

Firehouse

The Newsletter of the Mariposa Pines • Jerseydale Fire Safe Committee

I S S U E N U M B E R F O U R

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale Fire Safe Committee Newsletter.

About the Committee. The Mission of the Committee is to preserve the natural and man-made resources in the Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale Area by mobilizing the residents to make their homes and neighborhoods fire safe. It is also the intent of the Committee to acquire land, raise money and build a Firehouse/Community Building for the good of the community. The Area covers all private property from the intersection of Jerseydale Road and Triangle Road north. Our General Meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month at the Jerseydale Fire Service Station at 7:00 pm.



Election time is here!

Every year, our committee needs to elect new officers. Myself, Treasurer Lyman Tracy, and Secretary Tom Atkins are asking you to consider a leadership role in the Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale Fire Safe Committee. The elections are set to take place at our regular August 20th meeting and we need your input and your thoughts about our direction over the next few years.

Our committee as a whole benefits from a larger involvement of the people we represent. The more people involved, the greater the good we can accomplish. Won't you consider enriching us with your presence?

We are seeking nominations and hope you will consider nominating someone you believe could serve our community in this way.

If you would like be considered for a position of leadership, or know of someone who would enjoy working on the Fire Safe Committee, please forward names and phone numbers to:

Dennis Lagutaris midcalsupply@sti.net

or Lyman Tracy llmjtracy@sti.net

or Tom Atkins atkins@sti.net

See you on August 20th at the Jerseydale Fire Service Station, 7:00 pm.

PS: Maybe Tom will make some of his famous cookies.

Sincerely,

Dennis Lagutaris, *Chairman*

Learn What the Main Issues Are About CSA 3, aka Prop. 218.

First, this is what it's NOT about. It's not about what hasn't been done in the past. It's not about spending taxpayer's money on things like the arts and tourism (this county relies heavily on tourism!). It's not about if we can find money somewhere else. It's not about if you don't have fire insurance anyway. It's not about why the few have to pay for all. It's not about only purchasing a few engines and looking for more money later. And it's certainly not about if you voted "no" will you be put on a Do Not Respond list!

Here's what it IS about. It's about time. We don't have time to worry about the past! We don't have time to try to get the money elsewhere which could take months or years. The (ISO) Insurance Services Office is NOW looking at areas like ours to cut their losses from last year's SoCal fires. Talk to your insurance agent. You will probably get told that if the CSA passes, it won't lower rates, but if it doesn't pass, your payments will increase significantly, or be so high you may not be able to afford it. Your coverage might be dropped when the policy comes due. This is happening now all over California with one insurance company in particular. You could also get put into the assigned risk pool and be at the mercy of whoever will take you.

The ISO also doesn't care if we have a few new engines and are looking for more money to buy more later. The whole fire department is assessed. Three or four new engines wouldn't be enough.

The CSA is also about our area's frail economy. As we all know, any natural disaster that

comes our way can be devastating. The disaster that is headed our way is not natural, but possibly human caused. Human caused in that a failure to pass the CSA could have far reaching ramifications that could turn this area into a third world county. Think of it...if it becomes nearly impossible to get affordable homeowner insurance, that means no mortgaging of any kind, no home building, no home sales, no new businesses and no tourists. In the blink of an eye we could become the proverbial ghost town. Highway 140? That road goes to nowhere!

As for the few paying for all? Not necessarily true. Renters will pay their share if the land lord passes the expense on to their tenants. The sad part is that if everyone who pays the \$80 had that kind of attitude, they won't worry about their neighbor's house. Is yours the only one that should be saved? Definitely not! In a fire, every house is a potential hazard regardless of who paid and who didn't. When that pager goes off at 2 a.m. the volunteers aren't thinking about such things.

There has also been a concern voiced about why only developed properties would be assessed. That is a simple matter of who is mainly responsible for what. Although mutual aid is rendered in fire as well as medical calls, undeveloped land is considered wild land and is primarily the responsibility of CalFire. The national forest is U.S. Forest Service, and structures are County Fire. Thus, there is a direct connection to the assessment.

