

The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

December 2003

AFTER THE CEDAR FIRE

Health and Safety First in Burned Out Areas

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
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:
Barona
Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

At this very moment there exists an immediate threat to the health and safety of people living and working in areas hardest hit by the Cedar and Paradise fires.

Environmental health professionals warn that debris and ash from thousands of burned out homes is riddled with hazardous waste. If this waste is not immediately cleared, experts warn that winter rains may sweep the toxic sludge into streams, rivers, the ocean and even drinking water reservoirs.

Unfortunately, the safety of our water supply is just one of many problems facing fire areas. The massive scope of the fires and the debris left behind have turned whole communities into ticking-time bombs.

Imagine your children sifting through the waste of partially-melted car batteries, household chemicals, pesticides and paint. What if the standing water in your backyard pool becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes known to transmit the West Nile Virus?

Fire areas are already troubled by rats and other rodents on the hunt for food near surviving homes and temporary shelters. Residents live in fear of heavy rains because

much of the vegetation is gone, hillsides and canyons are extremely vulnerable to mudslides and flooding.

Supervisor Bill Horn and I are tackling this pressing problem before it becomes another disaster on par with Firestorm 2003. With the support of our colleagues on the Board, the County is funding an immediate

Imagine your children sifting through the waste of partially-melted car batteries, household chemicals, pesticides and paint...

and comprehensive clean-up effort. The effort will include debris removal and disposal in all areas affected by the fires and erosion control activities in areas already identified as at-risk for flooding.

The \$9.5 million Dollar price tag isn't small. But as any public health and safety expert can tell you, it is far cheaper than

the consequences of waiting too long. Currently, the County is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State Office of Emergency Services to hammer out a reimbursement plan. FEMA already indicated a willingness to pay back the County for all activities the law will allow, and FEMA is looking to the County for leadership when it comes to the logistics of the process.

Because the rainy season is upon us, I believe it is a race against mother nature to get the debris removal effort up and running. How important is it that we act now?

In a November 26 letter to the State Office of Emergency Services, County



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Calls for Consolidation of Region's Fire Agencies Growing Louder



The Cedar and Paradise fires have cast a bright new spotlight on a decades-old effort to bring the region's patchwork of more than 50 independent fire agencies together under a consolidated command. When it comes to consolidation, one group has been particularly active: The County's Task Force on Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services— an entity I initiated with the help of regional fire experts in 1999.

The Task Force has done more than just quietly amass nearly \$7 million dollars in additional funding for fire districts,

particularly agencies in the rural areas. Task Force members have pushed long and hard for unification because they know from firsthand experience that our region desperately needs a more seamless, coordinated firefighting force, one with consistent standards, training, and equipment. Such an entity would surely be more effective and cost efficient.

In the spring of last year, the Task Force initiated what's called a Municipal Service Review of every single fire protection agency in San Diego County. This review is the region's first legal and research-based step toward consolidation. Phase one of the review focuses on unincorporated fire agencies and will be made public this month. Phase two focuses on the rest of the region and will be completed early next year.

Next month, the Task Force's Regionalism Subcommittee is scheduled to present a timeline for consolidation which will give the region's its first glimpse at early plans for a regional agency. The timeline will also include funding options.

Last month, the San Diego County Fire Chiefs Association formally announced its support for a regional firefighting agency. The Board of Supervisors followed suit and voted unanimously to support the Task Force's call for consolidation.

The ultimate decision will be put to a vote of the people, but the growing number of credible voices calling for consolidation should go a long way toward convincing the voters of this region that we are altogether safer from fire when we coordinate-not separate- our skills, knowledge and resources. †

Health and Safety
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Environmental Health Director Gary Erbeck, wrote, "It is critical to public health and safety that all ash and debris of the completely and partially burned homes in the disaster area created by Firestorm 2003 are *promptly* removed, and the resulting hazardous materials and debris are properly disposed of to eliminate further risk to public health and safety." It should be noted that in his letter, Director Erbeck underlined the word "promptly."

Thanks to structurally-balanced budgeting and years of strict fiscal discipline, San Diego County is one of very few in the State with emergency reserve funds available. We can and must act now to protect lives. If toxic debris removal and erosion control to prevent mudslides in the wake of the single largest fire disaster in State history doesn't warrant the use of these funds, then in my mind, nothing does.

This region has already experienced the financial and emotional destruction brought about by one massive public health and safety disaster. It shouldn't take a second one to convince us that health and safety come first in burned out areas. †



A Season of Rebuilding for Fire Victims



The season of goodwill upon us. I wish you and your family a safe and joyous holiday season. I'd also like to take this opportunity to send my sincerest good wishes to communities still rebuilding from the recent wildfires. Now and in the months ahead I pledge to do whatever I can to make life easier for victims.

Below, readers will find a list of communities still in need this holiday season. Please keep them in your thoughts.

Ramona
Ramona Relief Fund
 Ramona National Bank
 1315 Main Street
 Ramona, CA 92065
 (760) 788-8788

Alpine
Alpine Fire Fund
 1830 Alpine Blvd.
 Alpine, CA 91901
 (619) 445-7330

Mussey Grade Road
Alliance Fire Victim Fund
 Washington Mutual
 1467 Main Street
 Ramona, CA 92065
 (760) 445-7970

Crest
Friends of Crest
 113 North Park Drive
 Crest, CA 92021
 (619) 447-7471

Lakeside
Lakeside Fire Relief Fund
 Washington Mutual Bank
 9558 Wintergardens Blvd.
 Lakeside, CA 92040
 (619) 561-6365

Julian
Julian Fire Relief Fund
 Valley Independent Bank
 P. O. Box 1897
 Julian, CA 92036
 (760) 765-2765

Lakeside Teens Dig New Teen Center



Cool Hangout: Supervisor Jacob joins teens to open their long-awaited Center in Lakeside.

Five years in the making, Lakeside teens now have a building all their own. Supervisor Jacob was thrilled to join teens to celebrate the grand opening of the long-awaited Lakeside Teen Center.

The Center is the new home of the exciting REC Club, a drop-in program that provides homework assistance, fitness programs, mentoring, counseling and many fun and educational classes including film production, arts and crafts, dance lessons, disc jockeying and music lessons.

Supervisor Jacob, who helped secure funding for the Center told the crowd that the building was part of a much bigger plan to provide a safe and livable community for youth to reach their full potential.

“The Lakeside teen center not only provides a safe environment for youth to gather and have fun, it’s a place where kids can develop social skills and healthy behaviors,” she told the crowd. “More than a hang out, the center is a place to learn and grow!”

Get The Jacob Journal!

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We hope to hear from you soon!

DEC-03

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