

California Fire Safe Council

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Fire Line

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Contra Costa County Supervisor Fights Wildfire

John Gioia may not have been wielding a fire hose, but when Contra Costa County's Supervisor hosted a defensible space workshop last year, he worked shoulder to shoulder with Contra Costa County and El Cerrito Fire Protection Districts and Diablo Fire Safe Council to save lives and homes.

Together this battalion of informers brought a wealth of information to attendees including appropriate landscape plants and techniques for defensible space, fire safe home retrofits, and making sure address markers are visible to firefighters. Most importantly, speakers drove home the point that the most important person protecting a home from wildfire is not the firefighter but the property owners and that fire prevention is their responsibility.



Thanks, Supervisor Gioia, for being part of our Fire Safe team!

Yosemite Foothills Project—An “ACE” In Hand

Yosemite Foothills Fire Safe Council (YFFSC) completed two clearinghouse-funded fuel reduction projects in the communities of Hells Hollow and Whites Gulch, near Groveland. To accomplish the thinning and brush removal, YFFSC worked with an American Conservation Experience or “ACE” crew. “We have used ACE crews since 2007, and they give us both great production and flexibility for a very reasonable rate,” said Kelly Bearden, Chair and Executive Director of the Yosemite Foothills Fire Safe Council.

ACE is a non-profit organization in Flagstaff, Arizona, with California crews based in Santa Cruz. Crews of young adults volunteer from around the world. Members typically stay for three months in order to experience a variety of conservation projects like trail maintenance, meadow restoration and re-vegetation work. The 10-12 person crews include supervisors, AmeriCorps members, and volunteers.

Congratulations to YFFSC on the fuel reduction that has been accomplished, and best wishes to the ACE crew members. California's communities and forests are more fire safe thanks to your efforts.



From the Desk of Pat Kidder

The California Fire Safe Council starts off the New Year with a wide range of challenges. The past Chairman, Bruce Turbeville retired from the California Fire Safe Council as Chairman and CEO. Bruce will still be Chairman of the Board's Advisory Council. The Board will be able to count on Bruce for counsel and suggestions in this role. With Bruce's retirement, the Board is taking the opportunity to change the organization of the Board and review Staff activities. The immediate focus will be on current and future federal funding through the Grants Clearinghouse for local Fire Safe councils.

The existing funding will keep CFSC very busy through calendar year 2011. Future federal funding for additional grants to local Fire Safe Councils in 2011 at this time is non-existent. Out year funding in 2012 looks to be non-existent at this time. The focus of the Board is to work with the federal agencies in 2011 and 2012 to restore funding for the Clearinghouse. In addition the Board is working with state and federally elected officials to highlight the effectiveness of the local Fire Safe Councils with the federal funding they received through these Clearinghouse grants. To this end, the CFSC Board has put forth considerable effort to contact the key people within the agencies and elected officials explaining the effectiveness of local Fire Safe Councils and the local Councils' ability to implement projects that are strategic to protecting communities from wildfire.

The efforts by the Board members have been and are to be appreciated as they certainly have been going the extra mile to show the effectiveness of the local Fire Safe Councils statewide. This effort needs to be highlighted by not only CFSC Board members, but also by all of the local Fire Safe Councils' participants with agencies and elected officials. As we know the Title II and Title III programs within the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act have greatly assisted with the funding for many Fire Safe Council coordinators and the promotion of Fire Safe and Firewise communities. It is possible the "Rural School Bill" will sunset after this year. The picture for funding local Fire Safe Councils is not encouraging, but accurate.

The bright spot is the continued effort of your Fire Safe Councils to collaborate at the local level to mitigate the effects of catastrophic wildfires on your communities and the surrounding landscapes. It will be your past and current successes at the local level that will bring funding back. Federal agency leadership appreciates and admires your efforts, but they also are dealing with uncertain funding at this time. The Board is committed to continue to work with local Fire Safe Councils and funding agencies to get through the current uncertainty with funding.

Our mission is clear, but we may have to move slower than we want, at least for now.

