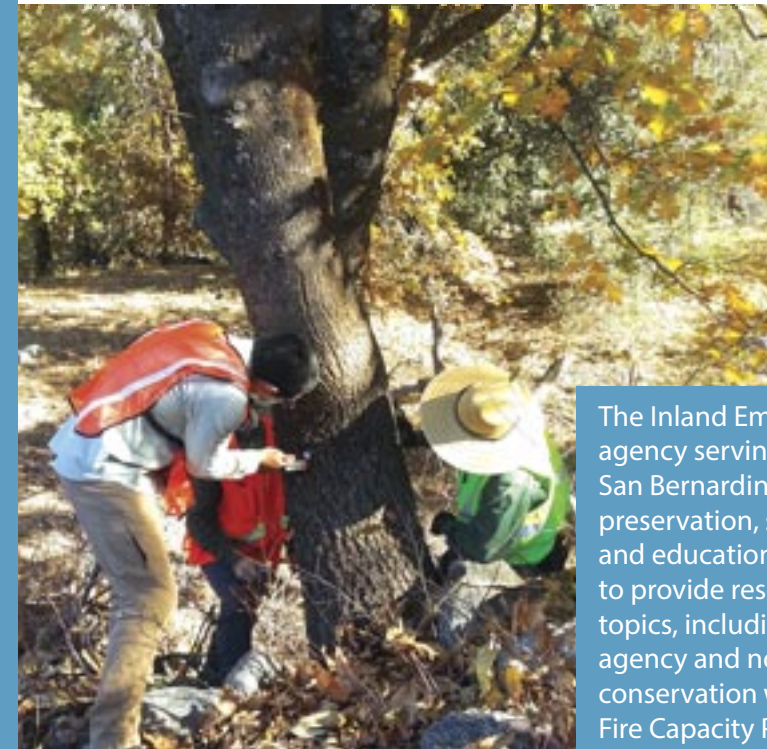
*Serving the residents of Arrowbear Lake and the mountain communities for almost a half century with professionalism, compassion, and community involvement.*



Arrowbear Lake Fire also assists Running Springs Fire, San Bernardino County Fire and CAL FIRE with Mutual Aid as requested.

The combination of Volunteer and Paid Call Crews are dedicated and passionate about their role in the community.

Contact [www.ablfd.org](http://www.ablfd.org) for more information.



The Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD) is a public agency serving the Upper Santa Ana Watershed, including portions of the San Bernardino Mountains. The IERCD's mission focuses on open space preservation, sustainable agriculture, forest health and fire resiliency, and education and outreach. IERCD staff work with private landowners to provide resources and technical assistance on a variety of conservation topics, including forest health and fire resiliency, and collaborate with agency and non-profit partners to increase the pace and scale of conservation work. The IERCD also oversees the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program for the San Bernardino Mountains.

More information about the IERCD and its programs can be found at [www.iercd.org](http://www.iercd.org)

# Together

We Have the Power to Keep the Future Bright

An emergency can happen at any time. There are some simple and basic steps you can take, like having a preparedness plan, some basic supplies and staying informed. SCE has invested in a variety of improvements and innovations to help prevent wildfires and act quickly when they occur to keep you and your community safe.

We are proud to partner with the **Mountain Rim Fire Safe Council**

For information on Wildfire Safety and Public Safety Power Shutoffs, please visit [sce.com/wildfire](http://sce.com/wildfire)



## Natural Resources Conservation Service

**WHO IS THE NRCS?** The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the federal agency that works with private landowners to help them protect their natural resources and keep watersheds healthy. NRCS emphasizes voluntary, science-based assistance, partnerships, and cooperative problem solving at the community level.

**THE PROBLEM** Due to extreme fire behavior, unprecedented landscape-scale fires, and wind events, the impact to California's forests has been widespread and destructive. Events following the damage from fires can be detrimental to watersheds, public safety, and long-term recovery of these landscapes. Responding quickly after a fire and offering select practices may offer a long-term solution to address the long-lasting impacts of high intensity fires.

