

Rocky Nook Gets Cleaned Up



The Enviroscaping crew—(from left to right) Lucian Gonzales, Jesus Estrada, Alfredo Avila—put their all into this project, along with county staff and volunteers.

PHOTOS: Randy Reetz

by **Randy Reetz**

For years Rocky Nook Park, certainly one of our most peaceful and idyllic settings, has been the favored destination for hikers, dogwalkers, birdwatchers, and cyclists. Children love the playground while daycampers splash happily among Mission Creek's boulders and pools.

But every night, homeless folks clamber up and along the hillside above Mission Creek, bringing in (and leaving behind) their worldly goods — food cartons, liquor bottles, beer cans, clothing, and bags full of debris.

Neighbors, park users, and friends of Rocky Nook brought the county's attention to these problems. Key players—Paddy Langlands and Jeff Lindgren with County Parks, Supervisor Salud Carbajal and his staff, with urging from the Mission Canyon Association board and concerned neighbors—tackled the issue head-on. Langlands and Lindgren, accompanied by Sheriff's Lt. Butch Arnoldi and Dep. Johnson, walked the hillside, identifying the main debris sites and introducing themselves to the hillside campers found along the way.

After posting notices advising that camping was illegal under the county ordinances and that campers had to remove their personal property, on July 15 and 16, county contractor Enviroscaping, Inc., with assistance from Mission Canyon volunteers, swept through the hillside, collecting debris in trash barrels and plastic bags, humping the loads downslope and then up the creek banks to the Enviroscaping dumptruck. The task was not for the faint of heart: Hand-gathering decaying trash and debris into trash barrels and black plastic bags; balancing the 50-pound loads on one's shoulder while slipping down the steep hillside, through the poison oak; and then climbing the opposite embankment up to the waiting truck—all in the heat of the day and doing this all day for two days straight—was the stuff of herculean legend.

Workers removed 3,400 pounds of detritus from the Rocky Nook hillsides.

As well as the county folks involved, credit particularly goes to Paddy Langlands, who tackled this project from the beginning, personally doing the inspections, devising the plan of attack, bringing in the right personnel, and executing the work flawlessly. ♦

NEWS IN BRIEF

Jesusita Settlement

About 60 Mission Canyon homeowners settled a suit with Stihl Inc. at the end of July for an undisclosed sum of money for the damages they suffered from the Jesusita Fire. Their attorney, Brian Heffernan of L.A.'s Engstrom, Lipscomb & Lack, filed against Brian Larsen and Craig Ilenstein, who started the fire, and Stihl, manufacturer of the trimmers the two were using to clear the Jesusita Trail the morning the fire began. Fire investigators determined that either the Stihl blades striking rocks or exhaust from the gas-powered trimmers created sparks that smoldered until afternoon winds picked up and started the two-week-long fire. Heffernan contended that Stihl did not warn that its trimmers could produce sparks. Plaintiffs sought their out-of-pocket expenses to repair fire damage—and apparently received about 15 percent of that—and the total settlement is estimated to be in the millions of dollars.

Penn Estes Arrested

The owner of Green Building America was one of numerous contractors who swarmed our area post-fire, and she was bad news to many. After Penn Estes gained the trust of those who had lost their homes to the Tea and Jesusita fires, Santa Barbara district attorneys and investigators estimate she defrauded a dozen victims of about \$4.8 million. She was arrested in San Bernardino on June 4, and remains in Santa Barbara County Jail on \$4.5 million bail.

Museum Takes a Break

What are the sexiest things we can raise money for? asked Luke Swetland, the Museum of Natural History's new director, at MCA's board meeting in August. He was talking about the museum's reevaluation of its development plans, which are on hold for the summer. Museum staff and their consultants are looking at about two dozen of their most needed and most wanted projects, and talking with city planning staff about what it would really take to achieve them—and the

NEWS IN BRIEF

price tags attached. Refreshing current buildings and planning new exhibits in current galleries are among their thoughts, as well as how to resolve ADA access issues. Swetland plans to bring their decisions to his board and resume community meetings in the fall.

Safe Passage Update

City Council gave its thumbs-up to the Safe Passage project, which is moving along slowly; most recently an augmenting survey between Puesta del Sol and Foothill was provided by the county and the Museum of Natural History. Safe Passage now has about 27 stakeholders, monthly meetings, and is breaking down to task forces within the group. The task forces include design, finance, historical resources, and regulatory interfaces. So far, no critics of the process have spoken out. —Alastair Winn

Water Drips Upward

Although a number of MCA boardmembers visited Mayor Helene Schneider and City Councilmember Dale Francisco to protest the increase in water rates, the city raised the price of Mission Canyon water in July. The city stated that the water routes and pump stations necessary to serve the canyon were a genuine added expense, but, more convinc-

ingly, that to reduce Mission Canyon’s rate would require a vote by all who receive water citywide. —Ray Smith

Red Flag Conundrum

The Red Flag Warning called in late June put us all on high alert, but the weekend remained warm and pleasant, not broiling and windy. Nonetheless, the S.B. Botanic Garden closed for the duration—a requirement of its conditional use permit—cancelling the Isabelle Greene lecture scheduled for the evening. Red Flags used to be called two to three times a year; already, we’ve had two lasting for several days. The difficulties with weather prediction and the financial loss to the Garden prompted Garden director Steve Windhager to bring his problem to the Fire Safe Council and MCA’s board. The conversation continues with no resolution as yet.