Request for Grant Applications Announced

The California Fire Safe Council's innovative online grants application system is now receiving requests for wildfire prevention funding. Although specific information about amount of funds, program and match requirements and sources of funding is not yet available, previous federal agencies supporting Clearinghouse projects have included the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. Grants approved by the independent grant review committee in previous years have included hazardous fuel reduction, creation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans, creation and dissemination of informational/educational materials, and maintenance projects.

New and noteworthy this year are a limit of \$200,000 per organization, a detailed Request for Application, and a useful online tool for more thorough project planning. Please visit the Clearinghouse website, www.grants.firesafecouncil.org for more information. The schedule for workshops to assist grantseekers has not as yet been confirmed; updates will be posted on the website.

Deadline for submissions is midnight, April 1, 2011

Survey Says...

Community surveys are a great way to find out what your neighbors need and want from your local Fire Safe Council. The leaders of the Westhills Fire Safe Council wanted to make the survey easy to access, complete and submit, so they used an online survey tool called Survey Monkey to help them achieve these goals. This online resource allows users to create unique surveys to be completed online and tracks the results of those who respond.

Sue Jennings of the Westhills FSC remarks that the online survey made it easy for both the Fire Safe Council and the residents. She was able to create questions in all formats – true/false, multiple choice, fill-in response – and add the Fire Safe Council logo to the form. The online tool also provided summaries and graphs of the results, making it easy for leaders to analyze the data and share results with the community.

For the residents, the process was equally convenient. FSC volunteers handed out calling cards with the website where residents could complete the survey online. They also offered paper copies of the survey for the less tech-savvy folks, the results of which were added by the Westhills leaders.

Upon collecting all the surveys, Westhills FSC provided a report to summarize their findings. With 44% of the residents completing the survey, they found the results to be quite useful for planning Fire Safe activities and projects for their first year. With their first successful projects under their belt, the Council looks forward to another year of working with their community members to make Westhills more fire safe!

Potrero FSC Chipping Away at Defensible Space



With Bureau of Land Management funding through the Grants Clearinghouse, Potrero Fire Safe Council was able to purchase a chipper and tools needed to assist Potrero and Tecate community members in creating defensible space around their homes and structures. Volunteers chipped material for 75 homes, creating usable mulch for homeowners.

“Without the BLM grant we would not have had the equipment and resources to provide this much needed service. We worked hand in hand with CFSC on how to best utilize our grant funds and we learned many ways to help and educate our communities,” said Brenda Wise, the PFSC Coordinator. “Our goal is to continue to provide chipping and clearing services for our communities to help make our community fire safe”.

Remembering Jim Villeponteaux

A ceremony in the Yreka area dedicated the Oak Valley Shaded Fuel Break to the memory of Jim Villeponteaux, who passed away before he was able to see one of his pet projects completed. Jim was a Fire Safe Council champion in Siskiyou County, —he helped 21 local Councils get off the ground! Jennifer Silveira of the Yreka Area Fire Safe Council recalled, “Jim had a way of sharing knowledge with you without making you feel stupid. ... he was a real model for not giving up, and at the same time not pushing things past the point where it was no longer productive.”

Jim’s dedication was not lost on the beneficiaries of his energy. Yreka Area Fire Safe Council Cooordinator Jan Johnston told those gathered on the November Tuesday. “It’s a way to get to know your community and work toward a common goal. I’m not sure that, without Jim’s interaction, we would have had a fire safe council here,” adding that the project – and the creation of the Yreka council –was Villeponteaux’s brainchild. He will be missed.



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Highway 108 Fire Safe Council Protects 1,100

Congratulations to the Highway 108 Fire Safe Council on the completion of their *Mt. Provo Shaded Fuel Break (Parts A and B)* in Tuolumne County. The project helps to protect 428 homes and 1100 residents by treating three ridges between 3016 and 4060 feet in elevation on the south flank of the mountain. These two clearinghouse projects, funded by the US Forest Service, make up 2.6 miles of a 31 mile long strategic fuel break that includes both private and public land designed to protect communities along the Highway 108 corridor. Both mastication and hand work were needed to complete 130 acres of clearing, a job well done!



BEFORE: Unable to see the forest for the fuel loading



AFTER: By removing understory growth, crews were able to break up horizontal continuity that