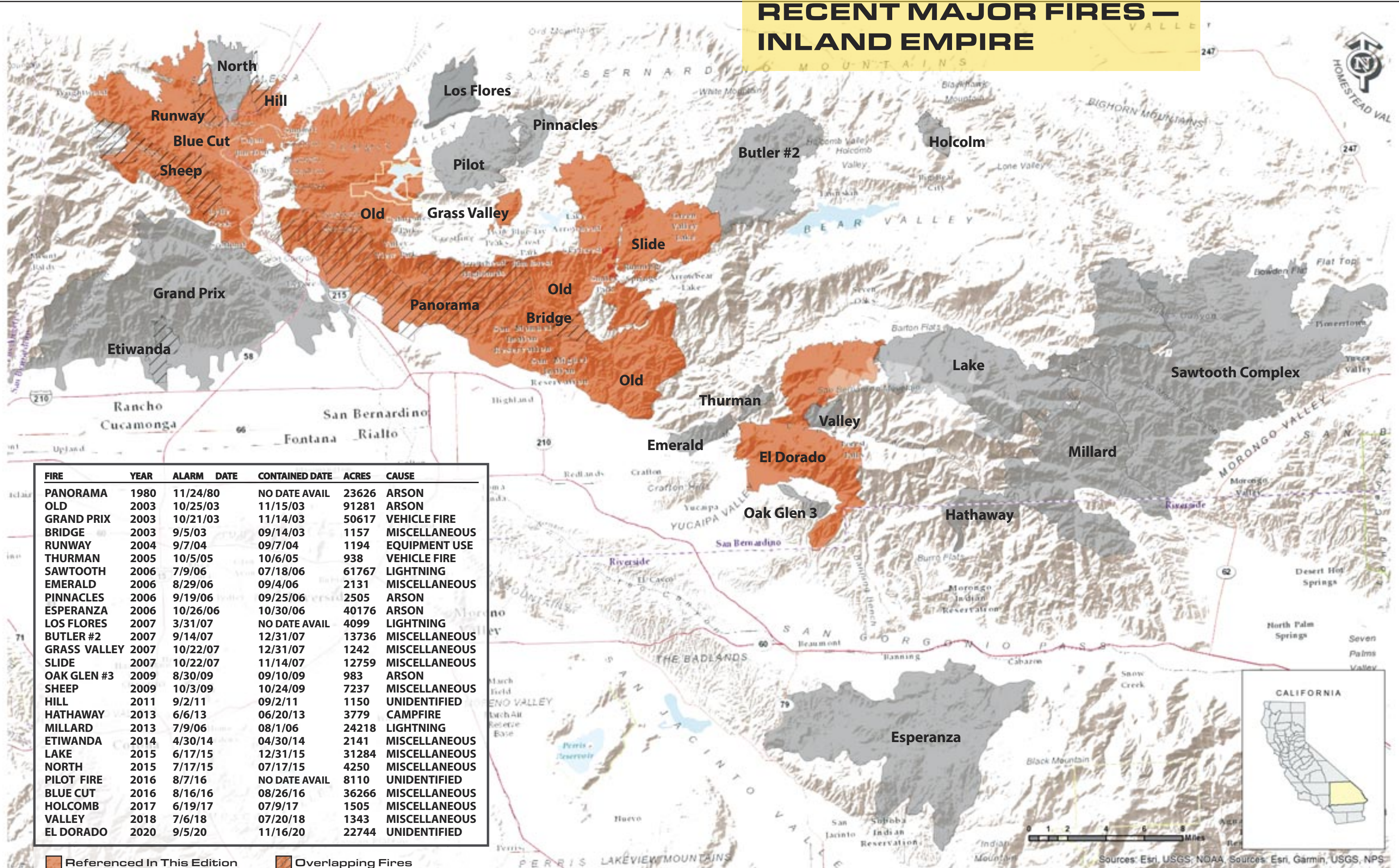
**NRCS ASSISTANCE TO PRIVATE FORESTLAND** NRCS can provide technical and financial assistance for private forestland owners to promote healthy and productive forests, reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and minimize impacts to water quality and reduce wildfire risks. NRCS can also provide post-fire resource protection and public safety in areas affected by wildfire.

Contact Us [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ca/home/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ca/home/)  
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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# RECENT MAJOR FIRES — INLAND EMPIRE



