



THE KEY TO A SAFER TOMORROW

FIREWISE BULLETIN

FALL 2014



Road easement clearing.

SRA Fee – Your Dollars Are Returning Home

The SRA fee assessed in rural California has been contentious to say the least. Many have thought it to be yet another sink hole – money in, little out. The money collected is designated for mitigation and education, not suppression. Stated more clearly, the money can only be spent on prevention and not firefighting.

Together in concert, CALFIRE, Napa County Fire Department and NCCFF planned goals and priorities to put the SRA collected money to good use. Mike Wilson, a founder of NCCFF and local resident, has returned from Sacramento to head the effort in our county. Mike and his staff have been working planning and prioritizing mitigation projects.

NCCFF and CALFIRE are working closely together in a coordinated effort to maximize the mitigation work accomplished. Community Fire Safe Council projects are being dovetailed with Wilson's group's projects. The net result will

be an increase in fire mitigation work. Napa County's Road Department will also continue to help and participate providing traffic control, chipping and tree trimming for these efforts.

CALFIRE has already started working clearing road easements on Hwy 29 over Mt. St Helena and in Mt Veeder. This is a tangible result of the fee coming home.

The complete future plans are still being formulated, but will include brush clearing in high fire danger zones among other activities in addition to road easement clearing. Sacramento has not finalized direction, but there is the possibility of community activity funding from SRA monies.

The good news is that there will be a coordinated effort of increased mitigation activities, all in concert to make our community fire safe.

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**N a p a C o m m u n i t i e s
F i r e w i s e F o u n d a t i o n**

Fifteen Minutes Until Evacuation!

Living in rural Napa County one of the words you fear most is 'fire'. Fire coupled with 'you need to evacuate' transcends fear beyond imagination. These words are quite clear with the underlying meaning that it is not safe to stay in your neighborhood as your house may burn to the ground.

A short time ago, this is exactly what a small community on the north end of Lake Berryessa experienced. As the Butts Canyon fire spread, the residents of Berryessa Estates were warned of 'fire'. A short time thereafter came the call from authorities to evacuate. You have very few minutes to gather what you need and what you'd like to preserve prior to leaving your home without knowing if it will be there when you return. Residents stoically complied, gathering their possessions and pets quickly and calmly driving away from their community.

The residents, except for one brave individual, headed to Middletown to an evacuation center set up at the local high school. John Hallman stayed behind to do what he could to help. He was leader of a local Firesafe Council and had worked on fire breaks and defensible space. He shared maps of their work with firefighters arriving to defend their community. He took the firefighters on a tour of their work so they would understand what they were defending to better be able to defend it. Soon though, calls came in from the displaced residents – forgotten medications, pets or livestock in need among other requests. John selflessly set out to help using cell phone guidance to enter homes for medications or attend to live stock.

The saga continues with residents spending over two days in the emergency shelter, always on the verge of fire sweeping through their community. Words cannot describe what these people went through. The good news is that the story has a happy ending. Firefighters were successful in keeping the fire away from Berryessa Estates. Their hard work of fire breaks and defensible space luckily were not tested this time. Residents returned safely to



Approaching wildfire

their homes thanks to the hard work of CALFIRE firefighters. The devastating Butts Canyon fire was contained with remarkably little structure damage, all things considered.

Berryessa Estates epitomizes a Firewise Community – neighbors helping neighbors. Whether it be defensible space, a community fire perimeter or just helping another in need, Berryessa Estates is a role model with John Hallman in the lead.

John Hallman received a letter of commendation and recognition from Chief Upton on behalf of CALFIRE and the County Board of Supervisors for his outstanding efforts on behalf of his community.

Firewise Going Greener

In an effort to 'go green' newsletters will be transitioning to a paperless PDF format that can be emailed and posted to our web site instead of traditional printed form. This shift reduces paper consumption with another 'green' benefit – cash in the bank. The cost saving derived from the transition is enough to fund a typical community's annual mitigation efforts. We are growing each year by at least one new community hearing the calling and so our funding

needs are also growing to support all our active Fire Safe Councils.

Please don't worry as the newsletters will still roll off the press, albeit a virtual press. We will continue to spread the Firewise word.

Soon, the next mailing will simply be a card with link information to access our e-letter.

