



# Newsletter

Shela Boynton, Editor

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## Board of Directors

### Officers:

- Mike Esnard, President
- Ron Perry, 1st Vice President
- Larry Kueneman, 2nd Vice President
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- Tom McCullough, Treasurer
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- Mary Carroll, Office Assistant
- Edwina Scott, Grant Manager
- Don Patterson, Project Manager
- John Hauer, Project Manager
- Pat Boss, Project Manager
- Mike Kellner, Project Manager
- Constance Bell, Bookkeeper

## Mountain Disaster Preparedness

extends warmest holiday greetings to all our Hill family and friends.

In 2010, one of our biggest goals will be to recruit new members. MDP starts the New Year with a wonderful core of volunteers, but we are sorely in need of "fresh blood."

Please visit our new website at [www.mdp-idyllwild.com](http://www.mdp-idyllwild.com), email us your name and contact information at [MDPIDyllwild@gmail.com](mailto:MDPIDyllwild@gmail.com), and we will be sure you are on our email list so we can keep you abreast of our training exercises and events. 2010 will include some valuable radio classes, medical training for emergencies, and an emphasis on acquainting you with the DAS units spread around the Hill, as well as how you can be a part of making our home in the woods a safer place for all of us.

**Happy New Year  
Stay Warm and Safe  
and Please  
"BE PREPARED"**

**Veronica Alt, President  
MDPIDyllwild@gmail.com  
www.mdp-idyllwild.com  
Tel: 951-659-5642  
FAX: 951-659-5875**

## A Year of Partnerships and Commitment

### The Silent Valley Project Mike Esnard, President

This has been an extraordinary year for the MCFSC. We began the year finishing up one large grant while waiting for overdue funds to arrive on a larger grant. The funds, held up by an environmental concern, arrived in September as we were just about out of money.

While we waited, something noteworthy took place. The local contractors had clients who wanted their properties abated over the summer. The contractors wanted to help their clients with grant funds, but knew we did not have them pending resolution of the environmental problem. So the contractors agreed to go ahead with the work, trusting that we would be funded, but assuming all risk in case we were not. The contractors kept working throughout the summer and, when the funds did arrive, we were able to pay them. This was quite a success for the community.

This year also saw our largest single project take place. Silent Valley is on the north

side of the mountain in Poppet Flats where strong winds often blow through heavy chaparral. The roads are narrow and lined with thick brush. In the 2006 Esperanza Fire a decision was made to have the residents shelter in-place, as evacuation seemed too risky. No one was hurt as the fire burned around the community, thanks to a Calfire fuels project, but needless to say, this is a vulnerable area.

Pat Boss, one of our project managers, arranged this fall to do a major abatement project in Silent Valley. (See before and after photos below.) The job, worth \$60,000, is so large that all four local, licensed contractors are sharing the work. Calfire is also working to expand a fuelbreak on public land south of the valley. Together, these projects will leave this threatened area much safer.

Making all these good things happen is an incredibly effective staff. In addition to Pat, Don Patterson and Mike Kellner help manage abatement projects. Edwina Scott takes care of the grants process and Mary Carroll

handles our large database. New this year is John Hauer, who is working with the Forest Service to build a photo database of key points in the district to help measure vegetation growth.

On the volunteer side of the house are the famous Woodies who work dozens of hours each month abating properties and taking cords of wood to donate to The HELP Center to help people heat their homes this winter. We also have a skilled and active board. Tom McCullough brings his math talent to the position of treasurer, and Norm Walker brings lessons from a career as Forest Service fire fighter to the position of agency liaison.

We do have bumps and setbacks, but commitment to our mission keeps us moving, learning and improving. With the continuing help of our fire agency friends and the community, we will keep doing our part to ensure the safety of our beautiful mountain.



**TREE CARE AND FIRE ABATEMENT**  
**Deborah Geisinger**  
**ISA Certified Arborist**

Living at the interface of wild areas means abatement is a year-round priority. Keeping a defensible space around your home and proper care for your trees and landscape go hand in hand. When blowing/raking needles/leaves away from structures, retain this valuable resource in a 6' ring around your trees. Oaks especially like their own leaves at their base. If you do not want to process this natural forest mulch, spread some chips or buy processed bagged mulch. Whatever you decide to use, apply a 2" layer around the base of your trees to retain moisture and regulate the temperature. See the "trees are good" website below for this and other valuable tree basics.