FIRE	YEAR	ALARM DATE	CONTAINED DATE	ACRES	CAUSE
PANORAMA	1980	11/24/80	NO DATE AVAIL	23626	ARSON
OLD	2003	10/25/03	11/15/03	91281	ARSON
GRAND PRIX	2003	10/21/03	11/14/03	50617	VEHICLE FIRE
BRIDGE	2003	9/5/03	09/14/03	1157	MISCELLANEOUS
RUNWAY	2004	9/7/04	09/7/04	1194	EQUIPMENT USE
THURMAN	2005	10/5/05	10/6/05	938	VEHICLE FIRE
SAWTOOTH	2006	7/9/06	07/18/06	61767	LIGHTNING
EMERALD	2006	8/29/06	09/4/06	2131	MISCELLANEOUS
PINNACLES	2006	9/19/06	09/25/06	2505	ARSON
ESPERANZA	2006	10/26/06	10/30/06	40176	ARSON
LOS FLORES	2007	3/31/07	NO DATE AVAIL	4099	LIGHTNING
BUTLER #2	2007	9/14/07	12/31/07	13736	MISCELLANEOUS
GRASS VALLEY	2007	10/22/07	12/31/07	1242	MISCELLANEOUS
SLIDE	2007	10/22/07	11/14/07	12759	MISCELLANEOUS
OAK GLEN #3	2009	8/30/09	09/10/09	983	ARSON
SHEEP	2009	10/3/09	10/24/09	7237	MISCELLANEOUS
HILL	2011	9/2/11	09/2/11	1150	UNIDENTIFIED
HATHAWAY	2013	6/6/13	06/20/13	3779	CAMPFIRE
MILLARD	2013	7/9/06	08/1/06	24218	LIGHTNING
ETIWANDA	2014	4/30/14	04/30/14	2141	MISCELLANEOUS
LAKE	2015	6/17/15	12/31/15	31284	MISCELLANEOUS
NORTH	2015	7/17/15	07/17/15	4250	MISCELLANEOUS
PILOT FIRE	2016	8/7/16	NO DATE AVAIL	8110	UNIDENTIFIED
BLUE CUT	2016	8/16/16	08/26/16	36266	MISCELLANEOUS
HOLCOMB	2017	6/19/17	07/9/17	1505	MISCELLANEOUS
VALLEY	2018	7/6/18	07/20/18	1343	MISCELLANEOUS
EL DORADO	2020	9/5/20	11/16/20	22744	UNIDENTIFIED

Referenced In This Edition
  Overlapping Fires



Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA, Sources: Esri, Garmin, USGS, NPS



Photo by Glenn Barley Old Fire 2003



# NOW - 2021

## After the Fires



Despite the significant loss to life, property and natural resources as a result of the Old Fire in 2003, Grass Valley and Slide Fires in 2007, and the Blue Cut Fire in 2018, communities came together to rebuild and reforestation efforts have taken many years to recover the watershed to its natural state. The aftermath of fires has had lasting effects on the landscape and has created a heightened risk of flooding for years to come. On Christmas Day, a few months after the Old Fire was extinguished, a storm led to a flash flood in Waterman Canyon that killed 14 people at St. Sophia Camp. On December 22, 2003, a mud and debris-flooding event, as a result of the Grass Valley Fire burn area, engulfed

**“The potential for damaging and destructive wildfires is present every year in California, therefore it is important every year for all Californians to maintain proper clearance around their home and to be prepared to evacuate if the need arises.”**

**– Glenn Barley**  
CAL FIRE Assistant  
Regional Chief



several neighborhoods in the city of Highland. The damage was estimated to exceed \$21 million.

Reforestation efforts in the San Bernardino Mountains, within the Old Fire, Grass Valley and Slide Fire footprints, are ongoing involving multiple agencies and partnerships. After a wildfire, vegetation plays an important role in preventing erosion, producing clean water, maintaining wildlife habitat, re-establishing native vegetation and helps control invasive species. Reforestation helps the future forests that supply wood products, clean air and combats climate change by increasing carbon storage. The process of replanting trees in order to maintain healthy forests for generations



to come. California foresters plant more than 35 million tree seedlings every year, according to Calforestfoundation.org.

During the Old Fire in 2003, the famous Santa's Village in Skyforest was saved by fire suppression efforts. Although the theme park had closed in 1998, it had tremendous historical significance to the area. Today, the mountain property is thriving and has been transformed into SkyPark at Santa's Village. This mountain gem is restored into a Christmas wonderland, offering activities and adventures for families such as: bike and hiking trails, skating, fly-fishing, and ziplining through the park. There is something for all ages to experience and enjoy.

Bill and Michelle Johnson own Santa's Village and believe in maintaining the mountain landmark and providing a place for guests to enjoy.

“We are custodians of this magnificent land, and we take that responsibility seriously,” said the Johnsons. “With that responsibility, comes an opportunity to excite, to entertain and to teach. Come experience our vision.”

Developed in 2004, after the 2003 wildfires, Mountain Communities Wildfire ReLeaf is an ongoing program that educates private landowners in the value of reforesting the burn areas and areas devastated by the bark beetle infestation. Citizen and student volunteers are used on much of the larger burned areas, and conservation crews, in the more hazardous areas. Mountain Communities Wildfire ReLeaf is administered by the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District and involves many community partners in the local mountain communities.

