

First Homes Completed Following Jesusita Fire

By Laurie Guitteau

Congratulations to Jean and George Rybnicek at 1297 Tunnel Road who are the first to receive a final inspection and return to their new home after the Jesusita Fire! George was determined to get back home as quickly as possible, and he did. George credits his contractor, Muracchioli Design and Construction of Cambria, for rebuilding their house so quickly and within budget. Though it's great to have their own house again, says Jean, she misses all the things that had made it their home. Anyone who has ever lost a home in a fire understands the bittersweet homecoming.

Roger McClellan at 2233 Las Canoas is very close to his final inspection. He is just waiting for a railing that he is having custom-made in Mexico. Both Rybnicek and McClellan started the rebuilding process immediately after the fire and both built using the same footprint, which certainly speeds up the process.

Mike McClellan, Roger's son, is in construction, so he knew exactly what to do

and started before the smoke had cleared. He ordered a septic report, a survey, and a soils test immediately and had plans being drawn within a week after the fire.

A stand of eucalyptus trees that contributed to the loss of their home was removed after the fire using the Fire Safe Council grant money that the Mission Canyon Association had received. The McClellans' new house and landscaping is much more fire resistant.

According to Petra Leyva in the Santa Barbara County Planning Department, 25 permits have been issued as of October 1 for dwellings. Numerous others have been issued for repairs and for accessory structures. Three submittals are currently undergoing plan checks. The canyon is slowly coming back to life.



Top photo: The McClellan house on Las Canoas.

Bottom photo: Jean and George Rybnicek, home again on Tunnel Road.

PHOTOS: Laurie Guitteau

Rebuild Efforts: Making Steps Forward

By Nancy Keltner

Since I lost my home in the Jesusita Fire on May 6, 2009, I have been on an unplanned and uncharted journey of discovery dealing with the difficult insurance claim



process, the mortgage bank paper chase, the S.B. County Planning & Development (P&D), the S.B. Fire Department, and others in an effort to recover and rebuild my home and my life. The process continues 18 months after the fire, and I've had to get creative about day-to-day survival and moving forward to rebuild my home.

In meetings at P&D and with the Fire Department, I have learned that new building requirements will go into effect on January 1, 2011, that will add costs to your rebuild budget. P&D will close from December 24 through January 3; thus, **December 23, 2010**, would be the

The rainy-day tarp solution for our leaky motor home and outdoor kitchen.

PHOTO: Nancy Keltner

deadline to submit plans under current codes. The second anniversary of the fire—**May 5, 2011**—potentially triggers two deadlines.

First, for owners of non-conforming dwellings to retain the non-conforming features, they must submit plans within 24 months of the fire or apply for an extension. An example of "non-conforming" would be a home built in 1953 with five-foot setbacks; current code puts setbacks at 10 feet. Second, trailers must be removed after two years, but P&D is currently allowing homeowners living in temporary trailers to remain until their home has been rebuilt. Since trailers may not stay indefinitely, case managers will eventually start to check on why the rebuild process has not yet begun.

If you have questions, comments, or would like to share your story, you can reach me at nancykca@gmail.com, or 637-0868.

How to Monitor Fire Weather

By Ray Smith

It never hurts to be too prepared, and MCA's new weather station can help us be forewarned about weather conditions that promote fire. This weather station may be an important asset in the ability of both the National Weather Service and our local fire departments to be able to call "red flag" conditions for this canyon, since Santa Barbara is famously rife with microclimates. The National Weather Service currently lumps together the area from roughly Gaviota down to Ventura as a single climate zone when considering whether a red flag should be in effect or not.

In order to monitor the microclimate within Mission Canyon, the Mission Canyon Association installed an accurate weather monitoring system, paid for via a grant from the California Fire Safe Council. In cooperation with the UCSB Department of Geography, Mission Canyon weather data can be accessed on the IDEAS website: zulu.geog.ucsb.edu/VDV/VV_Frame.php.

