

Secretary of the Interior Visits California



On June 11, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne visited the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Southern California to inspect hazardous fuels reduction projects. California Fire Safe Council Chairman Bruce Turbeville, Executive Director Margaret Grayson and Grant Manager Cathy Brooke were on hand to help celebrate the Department of the Interior's (DOI) many contributions to the success of the National Fire Plan. Overlooking the scar of the 2007 Canyon Fire, the Secretary was also able to view examples of how defensible space saves homes.

The CFSC delegation was the only non-governmental group participating in the site visit and was able to take advantage of the opportunity to discuss CFSC concerns with Secretary Kempthorne and highlight activities of local Fire Safe Councils.

Radio System Helps Canyon Fire Watch

A helicopter ride over the San Gabriel Mountains seems like a romantic end to a wedding—unless the entire wedding party, guests, musicians and waiters are being airlifted away from an approaching wildfire. This spring a wedding in Big Santa Anita Canyon ended in just that way. Big Santa Anita Canyon Fire Safe Council's FireWatch radio system, the only functional communications system in the Canyon, helped search and rescue teams make it an affair to remember!

The radio system, partially funded by a US Forest Service grant, consists of portable two-way radios and a solar-powered radio repeater located high above the Canyon. The radios are assigned to FireWatch volunteers based on their primary location in the Canyon and their frequency of visitation. Volunteers within the Canyon who have access to radios have the ability to call for help by cell phone. Big Santa Anita Canyon FSC is fortunate to have volunteers with both professional radio knowledge and fire fighting experience. It's a serious commitment, though: FireWatch volunteers monitor their radios at all times.

Does your Fire Safe Council have a useful product to share with other groups? Send your story to Wende Cornelius at info@firesafecouncil.org.

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From the Desk of Bruce Turbeville



I recently received an e-mail warning me about the dangers associated with barbecue propane tanks used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. Anhydrous ammonia, a colorless liquid that becomes a pungent gas when exposed to air, needs to be stored under pressure in sturdy containers. It is used legitimately as industrial refrigerant or fertilizer, but unfortunately is also a key ingredient in methamphetamine. These small propane tanks offer an easily transported vessel for thieves siphoning off small amounts from industrial sources.

Anhydrous ammonia degrades the brass fittings on the barbecue tank, rendering it unfit for safe use in any way. If you participate in a propane tank exchange where you drop your empty tank off at a retailer in exchange for a different full tank, be sure to take a look at the valve for any sign of corrosion. It is not likely a retailer would refill a corroded tank, but a little common sense goes a long way. If you are offered a tank with corroded fittings, ask for a different one. Better safe than sorry!

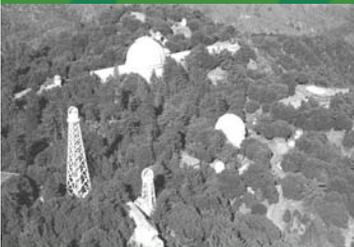
Bruce

Tuning In to Southern California

Think all Fire Safe Councils are alike? Obviously the answer is no, since local Councils vary widely across the state in terms of size, location (rural? urban? coastal? mountains?), type of vegetation and much more. One of the newest local Councils, however, surely holds the record for uniqueness. It's the Mount Wilson Fire Safe Council. Located on a mountaintop in the middle of the Angeles National Forest in Los Angeles County, Mt. Wilson is within just a couple of miles (straight up!) of the major metropolis of Los Angeles. Unlike all other FSC's, there are few residences on Mt. Wilson; instead, it's home to a bevy of transmission towers which are vital for the television and radio communications that keep Southern California in the know. It's also home to an historic observatory, built in 1904 and at one time the largest telescope in the world, and a camp facility owned by the Long Beach Unified School District.

The organization of the Mt. Wilson Fire Safe Council has been championed by local District Ranger Mike McIntyre and Fuels Officer Scott Lowden (both of the U.S. Forest Service) and L.A. County Fire Department Deputy Forester (and CFSC Board Vice Chair) J. Lopez, and mentored by the Big Santa Anita Canyon and Sierra Madre FSC's.

In addition to worrying about fuel reduction on and around their mountaintop, the members of the FSC have also been dealing with major physical changes in the towers resulting from the upcoming switch from analog to digital technology, and, in the observatory's case, finding new ways to use the historically steady air on Mt. Wilson to make important discoveries in interferometry despite the light pollution from Los Angeles. Coping with frequent nighttime recreational visitors – let's just say they aren't there to look through the telescope – is also an ongoing challenge for this "techiest" FSC. As a very new FSC, it's to be expected that there'd be a buzz about what they're doing --- but in the case of the Mt. Wilson FSC, it's more like a constant hum from the transmission towers. "Stay tuned" for further news about this very different Fire Safe Council!