Rebuild Stats

It’s been over four years since May 6, 2009, but a number of homes remain unfinished or quiescent. Petra Leyva at County Planning & Development tells us that of the 80 homes lost to Jesusita, 34 have received final permits for residence, 54 have been issued permits or are in review, and 13 seem not to be rebuilding.

How Do You Know?

For many of us, we heard first about Tea and Jesusita by a phone call from a friend or neighbor who happened to be listening to the news at the time. First responders are overwhelmed with help requests during emergencies, the county’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) recently reminded us. “In the first hour of an emergency, the people you will turn to for help are your neighbors,” said OEM. Develop an emergency plan with your neighbors—maybe over coffee or a potluck? Details about such plans can be found at espfocus.org when you click on “AWARE Plan.” Sign up for Nixle alert, which sends out a text message to your phone or email. Go to countyofsb.org/ceo/oem/ and click the Nixle logo.

Brush Day at Rockwood

Once again, MarBorg, Dan Upton Construction, and a whole lot of residents made Brush Day 2013 a success. We were able to remove over 17 tons of brush from the canyon. A special thanks to Station 15 for following us with their hoses so that Rockwood’s parking lot was pristine by the end of the day. ♦

About That Hot Stuff Again ...

by Jean Yamamura

The map on the next page tells the whole story: Jesusita burned in fits and starts, consuming some homes, leaving others intact. Though concentrated in the upper canyon, the fire also torched properties within densely populated Mission Canyon Heights at Tornoe, Montrose, and Edgemound.

Often people ask why one home was spared when its neighbor burned: our unscientific answer is fire-resistant construction and defensible space (and a lot of luck doesn’t hurt).

The sound of hammering this past month at a home toward the top of the canyon caught our attention. When we nosed around, we learned that this old house needed maintenance and repairs, and the homeowners had decided to do it in stages for affordability, and with an eye to fire resistance.

It had been time to prep and paint the wood siding, but instead of doing that expensive and time-consuming job, they decided to fur out the walls, place rock wool insu-

lation, and panel with Hardie board siding. Hardie board is one of many types of cement fiber “boards” that resemble wood and can be used for the look of a board-and-batten exterior. Not incidentally, Hardie board requires less maintenance and termites can’t eat it. Best of all, it’s fire resistant. This last feature was a life-saving factor for homes on Gibraltar during Tea Fire and on Palomino during Jesusita, which survived when their neighbors did not.

