

The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

September 2003

ON THE FIRE FRONT

Taming Fire Danger in Back Country

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
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Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:

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Allied Gardens
Alpine
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Blossom Valley
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Cuyamaca
Dehesa
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Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
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Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
Tierra del Sol
Vallecitos
Wynola

Serving the Indian Reservations of:

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Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

When the 61,000 acre Pines Fire tore through the Julian area last summer, fire officials and property owners got a dramatic front line view of what happens when bone-dry and bug infested trees meet wildfire.

Fire fighters described whole oak trees, from trunk to highest limb, exploding like fireworks. Homeowners were shocked as flames engulfed barns, buildings and whole hillsides in mere seconds.

The second largest blaze in San Diego County history, the Pines Fire was a wake up call for our region to collectively address the threat of dry vegetation in the wildlands.

That's why, at my urging, the County Board of Supervisors created the Wildland Task Force, a broad-based panel of local, state and federal fire agencies, wildlife and land management agencies, disaster preparedness officials and conservation groups.

One year after its initiation, the Task Force has released a stirring new report that warns the Pines Fire could be just the beginning. The report, titled "Mitigation Strategies for Reducing Wildland Fire

Risks," drives home our region's desperate need for additional state and federal funding to remove dead and dying trees. Right away, it urges fire agencies to step up vegetation management efforts, particularly dead tree removal and prescribed burns.

Forestry experts say the best defense against so-called "superfires"— hard to contain infernos capable of destroying many thousands of acres of brush— is a healthy patchwork of brush made up of varying age classes. Where areas of old brush meet areas of new brush, fire is slowed. It is this patchwork that keeps smaller fires from gaining momentum and

turning into larger fires like the Pines Fire.

Alarmingly, San Diego County's Back Country is a far cry from this ideal patchwork. Decades of old growth, record drought and a massive bark beetle infestation have turned our wildlands into a dangerous tinderbox.

Today, more than half of San Diego County's wildlands are overgrown with 50 years of old brush. Another 30 percent are more than 20 years old. As the Task Force report ominously warns, "...80 percent of wildland areas in San Diego will burn explosively under typical Periods of high fire danger." Factor in

"Record drought and a massive bark beetle infestation have turned our wildlands into a dangerous tinderbox."

*-Supervisor
Dianne Jacob*



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All Fired Up About State's Anti-Business Climate



On the Job: Supervisor Jacob fights for local jobs with Richard Costigian of the California Chamber of Commerce.

Business isn't booming in San Diego County. Manufacturing jobs have declined significantly and economists warn that businesses are leaving the region for more accommodating states.

Supervisor Jacob teamed up with the California Chamber of Commerce to take the matter to the streets of El Cajon. Joined by C.J. Buck of Buck Knives, Matt Guzzetta from Taylor Guitars, Jessie Knight of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and others, Jacob brought to town the Pink Slip Express, a moving van designed to symbolize the exodus of businesses from California.

The group made it easy on the California State Legislature by identifying nearly 50 pieces of state legislation that would hamstring businesses with onerous regulations.

"California has the highest energy bills and workers' comp costs in the nation," Jacob told onlookers. "Factor in a \$39 billion state budget deficit and businesses are running from California."

Raise your voice against California's unfriendly business climate. Visit cajobsfirst.org

Fire Danger

Continued from page 1

Santa Ana winds, not present during the Pines Fire, and we are faced with the threat of an unprecedented firestorm.

To best address the danger, fire officials agree that the first order of business must be the removal of dead trees. Last year, San Diego County, along with Riverside and San Bernardino counties, proclaimed states of emergency in response to the ravages of the bark beetle. All three counties are tapping into \$25 million in federal fire prevention funds. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with San Diego County has applied for \$30 million in federal funding slated toward tree removal.

In the meantime, the Task Force has identified ways local government can and must respond. Recommendations include the beefed up enforcement of rules requiring defensible space around structures and additional prescribed burns.

While professional foresters recommend that 27,000 acres of land be prescribed burned each year in San Diego County, we average less than 3,000 acres. The County is aware that nearly 40 percent of land with the oldest vegetation is owned by private property owners and has agreed to actively research low cost insurance to cover landowners who allow prescribed burning on their lands.

Perhaps the most striking element of the Task Force report is that it views fire not as an enemy, but as a natural force of nature. In the forest, fire is as beneficial as rain or wind. Fire gets rid of old growth, replenishes nutrients, and stimulates new growth. It should not take another Pines Fire to increase vegetation management activities in the Back Country. Prescribed burns, stepped up tree removal and the creation of defensible space around homes will help to create that healthy patchwork of brush that will ultimately protect our region from dreaded "superfires."



For more information about protecting your home from fire, please contact the San Diego County Fire Safe Council at (619) 562-0096.

As Prepared As Possible For the West Nile Virus

It was only a matter of time before the West Nile Virus made its way to California. Indeed, last month, the virus first showed up in mosquitoes collected in Imperial County.

Common in Africa and the Middle East, the virus can be transmitted from humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds.

The good news is less than one percent of people infected with the virus will develop serious illnesses

such as encephalitis and meningitis. Others will have only mild symptoms like fever, headaches and body aches. Most will not experience any illness. These five simple steps can protect your family:

- Don't spend time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially dusk and dawn.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight fitting screens.
- Eliminate all standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding.

The County Television Network will be airing a half-hour television special on the West Nile Virus during the month of September. Check the station's program schedule at www.ctn.org for days and times. Copies of the program are available for checkout at most County libraries.

For more additional information about West Nile Virus, visit www.westnile.ca.gov/.

Racers, Start Your Soap Boxes



She wasn't on a soap box. She was in a soap box. Earlier this summer, Supervisor Jacob was thrilled to take part in a soap box derby race sponsored by the La Mesa Kiwanis Club.

Racing against State Senator Dennis Hollingsworth, Jacob emerged victorious.

She also said she was glad the County's tough new street racing ordinance, which makes it illegal to cheer on dangerous street racers, applies only to motorized vehicles— not slowpoke soap boxes.

Join me for Coffee and Conversation

September 12, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Jimmy's Family Restaurant

9809 Campo Road

Spring Valley

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