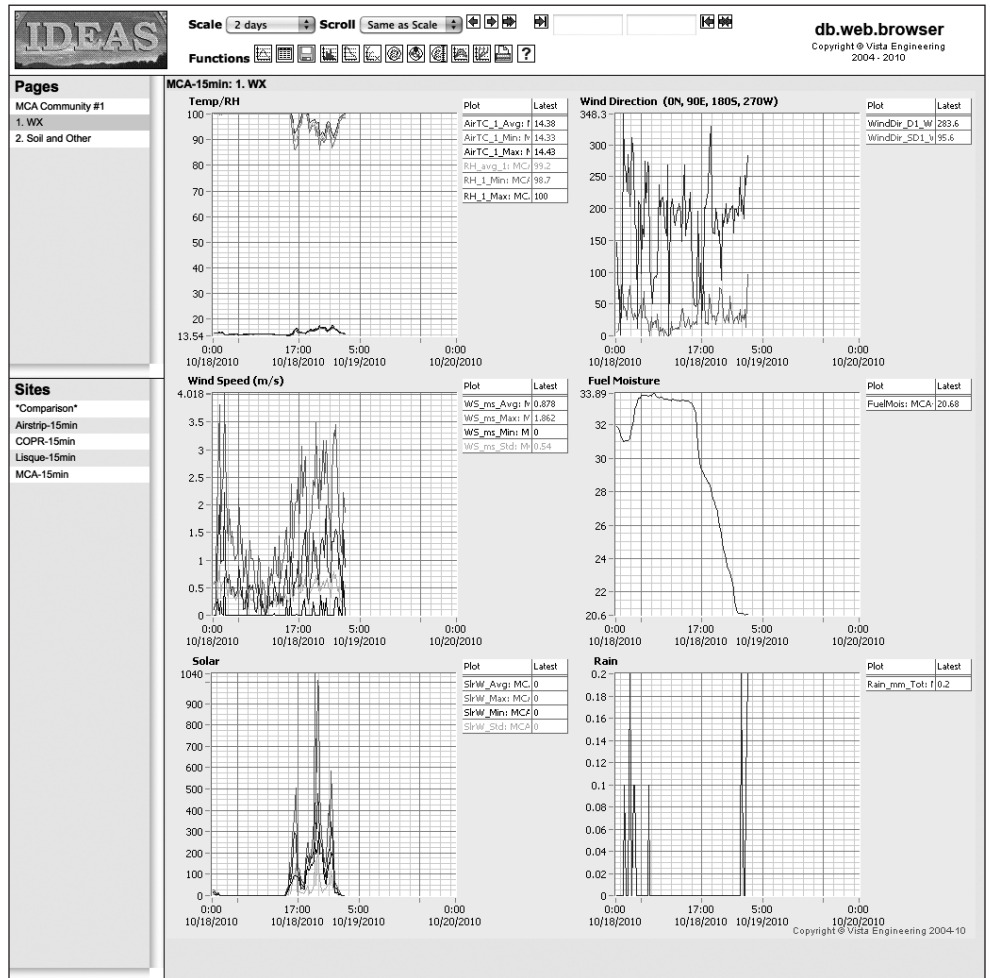
At that website, the introductory page provides information on using the site, and links to the instruments and what is being measured. On the left-hand column, select **MCA-15min** to access up-to-date graphs of weather, and fire-relevant, data.

The most important fire weather criteria are the "red flag" weather conditions. For our county, those are:

- Relative Humidity of 15 percent or less with sustained winds of 25mph with gusts to 35mph for 6 hours or more.
- Relative Humidity of 10 percent or less with sustained winds of 15mph with gusts to 25mph for 6 hours or more

Other important factors are temperature and fuel moisture, or how much moisture is contained in vegetation. As the air temperature increases, the likelihood of fire ignition also increases. For fuel moisture, the more moisture in a plant, the harder it is for it to catch fire. Conversely, the less moisture, the more easily it flames up. Fuel moisture levels become acute when they approach or are below the critical level of 60 percent.

