



The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Chairwoman Dianne Jacob

June/July 2004

LESSONS FROM THE FIRES

A Regional Approach to Fire Protection

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

San Diego County doesn't have a fire department. It has more than 60 fire departments. That's a lot of chiefs, a lot of fire board members and a whole lot of voices struggling to achieve consensus on fire safety issues, particularly during a crisis like the October 2003 Cedar Fire, the single largest fire disaster in California history.

The October fires exposed a litany of inadequacies in the way our region responds to disasters. A dire lack of resources tops that list, followed by insufficient communications equipment, poor management of vegetation, particularly in rural areas, and interagency squabbling among layers of government.

At a recent symposium hosted by the County, top regional firefighting minds agreed that the failings of last October were sad symptoms of a much larger problem: our system is dangerously fractured. It needs sweeping transformation.

Last month, at my request, the County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to begin to make that change. The effort is called regionalization, and although it won't be an easy process, it is one that cannot wait.

The County's Local Agency Formation Commission is working side-by-side with the Fire Chiefs' Association and the Task Force on Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services to develop a model fire and emergency medical system for the

“Indiscriminate wildfire doesn't know when it's crossing from one fire department's territory to another.”

- Dianne Jacob

entire region. This undertaking represents a monumental shift in the way our region has traditionally viewed fire protection. What exists now is a hodgepodge of agencies riddled with disparities in funding and service levels. What should exist is a seamless

blanket of coverage throughout the region. Indiscriminate wildfire doesn't know when it's crossing from one fire department's territory to another. We need a system that can respond to wildfire with uniform strength.

Regionalization doesn't automatically mean a single fire department for the region. It might mean that fire agencies form a joint powers authority, as exists in Orange County. Experts crafting the model system might recommend what's called a functional consolidation— where agencies agree to merge specific activities like training or dispatch, sharing costs and improving coordination.

Whatever the shape of the entity, regionalization is the vehicle by which we



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Bark Beetle Battle

Federal dollars will help County combat destructive insect



Bugged: Crews work to remove beetle-ravaged trees.

Think the October fires eliminated dangerous loads of tinder-dry trees and brush in the Backcountry?

Think again.

Two-thirds of the County did not burn. Years of drought and the destructive Bark Beetle have wreaked havoc on the health of our forests and open spaces.

Foresters estimate that in some communities as much as 80 percent of pine trees are either dead or dying. This means many communities still face extreme fire danger.

Long before the October fires, Chairwoman Jacob zeroed in on the beetle infestation and helped proclaim a local state of emergency in November 2001.

Since then, the County has been working overtime to address hazardous conditions. Last month, the County nailed down nearly \$40 million from the federal government to get rid of dead and diseased trees. This long awaited funding will be put to work immediately to bring about healthier forest areas.

Already the County is trimming back trees along roads that serve as access and evacuation corridors. You may have seen crews in areas where the infestation is the greatest: Palomar Mountain, the greater Julian area, including Harrison Park, Cuyamaca, Laguna Mountain, Descanso and Pine Valley and the Lost Valley area near Warner Springs.

Property owners play a huge role in keeping vegetation safe on private lands. Find out more about brush clearing regulations and creating defensive space around structures. Check out www.sdcounty.ca.gov and click on the homepage of the Department of Planning and Land Use.

Watch for Tree Removal Along Roads in These High Risk Areas

- Palomar Mountain
- Highway 79 from Julian to Cuyamaca
- Los Coyotes Indian Reservation
- Heise Park

Regionalization

Continued from Page 1

can create a more coordinated defense against fire. Regionalization would help us to better manage existing resources like engines, aircraft and firefighters. It would help to ensure that radios and communications systems are compatible from one end of the County to the other. It would facilitate consistent brush clearing regulations and building code standards around the region. Overall, it would begin a new era of coordination— not separation— among fire agencies.

It must be noted that one of the biggest challenges facing our fire agencies is adequate long-term stable funding. As a regional fire and emergency network takes shape, the Board of Supervisors has asked a coalition of fire officials to develop a funding proposal for such a system. We don't yet know what that proposal will look like, but we do know that public safety requires the steadiest of revenue sources. We also know that property taxes are the most stable stream. I am committed to seeing that fire and emergency services receive their fair share of property taxes.

In my 2004 State of the County Address, I made it a goal to make our region safer from fire. Regionalization is the cornerstone of that promise.

Cool Zones Are New Hot Spots



The bears are back! Just in time for summer, the cute polar bear sticker on the outside of buildings, malls, businesses and community centers means the temperature inside is cool and safe.

More than 100 Cool Zones are open this month. These existing facilities help seniors and people susceptible to health-related illnesses beat the heat, save money on electric bills, meet new friends, and help the rest of the State conserve electricity. At select Cool Zones, community outreach specialists are available to help seniors enroll in energy savings programs.

For a Cool Zone near you call 1-800-510-2020

Don't Lose Your Cool This Summer

- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing.
- Drink water. Avoid drinks with alcohol and caffeine.
- Keep shades down, blinds closed and windows open.
- Air out hot cars before getting in them.
- Eat small meals and eat more often.
- Take cool baths or showers.

Community Happenings

JULIAN— After months of sweat and blisters endured by volunteers, major trails at



William Heise County Park are open after the October fires.

Volcan Mountain Open Space Preserve is open too.

Chairwoman Jacob thanked

AmeriCorps crew members, some from as far away as Mississippi and New York, who helped restore habitat and repair trails. Kurt Dalton, a Boy Scout from Julian worked on the trails in order to attain his Eagle Scout rank. Thanks Kurt!

ALPINE— Chairwoman Jacob was thrilled to take part in a groundbreaking ceremony for a new fire station in Alpine. The foothill community was hard hit by the Viejas Fire in 2001 and many homes were lost in the Cedar Fire last October.

CAMPO— Job-hunting in the Mountain Empire area just got easier. Chairwoman Jacob was glad to unveil a new job kiosk at the community center there. Check out the many job training opportunities.



Join Chairwoman Jacob for Coffee and Conversation

**June 24, 2004, 9:00 a.m.
Guy B. Woodward Museum,
645 Main Street, Ramona**

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We hope to hear from you soon!

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