For those of you stewarding mature, native trees that have lost their native duff/mulch layer, AND they did not show healthy new growth this year, the following message is for you!! The bark beetles never go away! And now we may be threatened by one attacking the oaks. One of the very best ways to protect trees and other exotic plants from pest infestations is to provide them with all the resources needed so they can create their own defenses. Exotic species typically need other protections as well, but native (indigenous) trees should be able to make it on proper health care alone. Just like you and me, healthy trees are less likely to contract illness, "bugs", than stressed ones. Plants need three main resources: light, water and nutrients (food). We usually don't have to worry about light (unless there's overgrowth), so I will focus on water and food.

The mountain finally received a good amount of moisture with the rain in December. The cold temperatures and moist days provide a signal to stop regular irrigation water and to start monitoring the natural water. Native trees actually need the long, hot summer rest of 45-60+ days without water. However, now that the trees are expecting moisture, regular intervals are imperative. Start counting the days after each storm. If we go more than 30 days

without another appreciable amount, it's time to provide water.

In addition, trees need a 1-2" layer of active mulch under the canopy, and further when possible, to retain this precious gift from the sky. Even wood chips will help if not piled too deep. But if this layer is lacking, the tree is likely to become stressed. A regular watering schedule for mature trees is helpful, but the decomposed granite soils on our mountain tend to leach away any available nutrients and frequently become compacted. A regular feeding schedule can get your soils back on track and facilitate the nutrient cycling process trees perform to grow and stay healthy.

**PRIORITIZING TREE MAINTENANCE**

Most people know that trees are valuable assets. A study in Washington showed a single mature tree contributing 6.4% of a property's appraised value. When deciding to invest in the proper maintenance of your trees, you should first make a priority list. Focus on your most valuable and desired trees: those within the 10' defensible space of your structures first. Prioritizing tree maintenance can look something like this:

- Trees built into the architecture of a structure, deck or hardscaped area should be assessed for stress from elevation changes, root damage, etc. Special care should be given to these trees as the cost to preserve them is usually much less than the cost of removing and replacing them, and/or remodeling your home or deck.
- Exotics (non-natives), newly planted trees (2 yrs or less) and especially fruit trees need close attention to food and water. Gophers must be controlled first.
- Native pine and oaks with a thin (less than 2") or no mulch layer should be mulched. If you can't mulch, at least feed them somehow.

- Trees that have a footpath or driveway within 6' of the trunk need to be aerated every 3-5 years; there's compaction if a shovel is difficult to push in. No oxygen means no uptake.
- Trees with a thinning canopy: less than 30% of original canopy, branch dieback or losing whole branches each year.

Over or under-watering leads to 80% of the problems in your landscape. Mature trees need a deep watering (18-24" reaches 80-85% of the absorbing roots) every 30-45 days with a rest in between. Native oaks should receive NO additional water during hot, dry summer months. Irrigation or gray water should NEVER flow to mature trees on a daily basis year-round. If you irrigate natives through the summer, stop now and make a plan to water next spring and again in the fall as needed and then only sparingly through the summer.

Bare mineral soil may seem the most fire-safe way to be, but this allows for erosion, leaching of soil nutrients, compaction that limits oxygen needed for water and nutrient uptake, and provides higher temperatures that damage delicate absorbing roots and limits water retention. This leads to branch dieback and more needle drop. Therefore, 2" of mulch is safer than 80' of dying tree.

Cultivation or trenching within 6' of any tree is discouraged. If trenching, structural roots can be protected by going under or around rather than cutting through.

Before building any structure or hardscape, be sure to provide the proper protection for mature trees 6-10' out from the trunk.

*For more information, visit [www.treesaregood.org](http://www.treesaregood.org).*

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**EDITOR'S NOTE: Idyllwild residents should check with IFPD regarding the above suggestions for mulching within 10' of a structure. Exceptions to their policy may be allowed, but only as part of a professionally designed plan.**

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**MCFSC Year-End Figures**

**364 Properties Abated**  
**390 Acres Thinned**  
**\$813,475 Put to Ground**  
**1065 Tons Biomass Processed**

**MCFSC OFFICE HOURS**  
**Mon-Fri**  
**9:00-12:00, 1:00-4:00**

**A HEALTHY FOREST IS A**  
**HEALTHY HABITAT**

**!FREE WATER!  
A \$4750 VALUE!**

**Doris Lombard  
Board of Directors**

The amount of water in 1" of rain on one acre is 27,150 gallons. The recent rainstorm dropped 2 1/2" over our 2.42 acre yard. That means 67,875 gallons of water landed in our yard in less than 24 hours! Those tanker trucks you see delivering water in the summer can carry about 2,500 gallons. For 67,875 gallons, that's over 27 truckloads. And at \$175 per load, that's \$4,751! Thank heaven for rain and snow!