In 2009, ReLeaf Volunteers, partnering with CAL FIRE (California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection), planted over 175,000 native seedlings across several hundred acres of land in the San Bernardino Mountains,” said Henry Herrera, CAL FIRE regional forester.

“In 2016, CAL FIRE partnered with the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District (MDRCD) to take part in the Mountain Communities Wildfire ReLeaf. ReLeaf's project efforts are funded in part, by generous grants from American Forests, as well as other organizations,” said Herrera. “CAL FIRE crews and volunteers planted approximately 8,000 tree seedlings in the San Bernardino Mountains and have planted over 450,000 native seedlings across hundreds of acres in the San Bernardino Mountains to date.”

David Haas, CAL FIRE forester said most recently, CAL FIRE contracted approximately 115 acres of mastication work at Hubert Eaton Scout Reservation to Cecil Logging, approximately 95 acres of which were completed in 2019 and 2020.

“The Hubert Eaton plantings were in the Old Fire footprint and the Camp Whittle plantings were in the Butler Fire footprint,” said Haas. “The remaining 65,000 seedlings were planted in the masticated areas, as well as some naturally low brush density areas of Hubert Eaton in 2021. Both the plantings at Camp Whittle and Hubert Eaton were completed by the California Conservation Corps Inland Empire Center.”

Fire risks in communities are an ongoing concern, however it takes community



Photo by Henry Herrera

involvement and coordination to achieve a healthy, and sustainable forest system for the future.

“The potential for damaging and destructive wildfires is present every year in California, therefore it is important every year for all Californians to maintain proper clearance around their home and to be prepared to evacuate if the need arises,” said Glenn Barley, CAL FIRE Assistant Regional Chief.





## Post Fire Recovery at the Oak Glen Preserve

For almost a year now, things have been quiet on the Yucaipa Ridge, which towers above our little Glen, quite a contrast to the inferno that raged above our homes and heads this past September reflects Doug Chudy, Regional Director - The Wildlands Conservancy. “Not all of the El Dorado Fire was confined to the old-growth timber and chaparral strewn slopes, as it shot aggressively downhill around 2:30 in the morning on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, blazing its way into the oak woodland community which makes up the north side of the Oak Glen Preserve, said Chudy. “When first light came the following morning, the scene was apocalyptic to be sure. Initially, I had believed that more than 90% of the woodlands had been destroyed by the fire but, as the seasons changed, the tenacity for life was apparent in many of the trees that had been burned, some heavily. Certainly, a great many of these will perish in time due to the damage inflicted, but there is some survivability within the most affected stands, while other sections seem



almost unaffected from a distance,” said Chudy. Following the incredible chaos of both the Apple and El Dorado wildfires (as well as a tragic structure fire that destroyed historic Los Rios Rancho buildings), staff at The Wildlands Conservancy began remediation to the land, plant and animal communities that thrive therein. “Rangers and Naturalists, alongside Los Rios Rancho staff, spent countless hours in the field putting out spot fires, spraying down the root zones of smoldering trees and tending to the maimed animal community. Grey fox, bobcat and other fauna with severe burn injuries, were found and placed at a qualified rehabilitation center run by the team at The Pond Diggers Ranch and later released back onto the Preserve once they recovered,” said Chudy. In addition to the immense clean-up and restoration efforts, we have begun planting conifers on the fringe of the fire scar and hope to plant more oaks as well, but we are currently facing a dilemma, as we have the gold-spotted oak borer (GSOB) in the area. This pest is wreaking havoc on Oak Glen’s black oak population, adding to their decline in recent years. We anticipate planting many more native trees on Oak Glen Preserve, including oak, as well as some experimental species, to combat new and growing environmental challenges,” said Chudy. Chudy explains that we’re nearly a year removed from the Apple and El Dorado fires, a major concern is the potential for debris flows cascading through the drainages once we finally receive some



serious precipitation on the burn scars above the Preserve. “It was evident in the recent El Dorado, Bobcat, and Apple fires, that wildland fire continues to threaten our communities. By preparing your property and readying for an evacuation, if need be, you are giving firefighters a fighting chance to protect you, your loved ones, and your property. I encourage you to review and enact your own Ready! Set! Go! Personal Wildfire Action,” said Daniel Munsey, Fire Chief, San Bernardino County Fire Protection.