Dave Jurasevich/Mt. Wilson Institute

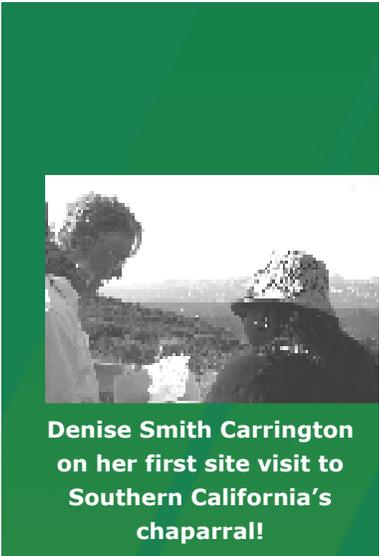
**Southern California's
newest Fire Safe Council
is really "tuned in!"**

New Grant Managers Join the Team

Sierra Region Grant Manager Dan Lang is no stranger to fire safety, having recently retired from a 39-year career with CDF (CalFire). His final position was Staff Chief on the Director's Fire Protection Staff, and he worked with many CFSC, federal agency and community members over the years, creating a wide resource and knowledge base which will greatly benefit Sierra Region organizations. Dan's office is at McClellan Park in Sacramento.

Denise Smith Carrington, new Grant Manager for the Greater San Diego Region, brings a great deal of insight into insurability issues as a resource for the groups with whom she works.. In addition to her 13 year stint with the Auto Club of Southern California, Denise also owned her own local insurance agency. She has already created and implemented a successful mentoring program, matching veteran grantees with San Diego area first-timers. Denise is working out of the Glendora headquarters office.

Both Dan and Denise are also attending training classes toward their certificate in Federal Grants Management.



Denise Smith Carrington on her first site visit to Southern California's chaparral!



THINK SMART, DON'T LET THEM START

GET YOUR JINGLE ON!

Whether you're hoping to get folks to

OR



Be an ace: create defensible space

a catchy fire safe slogan can help you get your message out. Send us your best slogan and **you could win** a collection of give-aways printed with your slogan as well as your local Fire Safe Council's contact information!

Send entries to wecornelius@att.net

Deadline for entry is September 30

Fire Safety Blooms in Humboldt County

As a collaboration between the Mid Klamath Watershed Council (MKWC), the Karuk Indigenous Basketweavers and the Karuk Tribe's Department of Natural Resources, the Karuk Native Plant Demonstration Garden is a different take on a fire safe demonstration garden. Funded by a grant from the US Forest Service and located in Orleans, this garden's goal is to increase awareness about traditional forest management with the use of fire. The project is grounded in the fact that native plants are often fire resistant and always fire adapted, since they have evolved with regular natural (including Native American-inspired) fire return intervals.

The Karuk Native Plant Demonstration Garden was founded as a volunteer project in 2005. One half-acre section of the two acre garden has been prepared for a prescribed burn, to occur when the conditions are right. This area will be planted with particular fire-adapted plants, burned specifically for cultural uses. In the meantime, community volunteers and participants from last winter's Burn Workshop have had chances to learn safe, efficient and legal ways to burn brush piles and how to build fire lines.

This unusual garden provides information about using native plants for cultural, restoration, erosion control, landscaping and fire safe purposes. Over 800 people have come to learn and work in the garden since its inception, including local elementary school children, summer youth program participants, university ethno-botany students, basketweavers, restorationists and workshop attendees. Local Fire Safe Councils are always invited to visit and share this inspirational space!



A "Safe Burning" workshop at the Karuk Demonstration Garden.



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Workshop Success in Big Bear Lake

The City of Big Bear Lake's Fire Department has developed an innovative workshop to help inform the wider landscape community about defensible space requirements. To date, about 50 people have participated in the widely-publicized training, including landscapers, maintenance men, handymen, property managers, nursery workers and others working toward complying with defensible space regulations.

The training includes information on steps that can be taken to help ensure the survivability of homes in a wildfire, including requirements regarding roofs, eaves and foundations as well as landscaping issues. The basic concept is that fuel reduction doesn't stop at the property line: it is everyone in the neighborhood working together to comply with defensible space requirements. Landscape professionals learn how to communicate a clear and consistent message to homeowners regarding the need for defensible space and how it should be accomplished.

Not only are attendees given a certificate showing that they attended the workshops, but their attendance allows them to be listed on the Fire Department's website. Although not an endorsement, for landscape professionals in the fire-prone Big Bear area, this helps promote their business in a very persuasive way. The Fire Department's David Yegge confirms that participation in the workshop has led to a significant increase in the level of compliance as compared to previous years. "In the past, many more owners were not in full compliance, and now that number is significantly lower," said Yegge.

To learn more about this workshop and other aspects of Big Bear Lake Fire Department's proactive stance on wildfire prevention, please visit: www.thisisin.org.



David Yegge finds that Big Bear Lake's landscaper training increases the piles for their chipping program!