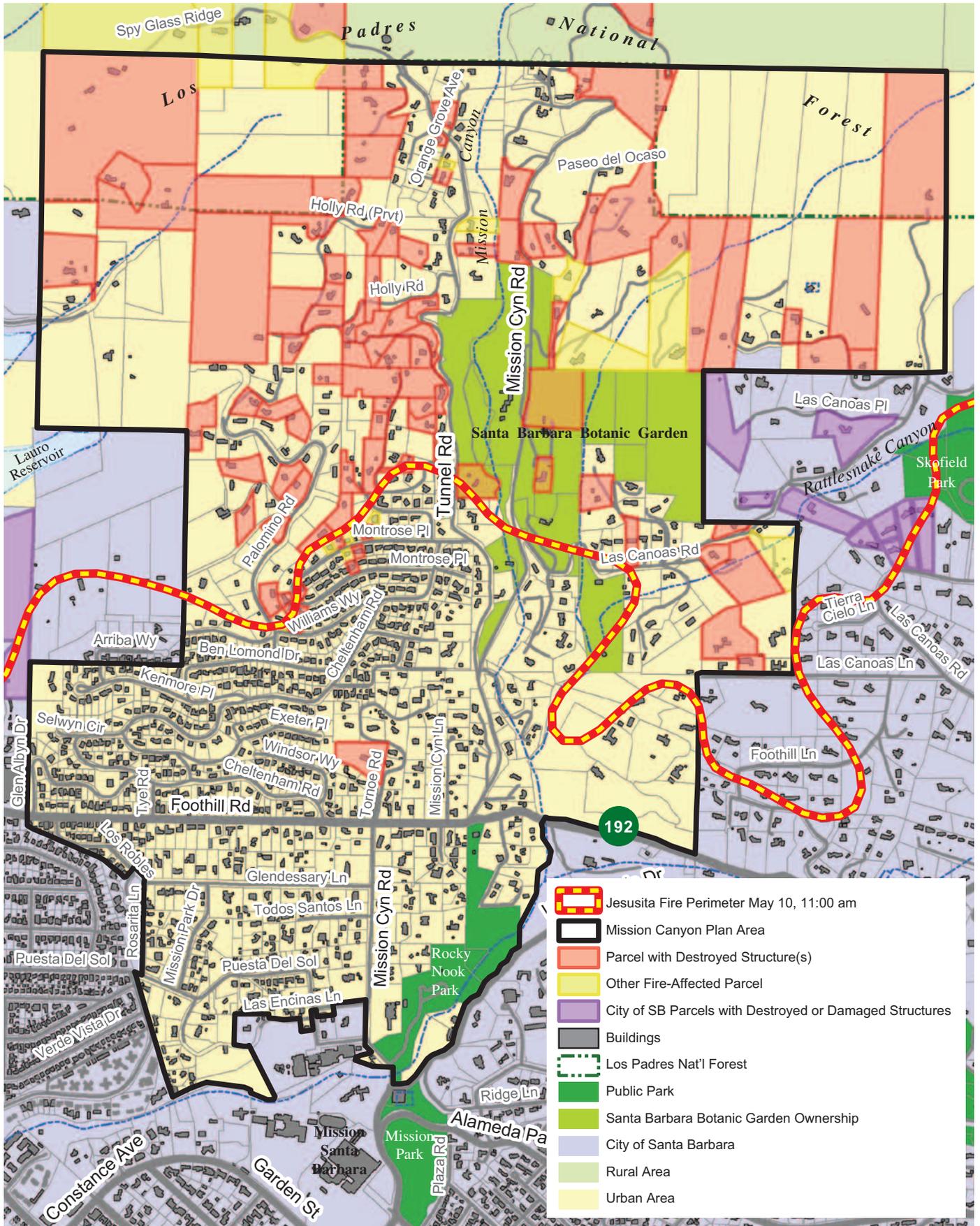
With the addition of the rock wool, the vintage 1938 home is better insulated, has lower heating and cooling costs, and its value is increased. For further fire safety, the family decided it was time to enclose the eaves and replace a wood deck with a smaller deck made of heavy Class-A timbers.

We nosy parkers always ask about the cost of things, and their reply was one we love to hear: Lower heating and cooling costs means increased sustainability for the planet; and fire resistance also benefits the community—we are all in this together! ♦

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*Chair of committee
 The MCA Newsletter was prepared with the help of **Lee Anne Dollison**, graphics, production, and photography.
 MCA’s Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., at the S.B. Natural History Museum’s MacVeagh House. All residents are welcome to attend.



Mission Canyon Community Plan
 Jesuita Fire Structural Damage Assessment June, 2009

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles

Map produced by Santa Barbara County Planning & Development — Mission Canyon/MCCP Jesuita Fire Structural Damage Map — June 2009

This map shows the homes and properties affected by the Jesuita Fire. One thing to keep in mind: during a wind-blown fire, we all benefit from making our homes more fire resistant and keeping defensible space clear. The original map is at page

51 of the Mission Canyon Community Plan's Revised Draft EIR (February 2013), still in process at County Long Range Planning.
 MAP: Santa Barbara County Planning & Development



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Rocky Nook Cleanup Fire News & Tips

Where Are the Poppies?

by David Chang,
county agriculture program specialist

Besides drought and habitat loss, invasive plants like *Euphorbia terracina*, are threatening California's wildflowers. *Euphorbia terracina*, also known as Geraldton carnation spurge, is a short-lived perennial herb that has been newly introduced to California and Santa Barbara County. First discovered in Santa Barbara County in 2010, the weed has unfortunately been detected in other locations on the South Coast and Southern California. Mission Canyon is the location of some of the largest infestations in the county.

Euphorbia terracina grows prolifically and can prevent the growth of native wildflowers—like poppy, lupines, and blue-eyed grass—because its numerous seedlings can grow nearly everywhere. They physically dominate and chemically inhibit other plants from growing within its patches. *Euphorbia terracina* also causes dermatitis and temporary blindness in susceptible persons.

The distribution of *Euphorbia terracina* is currently limited. Please help prevent its spread by reporting its presence to the County of Santa Barbara Agricultural Commissioner at (805) 681-5600, sbcwma@agcommissioner.com, and controlling it, if found on your property. Control assistance is available from the Agricultural Commissioner.

Control is difficult but worth attempting in order to save California's wildflower

legacy. Herbicides, like glyphosate (aka Roundup), can be used to treat *Euphorbia terracina* in this situation, but care must be taken to prevent non-target-plant damage. Cutting plants after they bloom, rather than when they are seedlings, is more likely to kill this perennial plant, but timing is important to prevent the plants from dropping seed or regrowing from its single tap root. Double bag the plants for proper disposal. Do not use cuttings as mulch for other landscapes. ♦



The prolific *Euphorbia terracina* threatens to overrun native wildflowers by using chemical toxins and hardy offspring. Get it before it seeds!

PHOTOS: David Chang