**I encourage you to review and enact your own Ready! Set! Go! Personal Wildfire Action.**  
— Daniel Munsey  
Fire Chief/Fire Warden,  
San Bernardino County



Lincoln & Mia Smith with sequoias at the Preserve



### A Year Later... Huddleston Family — Yucaipa

The aftermath of the 2020 El Dorado Fire is a constant reminder to Yucaipa resident, Susie Huddleston. The fire destroyed her family barn with irreplaceable family heirlooms and damaged her home. Her family's story was featured in the spring edition of Living with Wildfire. "It took eight months to rebuild our barn and restore our home," said Huddleston. "I am reminded of the fire when I see the burn scar on the mountain, the dead trees, and my great grandfather's 1949 burned Flatbed truck, that was used years ago as a work truck in the Highland orange groves. I am thankful that my husband started using the new barn as a woodworking shop. He makes wooden American flags and furniture for friends."



Photo Courtesy: Zach Behrens, PAO, San Bernardino National Forest



**“The El Dorado Fire changed our lives forever.”**  
— Susie Huddleston  
Yucaipa resident



### 2020 - 2021 Fire Season

Clyde Ranch - Lone Pine Canyon

The 2020 fire season in California, by early December: more than 9,200 fires had burned nearly 4.2 million acres according to Cecilia Clavet, The Nature Conservancy. "Over the past 40 years, 32% of the United States has gotten warmer and drier, primarily in the West, said Clavet. California's dry winter is raising concerns that the state's 2021 fire season could be worse than 2020, and droughts are ongoing in other parts of the west. Climate change and forest conditions along with fire management across the West are intersecting with the population and economic growth in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). More people, communities and assets are being exposed to fire risk and are more vulnerable to harm. At the same time, fires are increasing in frequency and intensity. The 2020 wildfire season highlights how our understanding of these risks has expanded beyond the WUI to include the concept of landscape scale fires, where fires can range across 10 or more miles. Megafires burn hundreds of thousands of acres. In 2020, California's August Complex Fire reached giga-fire size, covering more than 1 million acres. Smoke plumes from fire incidents routinely impact air quality and health across multiple states, with even the East Coast seeing haze from the 2020 western fires," said Clavet.

Daniel Berlant, CAL FIRE Assistant Deputy Director, said California's 2021 fire season started early with significantly more acres burned earlier in the year. Even compared



Photo Courtesy: Wrightwood.org 1945 truck, historic remnant of Clyde Ranch

to last year's record year, 2021 has resulted in more large and damaging fires. "Over the last few years, we've had over 45,000 homes and structures destroyed by wildfire. The data from these wildfires has really highlighted the fact that a home that is hardened with ember resistant building materials and that has good Defensible Space, is at the best chance of surviving a wildfire." "With over a dozen large wildfires, as well as responding to dozens of new wildfires and hundreds of emergency incidents every day, firefighting resources are continuously prioritized. The prioritization of resources is always based on life, property, and natural resources," said Berlant.

"Since the beginning of 2021, there have been over 6,600 wildfires that have burned more than 1.5 million acres," said Berlant. The Dixie Fire inferno is recognized as the largest single fire in California's history, ravaging through Butte, Plumas, Lassen, and Tehama Counties. The fire began in the Feather River Canyon near Cresta Dam on July 13, 2021 and had burned 963,309 acres by August 20th. "Under these drought conditions wildfires are burning rapidly with extreme severity. In fact, the Dixie Fire made an 8-mile run in one day, burning over 100,000 acres," said Berlant.



For more information on Home Hardening and Defensible Space or to do a self-assessment or request a free inspection, go to [www.fire.ca.gov/dspace/](http://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace/)

Help us keep you safe during a disaster by registering for emergency notification systems. Stay prepared and protect your loved ones should an emergency occur.

### TENS

During a major disaster such as a wildfire, your Fire and Sheriff's Departments use a system known as the Telephone Emergency Notification System or TENS to send high-speed mass notifications by telephone and text messages. This system helps us get you critical updates, such as evacuation information, as quickly as possible.

The County uses a database of landline telephone numbers, which is updated every six months, to send emergency messages to landline phones only. By signing up, residents can receive emergency text messages on their cell phones, add voice over internet phone numbers (V.O.I.P.), and manage their own account using a valid email address. Those without internet connections can sign up by calling 2-1-1 or (888) 435-7565. TENS alerts do not generally go out to the entire County but instead are targeted to affected areas. Register today!  
<http://www.sbcounty.gov/SBCFire/TENS/TENSContact.aspx>

### SB Ready App

The Ready San Bernardino County app will help you prepare and plan for how to respond to a disaster in your area. Using the Ready San Bernardino County app, you will be able to:

- Share your status with your selected contacts with the push of a button.
- Receive critical emergency alerts via push notification.
- Locate San Bernardino County's emergency shelters.
- View up-to-date evacuation route maps.
- Get the latest news and weather for the San Bernardino County area.
- Create a personalized Emergency Preparedness Plan by answering five basic questions.