Understandably, we need to update our email address data base, as we only have a small fraction of email addresses compared to physical addresses. It will be important for you to sign in to read our next edition e-letter so that we can log your email address. You can also just send an email to our info@napafirewise.org

We need your support

Fifteen Minutes Until Evacuation #2

It is hard to describe the thoughts and fears associated with being told there is a fire and you need to evacuate. The residents of Berryessa Estates know this experience all too well, as they recently evacuated their homes during the Butts Canyon fire. They were warned there was a fire and then later told they had fifteen minutes to evacuate. Yes, fifteen minutes to gather whatever you need or cherish and leave not knowing how long you will be gone or what will remain upon your return. Fifteen minutes until evacuation.....

The residents of Berryessa Estates had some hard learned lesson from their experience. Basically, don't leave thinking about evacuation until you are told you must. Fifteen minutes under the stress of looming fire is not the best combination for making good decisions. If you live in a fire danger zone, you need to think of the possibility of evacuation before the time comes, which hopefully it does not. The better approach is to have a written plan for emergency referral and important items stored for quick retrieval.

NCFF, www.napafirewise.org, has a list things to consider if disaster should hit posted to the web site in the publications section. The things to consider range from a computer back up drive to save computer data through listing medications needed daily or occasionally. It is worthwhile to spend a few minutes reviewing the 'What if' document. In addition, *Ready Set Go* is another great resource providing guidance.

The hard learned lessons from Berryessa Estates are varied. They include simple things such as a cell phone and its charger – easy to remember phone, charger is another matter. If you have pets, they require food in addition to containment, leashes, medications, toys, etc. If you have livestock that can't be moved, somebody needs to take care of them while you are gone. Not every community has a John Hallman to step up to the challenges of the forgotten or left behind. Unfortunately, one needs to make very hard decisions and may not get a second chance to change one's mind.

The bottom line is that one really needs to think about evacuating their home



Pets evacuate too!

before the call comes to do so. Make a list of what you can take in 15 minutes. It needs to include everything absolutely necessary such as medications and those things which are considered dear and irreplaceable. You may be living in a shelter for days, so think about what you'll need to survive if essentials of food and shelter are provided. Don't forget that the items need to fit in your vehicle. It is sad to say that tough judgments will need to be made as to what is really necessary and what can stay behind.

If you live in a hazard area and have not yet gone through this exercise to prepare for a fire or any other disaster, you need to do so soon.

Fifteen Minutes Until Evacuation #3

The recent Butts Canyon fire was allegedly caused by workers doing fire mitigation activities- clearing weeds and brush to prevent the spread of a fire. This is case of good intentions with a bad outcome. A devastating fire and a community evacuated resulted from work to prevent such.

Countless articles have been written on the topic of safely creating and maintaining defensible space. The key points are reiterated here:

If you are doing outside work in a dry season, make sure you have the ability to extinguish a fire you might generate with either a hose, extinguisher or other water source handy.

Metal blades can spark off rocks, so mow lawns early in the morning when things can be damp. Replace metal weed whacking blades with plastic string once the season dries out.

Chain saws can cause sparks nicking off rocks or cause wood to burn if blade is dull. Take care and try to do saw work early in the morning.

Tractor metal blades for mowing or scraping can cause sparks off rocks. Limit such activities as mowing, scraping or excavating to damp mornings.

Gas or diesel powered equipment require proper spark arrestors. Exhausts also are very hot and can cause weeds to ignite if they come into contact. This includes trucks and cars driving off pavement. Each year, cars burn to the ground which were parked off road in weeds which contacted exhausts.

Think before you act! Please consider whether your actions can cause a fire before you do anything outside. Don't be another statistic added to good intentions, bad outcome.....

Donations to NCFF are tax deductible



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- Chipping season is April - September!

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National Firewise Recognition!

Congratulations to Berryessa Highlands for becoming a nationally recognized Firewise Community. The Highlands joins the Circle Oaks and Atlas Peak communities that have already earned and maintained this status. Being recognized is not an easy task as it requires jumping several hurdles each intended to help your community be Firewise. The Highland's efforts have truly been a remarkable achievement and this national recognition is well earned.

Meet the Board

NCFF is pleased to reintroduce board members with their reshuffled responsibilities:

President and Foundation Development

Stephen Gort

Vice President Community Development

Tim Streblov

Secretary & Treasurer

Rick Thornberry

Director of Communications

Tom Vreeland

Director & President Emeritus

Darren Drake

Director & Secretary Emeritus

Alicia Amaro

Director & Insurance Industry Adviser

Brooke Dunton

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