The first page of the MCA weather station website shows graphs for temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, and fuel and soil moisture. It not only shows information that is updated every half-hour, but ever since the weather station began delivering data in May 2010, the historic information has been stored on the UCSB Geography Department server and can be accessed.



First page of the MCA weather station website showing graphs for temperature, relative humidity, wind direction, wind speed, fuel moisture, solar index, and rainfall. Information is updated every half-hour.

By viewing the relative humidity and wind speed information on the website, for instance, and checking against the criteria listed above, anyone with a computer can get an idea of how close to or far from fire weather Mission Canyon might be.

Some useful conversions:

- Temperature: Celsius to Fahrenheit: Multiply temperature in degrees Celsius by 9/5 and add 32 to obtain temperature in degrees Fahrenheit. (Or, more simply but less accurately, double the Celsius temp and add 32.)
- Wind Speed: 1 meter/second = 2.237 miles/hour
- Wind Direction: 0 and 360 degrees = North (in Mission Canyon that would be a down-canyon wind)
 - 90 degrees = East
 - 180 degrees = South (up canyon)
 - 270 degrees = West
- Time: Time is given in UTC (Coordinated Universal Time), a time standard based on International Atomic Time (roughly Greenwich Mean Time). To convert UTC

to local time, subtract 7 hours from PDT (Pacific Daylight-Savings Time), or 8 hours from PST (Pacific Standard Time).

Local fire weather information is officially provided by NOAA's National Weather Service Forecast Office (Los Angeles/Oxnard). The NWS website (www.wrh.noaa.gov/lox/) presents a map of Los Angeles vicinity weather, which includes Santa Barbara. For information regarding fire weather, look at the left-hand column under **Forecasts** and click on **Fire Weather**. This will display a map of Fire Weather Zones. Our local zone is Santa Barbara County South Coast—CAZ239 (roughly the front country from Point Conception to Ventura). Click on CAZ239 and you will obtain the fire weather forecast for this area. During Red Flag Warnings (sbcfire.com/sbcfdrfaz/RedFlag.pdf), monitor the fire weather forecast for CAZ239.

If you have any doubts about your fire preparedness, visit County Fire Station 15 at the foot of Mission Canyon Road, talk to the friendly firefighters there, and pick up a copy of the **Ready, Set, Go** manual.

NEWS IN BRIEF



After a long selection process, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden has appointed a new president, Steve Windhager, pictured above at his old job at the University of Texas' Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

SOURCE: Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

SBBG's New CEO

Starting December 1, the Botanic Garden will have a new president, Steve Windhager. "Chosen as the Garden's next leader because of the depth of his experience, his passion, and his dynamic leadership style," according to John Wiemann, the search committee chair, Windhager comes from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin. There, he was director of landscape restoration for the Sustainable Sites Initiative, an innovative program to create the landscape equivalent of LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) standards.

An expert on grasslands restoration and a fire ecologist, Windhager also wrote the section on fire in the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* published by Gale Press (London) in 2008. When it comes to botanic gardens, Windhager stated in a talk to SBBG members, their key elements should be conservation, applied ecology, sustainable design, and education at all levels, and that gardens could "change the world" through education and leading by example. After taking a look at the Sustainable Sites Initiative website, he may have something there.—RS

What Price Further Fire Protection?

What do you think? We know you're busy with the daily rat race that consumes us all, but we really do care what you think. Your

Mission Canyon Association Board members represent you, and in order to do that effectively, we need to know your concerns, your opinions.

MCA is currently exploring the creation of an assessment district to give us a dependable source of income for vegetation management and fire safety. We sent out a survey on this topic about two years ago.