Download the app today! <http://readydl.com/landing/eoc06071/index.html>



Homeowners can take a proactive approach to living with wildfire in the ecosystem by practicing proper clearance and home hardening. This information can be found at [readyforwildlandfire.org](http://readyforwildlandfire.org). Each homeowner also needs a plan preparing to evacuate utilizing the Ready, Set, GO method.

— Shane Littlefield  
 CAL FIRE Unit Chief

**IN CASE IMMEDIATE EVACUATION IS REQUIRED, REMEMBER THE SIX P'S**

- P** EOPLE and pets
- P** APERS, phone numbers, and important documents
- P** RESCRIPTIONS, vitamins, and eyeglasses
- P** ICTURES and irreplaceable memorabilia
- P** ERSONAL COMPUTER hard drive and disks
- P** LASTIC (credit cards, ATM cards) and cash

# WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER IN BUILDING FIRE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

It was very evident in the recent El Dorado, Bobcat, and Apple fires, that wildland fire continues to threaten our communities. Over the past several years, we have been working hard with our partnering agencies, elected officials, and residents in finding synergistic solutions. We've worked to find the best ways to utilize firefighting resources in the most efficient and effective manner. Below is a list of solutions that we have undertaken over the last year to prepare for this year's fire season.

- We have formalized a Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Program, which works hand in hand with its citizens to identify ways to help keep our communities safer
- Added 2<sup>nd</sup> professional Wildland Hand Crew. Hand Crews commonly respond as part of our initial fire attack dispatch and serve multiple roles in fire suppression as they can create fire lines, defensible space, structure defense, perimeter control. When these crews are not fighting fires, they are involved in various community projects such as creating "fire breaks" and chipping foliage, that provide hazard fuel mitigation in fire prone areas such as our mountain communities.
- Increased Dozer Program, staffing a Dozer 24-hours, with another on stand-by
- Gel Task Force will now be able to utilize five Type 6 Brush Engines that have been upgraded to spray strong water technology/gel treatment on homes for structure defense. These engines can access the narrow mountain roadways.
- Participate in a regionalized Staging Plan, that stages additional firefighting resources to our County during Red Flag and Santa Ana wind events
- Brought onboard "Dinty", our first arson canine to assist with fire/arson investigations
- Increasing enforcement with the addition of new fire investigator personnel
- Nationwide leading (and award winning) use of technology to find arsonists, track illegal firework use, and connect with citizens allowing better and faster reporting of fire related crimes

The San Bernardino County Fire Protection District thanks you for the opportunity to serve you. Together we can conquer today's fire and EMS challenges.  
 Daniel R. Munsey  
 Fire Chief/Fire Warden  
 San Bernardino County Fire Protection District



During emergency situations...  
**FIRES SNOWSTORMS, FLOODS...**  
*Please... follow directions from Caltrans District 8 first responders!*  
 We are here to help you and your loved ones get to your destination safely.

District 8  
 Serving Riverside & San Bernardino County



CAL FIRE's fleet of over 60 fixed and rotary wing aircraft make it the largest civil aerial firefighting fleet in the world. CAL FIRE's world-renowned aviation program responds to thousands of wildlands fires throughout California each year. CAL FIRE's current aviation fleet includes Grumman S-2T airtanker, Bell UH-1H Super Huey Helicopters, Sikorsky S70i Helicopters, and North American OV-10A (& 1 D Model) Bronco Air Tactical Aircraft. These aircraft, highly skilled pilots, and aviation support staff are strategically located throughout California at our 13 air tanker bases, 10 CAL FIRE helitack bases and one CAL FIRE/San Diego County Sheriff helitack base. Aircraft can reach the most remote State Responsibility Area (SRA) fires in approximately 20 minutes, with the goal of keeping 95% of fires at 10 acres or less.

CAL FIRE's aviation program continues to look to the future in both technology and aerial firefighting capability. The recent addition of the 12 Sikorsky S70i CAL FIRE HAWK helicopters and future addition of 7 Lockheed Martin C-130H Hercules airtankers are an example of CAL FIRE's commitment to remain the premier firefighting aviation program in the world.