We are learning to do what we can to manage that water and to maximize its availability for a healthy forest.

An interconnected series of terraced-raised berms and basins captures, retains and allows the ground water to soak deep into the soil and even deeper into the water table. These photos show how it can be done one step at a time as you gradually observe and plan for expanding your system for the next storm.

Gutters catch and channel large amounts of water. Watch its flow and scoop out a basin to slow it down and let it soak into the ground. With the soil you removed, build a dirt dam or berm to hold it in.

The next time it rains (or use a hose to fill the berm), see where the water goes as it overflows. Build another water catchment basin and wall it in with a berm. Soil, rocks, raised gravel pathways, and cedar logs all can work to fortify your berms.

Cedar or other woodchips alone on a slope will not stop erosion. Native plants, abated and landscaped into islands of vegetation separated by open spaces, break up fuels. Raised rock, gravel or dirt pathways double as water retention catchments and as mini-fuel breaks.

Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands, Brad Lancaster (2006) Rainsource Press has a wealth of ideas. Start simply and expand your rainwater harvesting system as you can. Every drop you save serves to preserve our forest. Good luck!



**CONGRATULATIONS  
VIV LARSON**



**MCFSC Citizen of the Year**

**CHIEF KEVIN TURNER  
RETIRES**  
Blair Cenicerros, Secretary

Cal Fire Chief Kevin Turner announced his retirement at the December MAST meeting, effective December 17. As MCFSC President Mike Esnard said at the meeting, "The Fire Council owes you a huge debt."

Kevin has been the go-to guy for various council problems regarding funding and grant requirements that have emerged over the years. He has guided the council through a number of difficulties, most recently helping us navigate through Fish and Wildlife concerns on our Anza project. Issues regarding a listed species of butterfly threatened to hold up the abatement of brush along roads that fire equipment would need to access during a fire. Meanwhile, the grant deadline was looming. In a three-way conference call with Mike Esnard and Fish and Wildlife, Kevin was able to bring about an agreement that enabled us to continue.

He also worked out an arrangement with Riverside County for MCFSC to utilize funds for abatement in partnership with the county. He is a problem solver who can work his way around obstacles that frustrate others.

Mountain Area Safety Task Force has benefited from Kevin's leadership. Over the years, he has scheduled and skillfully chaired its meetings.

Kevin will be sorely missed, but we wish him well in his retirement. He certainly deserves it.

**\$2,000,000.00**  
Liability Insurance

**\$1,000,000.00**  
Workman's Comp Insurance

**\$1,000,000.00**  
Fireman's Fund Insurance

**MOUNTAIN FIRE ABATEMENT**

Tree Removal  
Trimming  
Topping  
Felling Service

Locally owned and operated  
Uniformed Professionals  
Abatements to code

**And Tree Service**

*Protect yourself and your property: Always ask for a copy of license, liability insurance and Workers Compensation Ins. for your records before any work is started on your property.*

- Members of the California Tree Trimmers Association
- Members of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)
- Members of the Western Chapter ISA- #CH-08164
- Members of the Associated California Loggers (ACL)

**(951) 659-1157 • (951) 659-5590 fax**

State Lic. #642638 C-27, D-49, C-61 • State Timber Operator's Lic. #A10209  
ISA Member #CH-08164

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- Contractor for Mountain Community Fire Safe Council
- Workman's Comp Insurance: \$1,000,000
- General Liability: \$2,000,000
- Logger's Insurance: \$1,000,000

Cell: (951) 206-9671  
Phone: (951) 659-3676  
Fax: (951) 659-9996  
**Mike & Emily Pearson**



Pearson left donated the tree used for the 1997 Tree Management. He also regularly donates firewood to the HELP Center for those in need.



**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**  
(\$10 per person or \$20 for family)

Return to:  
MCFSC  
PO Box 507, 25380 Franklin Dr.  
Idyllwild, CA 92549-0507

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_

(Mailing AND Street Address) (Circle-Anza, Idyllwild, Mtn. Center, Pine Cove, Pinyon) \_\_\_\_\_

(City State and Zip) \_\_\_\_\_

(Phone) \_\_\_\_\_ (Email address) \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive a newsletter via email, please send your email address to [exec-dir@MCFSC.org](mailto:exec-dir@MCFSC.org).

The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the options or policies of the California Fire Safe Council or the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the California Fire Safe Council or the U.S. Government.

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