With money from an assessment district, chipping would come to your driveway once a year instead of your having to haul your brush down to the Women's Club. Tunnel, Mission Canyon, Cheltenham, and Las Canoas would be cleared of brush and overhanging trees on a yearly basis, and a firebreak would be created and maintained on the hillsides toward the National Forest.

Higher assessments could accomplish even more such as more vigorous fire safety inspections and parking enforcement, more firebreak clearing, and roadside clearing along smaller streets. The assessment district will be designed to meet the needs of the residents.

Once we know we can move forward, an engineering company will do an official survey. This is a long and complex process as your friends in the city's wildfire assessment district can tell you. Meanwhile, MCA's board would like to hear from you. On an annual basis would you be willing to spend \$100, \$200, \$300 for improved fire safety throughout the canyon? Please write to webmaster@missioncanyon.org to let us know your thoughts. If you don't have

a computer, you can mail your comments to MCA, PO Box 401, Santa Barbara, CA 93102.

We want to hear from all residents, both for and against.—LG

Survivor Skills

How families cope in the face of extreme challenges such as the fires we've experienced in the past few years is a topic of study for researchers at UCSB and the Fielding Institute. Experts in the field of the psychosocial effects of disasters would like to interview families with children between the ages of 10 and 20 to learn about their experiences. The information will ultimately give professionals better training in how to help others in future disasters. A stipend of \$100 is available through their grant. Please contact Dr. Tamara Afifi at tafffi@comm.ucsb.edu or 893-4860.—JY

Warning!

Everyone driving Mission Canyon or Tunnel Roads these days has a tale to tell about being run off the road by large trucks—no, not just large, enormous. These trucks ignore the centerline, often on a curve, and most of us are too small to argue. As more and more residents begin the rebuilding process, there will be more and more pieces of large equipment using our narrow, winding roads. Drive defensively.—LG

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Your MCA Newsletter Fall 2010

New Homes Post-Jesusita!
 MCA Weather Station Goes Up.

New Road Sign

Don't miss the restored, historic sign at the wye of Mission Canyon and Tunnel Roads, replaced through the generosity of an anonymous donor. Those of us who drive by daily know that it was really showing its age. Now that it's lovely again, please, please do NOT put your yard signs and so forth on the actual sign. Instead, use a stick or post to plant your notices directly into the ground. That way we can keep our entrance beautiful for years to come.—LG



PHOTO: Lee Anne Dollison

C A L E N D A R

- Nov. 20–21** **Holiday Marketplace.** 10 a.m. S.B. Botanic Garden, 1212 Mission Canyon Road.
- Nov. 27–28** **Orchid Fall Show & Sale.** 10 a.m. Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol.
- Dec. 1** **County Planning Commission.** Hearing on ordinance to limit number of cars on residential properties. 9 a.m. 105 E. Anapamu St.
- Dec. 4** **Celebrating 224 Years of Christmas.** Old Mission Santa Barbara candlelight concert and tour on the Feast of Saint Barbara. 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 7** **MCA Board of Directors.** Meets first Tuesday of the month. All residents welcome. 7:30 p.m. MacVeagh House, S.B. Museum of Natural History.
- Dec. 13** **Morning Bird Walks.** Every Monday morning, walk around the Natural History Museum's oak woodland to listen and scan for migrant and resident birds (barring rain). 8:30 a.m.
- Dec. 21** **Total Lunar Eclipse.** Occurs shortly after midnight on the North American continent on this Winter Solstice night.
- Jan. 1-5** **Quadrantids Meteor Shower.** Up to 40 meteors per hour after midnight during peak periods January 3 and 4. Look toward the constellation Boötes.
- Jan. 4** **MCA Board of Directors.** All residents welcome. 7:30 p.m. MacVeagh House, S.B. Museum of Natural History.
- Feb. 1** **MCA Board of Directors.** All residents welcome. 7:30 p.m. MacVeagh House, S.B. Museum of Natural History.