All CAL FIRE helicopters are flown by CAL FIRE pilots. CAL FIRE's current support Contractor DynCorp International provides airtanker and air tactical fixed wing pilot services, and all aircraft maintenance services. DynCorp International has received numerous awards by the Federal Aviation Administration. LSI Logistic Specialties Inc. provides procurement and parts management services.



The Running Springs Fire Department has been an integral part of the community of Running Springs within the San Bernardino mountains since 1951, protecting the community from wildfire and providing emergency medical response.



For more information, visit [www.runningsspringsfire.org](http://www.runningsspringsfire.org).  
 31250 Hilltop Boulevard • P.O. Box 2206, Running Springs, CA 92382



**Our Mission:**  
 Engage Americans in promoting the health and public enjoyment of our National Forests



To learn more visit [support.nationalforests.org/socal](http://support.nationalforests.org/socal)

“ Every acre can and will burn someday in this state. Be ready now! Before there is a warning.”

– Thom Porter  
 Director of the Department,  
 of Forestry and Fire Protection

# 2021 STATISTICS

Total Incidents	Acres	Structures Damaged or Destroyed		
8,106	2,495,174	3,629		
25 largest incidents, including those managed by CAL FIRE and other partner agencies (10-20-21)				
Incident Name	Start Date	Contained	Acres	County
Dixie	07/13/21	Active	963,309	Butte, Plumas, Shasta, Lassen, Tehema
Monument	07/30/21	Active	223,124	Trinity
Caldor	08/14/21	Active	221,775	El Dorado, Alpine and Amador
River Complex	07/30/21	Active	199,343	Siskiyou, Trinity
Antelope	08/01/21	Active	145,632	Siskiyou
McFarland	07/30/21	09/16/21	122,653	Shasta, Trinity, Tehema
Beckwourth Complex	07/04/21	09/22/21	105,670	Plumas
Windy	09/09-21	Active	97,554	Tulare
McCash	08/18/21	Active	94,962	Siskiyou
KNP Complex	09/10/21	Active	88,278	Tulare
Tamarack	07/04/21	Active	68,637	Alpine
French	08/18/21	Active	26,535	Kern
Lava	06/24/21	09/03/21	26,409	Siskiyou
Salt	06/30/21	07/19/21	12,660	Shasta
Tennant	06/28/21	07/15/21	10,580	Siskiyou
River	07/11/21	07/19/21	9,656	Mariposa
Walkers	08/16/21	09/17/21	8,777	Tulare
Fawn	09/22/21	10/02/21	8,578	Shasta
Southern	05/02/21	05/06/21	5,366	San Diego
Dexter	07/21/21	07/30/21	2,965	Mono
Willow	06/18/21	07/11/21	2,877	Monterey
River	08/04/21	08/13/21	2,619	Nevada, Placer
Knob	08/29/21	09/13/21	2,421	Humboldt
Peak	07/20/21	08/13/21	2,098	Kern
Shell	06/27/21	06/30/21	1,984	Kern

Statistics are from the 2021 Active Incident Archive - [www.ca.gov/incidents/2021](http://www.ca.gov/incidents/2021) as of 10-20-21

## California Highway Patrol

### Arrowhead Area



31230 Highway 18

P.O. Box. 997

Running Springs, CA 92382

(909)867-2791



## INVESTING IN SAFETY

Wildfires are a year-round threat for California communities like Big Bear. We live in a "Very High-Fire Risk" area, and BVES, Inc. is prepared to go above and beyond state-mandated safety standards to protect customers and the community from the risk of wildfires.

### COVERED WIRE PROGRAM

BVES became the first Investor-Owned Utility in the United States to install fire-resistant-non-propagating (FR-NP) covered wire across its service territory and plans to replace all overhead sub-transmission bare wire with covered wire.

### UAV INSPECTIONS

In partnership with Davey Resource Group, Inc., BVES will conduct Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) fly-over inspections of its sub-transmission and distribution system throughout the months of July, August and September.

### LIDAR PROTECTION

BVES utilizes LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) inspections and analysis, which use a system of lasers and software to develop surveys of the overhead sub-transmission and distribution systems, to accurately determine vegetation clearances to conductors.

### EVACUATION ROUTE HARDENING

BVES installed wire mesh wraps around 812 power poles throughout Big Bear to help combat potential wildfires. Wire mesh treated with an intumescent graphite coating may be able to prevent a wooden power pole from being consumed in a wildfire.