The state is also planning on setting up a secure funding stream to enhance its firefighting capabilities. None of it will effect the county fire department as it is mainly directed at the state level during fire season.

One last thing the CSA is about is medical assistance. Maybe your house will never catch fire, or maybe there will never be a wildfire, but almost assuredly many of us will be involved in some kind of medical emergency at some point, be it a health issue or an accident. This county can't afford to contract to other agencies such as CalFire. They require full time paid staffing at each fire station along with equipment.

Please, please, please if you haven't already voted on CSA 3 get educated on these issues!

Lorie Setterberg

Fire Safety More Than a Cause for Mariposa Woman

Group organizes efforts to prevent blazes in woody landscape.

By Doane Yawger

Reprinted from the Merced Sun-Star

MARIPOSA -- One of Mariposa's charms is its woody nature. But the lush, overgrown look that's typical of a mountain county can be a mixed blessing, particularly in times of drought when things that are normally green turn brown.

Jan Hamilton has been a Mariposa resident since 1990; her family owns a ranch which was purchased in 1940. However, the rural setting is not without its risks.

The Oliver Fire which has been burning over parts of Mariposa County recently worries Hamilton. If the wind were to blow just right, the fire could come over a couple of ridges and endanger her home. Smoky clues to the fire's fury are everywhere.

For Hamilton, a retired Realtor who moved to Mariposa from Pleasanton, fire safety has been a near and dear cause. She heads the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council, a group that works on several fronts to make the community safer from its greatest peril, wildland fires.

Keeping Mariposa properties safe from fire is an ongoing struggle. The Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit of CalFire is in the midst of its annual fire hazard reduction inspection program. Firefighters say the most important preventive step homeowners can take is to clear flammable vegetation at least 100 feet from all structures, Chief Mikel Martin said.

There are about 23,000 homes involved in Mariposa County, according to Karen A. Guillemain, CalFire fire prevention specialist. Fifteen of the 21 communities listed in the Federal Register are at-risk from wildfires.

Hamilton said the Fire Safe Council, formed in January 1998, is not a membership organization, per se. It holds monthly general meetings and has a series of smaller committees in some of the 22 communities within Mariposa County. People are active when there's a brush-clearing project in their area.

Hamilton praises Kimberly Bullock, who functions as the organization's executive director. Bullock excels as a grant writer and the

council's success is a combination of her expertise and the citizens' involvement themselves, Hamilton said.

Earlier this month, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors approved \$159,048 in federal Title III funds for the Fire Safe Council to use for the next three fiscal years. This money is used in conjunction with a \$99,970 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and a \$117,450 grant available this fall from the U.S. Forest Service.

The council owns a brush chipper and contracts crews to use it to reduce accumulated brush and debris, Hamilton said. Cal Fire determined since the Fire Safe Council was formed in 1998, violations of Public Resources Codes mandating minimum clearance around homes have dropped 31 percent in Mariposa County.

The group partnered with the Bureau of Land Management in 2003-2005 to construct about five miles of shaded fuel break on a ridge above Greeley Hill and collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service in 2005-2006 to construct about 1½ miles of shaded fuel break on ridges above Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale areas. Between 2006-2008, the group is in the midst of constructing six miles of shaded fuel break along Stumpfield Mountain and Watt roads.

Hamilton said the Fire Safe Council is similar to Neighborhood Watch, but with a different point of view. California's fire season is fast becoming a year-round affair and there are challenges with a wildland-urban interface.

If the defensible space buffer advocated by Cal Fire is followed correctly, people's houses have a chance of surviving a wildland fire. If firefighters can park their trucks safely on people's property and there's a chance of saving a home from approaching flames, homeowners certainly will benefit, Hamilton said.

Hamilton said Mariposa is a wonderful community and she has great respect for all firefighting agencies. While the Fire Safe Council isn't regulatory in any way, she hopes its mission keeps her surroundings green -- not fire-place black.



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