# HELPING PEOPLE – AND COMMUNITIES – ON THEIR WORST DAY

By Mary-Justine Lanyon  
(first published in Alpine Mountaineer Newspaper July 2021)

**W**hen an earthquake, tornado, hurricane or fire strikes, the affected people are experiencing their worst day.

Recognizing that there can be a gap between when disaster strikes and when the emergency agencies are able to arrive on the scene, two Marine buddies formed Team Rubicon to bridge that gap.

Recently, Kevin Kothlow, the state administrator of Southern California for Team Rubicon, described their work to members of the Mountain Sunrise Rotary Club. He also explained why he felt compelled to become part of the team.

The retired Army veteran said he was looking for a way to continue serving in the community. “After the 2016 election, I couldn’t figure out what was wrong with the world, why we were treating each other the way we were on social media.”

He found and joined Team Rubicon – which unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams – in 2017. Kothlow was part of a Team Rubicon effort to help after Hurricane Harvey in Houston.

“I came to the realization that Americans are good people,” he said. “The 22 years I spent in the military were not for naught. I drank the Kool-Aid and went in with both feet to Team Rubicon.”

Last year, when hurricanes hit in Florida, Alabama and Louisiana, Team Rubicon had more than 2,700 volunteers deployed. Kothlow spent a month in Baton Rouge, where they cleaned out houses that had



flooded, removing debris for FEMA to come in and pick up.

During the pandemic, Team Rubicon has helped with COVID vaccination clinics. In addition, they assisted at food distribution centers.

Their focus in Southern California, Kothlow noted, is primarily fire. Their clients and targeted operations include low-income and elderly people, areas with key terrain and isolated communities.

“We moved heavily into mitigation work in Southern California. You can’t see either a fire or an earthquake coming but we can try to mitigate fire by clearing brush and creating home defense zones in coordination with fire safe councils.

Their biggest operation a year ago was in Niland in the Imperial Valley. A fire had destroyed 43 homes. Team Rubicon removed 4,312 tons of debris, working with the county and state OES. “It was a huge response on our part,” Kothlow said. He noted the temperature was 116 every day. “The soles of my boots melted off,” he told the Rotarians.

Closer to home, Team Rubicon worked with the Mountain Rim Fire Safe Council

to clear brush at Camp Paivika in Crestline. It’s a project Team Rubicon dubbed “Protected Pines.”

Laura Dyberg, president of the fire safe council, was contacted by Team Rubicon, saying they wanted to reduce some of the fuel on the mountain. “Does anyone need us?” they asked Dyberg. She reached out to David Kelly (retired USFS) and AbilityFirst/Camp Paivika in Crestline immediately came their minds. “The insurance company was going to cancel their insurance because of the presence of brush and heavy fuels,” Dyberg said.

Kelly Kunsek, the director of Camp Paivika, had received notification that they had to clear brush 200 feet from the lodge. “It was impossible for us to get fire insurance,” Kunsek said.

“I was in full-blown panic mode when I got a call from Laura,” Kunsek said. But that panic was assuaged when Team Rubicon arrived on the scene the third week of May.

They were there seven days, Kunsek said, with 20 people clearing the brush. Local fire authorities, Kothlow noted, had “tagged the corrective action on an inspection so we worked off their initial list.”

David Kelly, a retired division chief with the U.S. Forest Service, Kothlow added, “really helped us identify some of the things we need to look for when doing fire mitigation.”

The clearance that Team Rubicon did, Kunsek said, “will give a greater level of protection to the camp and all of Cedarpines Park. They took the brush on the slope coming up from Waterman Canyon to the camp to a safe level.”

She added that “Team Rubicon loved being with us. We have already scheduled them to come back next year.”

Kothlow said they had some initial help training their chainsaw crews from Stihl and now run their own training classes. He added that their key leaders have taken Home Ignition Zone classes from the National Fire Prevention Association.

In addition to doing the brush clearance at Camp Paivika, a group of Team Rubicon volunteers also worked on a dozen private properties suggested by the fire safe council. They were primarily low-income seniors, Dyberg said. “They don’t have the fiscal or physical ability to create defensible space around their houses.

“They can rest easier this fire season.”

For more information on Team Rubicon, visit [www.teamrubicon.usa.org](http://www.teamrubicon.usa.org).



“I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees.”  
– Henry David Thoreau



# OUR FORESTS, OUR FUTURE After the Fire – Regrowth – Rebirth

“The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is NOW.”  
– Chinese Proverb



Mountain Rim Fire Safe Council  
PO Box 2582  
Running Springs, CA 92382



[www.FireSafeNOW.org](http://www.FireSafeNOW.org)  
(866) 923-FIRE  
(866) 923-3473

