

Bad Brush Behavior

by MCA Fire Committee

This year's Brush Day—which is now called Chipping Week—started off well. No wildfires broke out to pull the Hotshots away, and residents piled brush alongside the roads as requested. Then the dumping began.

Some jerk (we say politely, since this is the newsletter) mistook MCA's large collection point — the big turnout below the “wye” at Mission Canyon and Tunnel roads — as the county dump, leaving behind huge logs, rocks, masses of concrete, 2 x 4s, and palms, all clearly on the “strictly forbidden” list in all communications to residents in prep for Chipping Week. It was a blatant gaming of the system and intolerable.

A quick call from the Mission Canyon Association brought MarBorg trucks out promptly to take the mess to the transfer station. If anyone knows who dumped all that

crud, MCA has a bill and a few words for this inconsiderate person(s).

MCA cannot continue to provide the turnout as a brush-collection spot. And that's too bad because it was the best location for brush collection for the people who don't live along the major roads. But the illegal dumping has happened more than once—this year was just particularly bad—and it presents a danger to us all. The chipping program is a benefit to us all, clearing brush from our and our neighbors' land. It's our collective dues at work, keeping us safer.

The good news is that, with the hard work and help of Mission Canyon residents, 26.25 tons of fuel was removed from the canyon this year. We just wish it hadn't included tons of other people's garbage.



Prepare Now for the Next Fire

by Laurie Guitteau

Last year we were horrified by the Wine Country Fires, then our own Thomas Fire, and this year's devastating debris flow that was a direct result of Thomas. As we write, massive fires are burning throughout the state. We in Mission Canyon suffered the Jesusita Fire in 2009, and for anyone who's moved here since, this article is for you.

We live in the wildland urban interface, “the areas where homes are built near or among lands prone to wildfires,” aka the WUI. It is our responsibility to accept this reality and do everything we can to protect ourselves. We can't wait for the conversation. The new variable is climate change. Hotter weather combines with drought to parch vegetation and weaken trees, inviting destructive insects. It creates the perfect environment for fire; explosive, erratic, dangerous fires that shock even veteran firefighters.

The men and women who staff Fire Station 15 (2491 Foothill Rd.) are your best resource on how to be safer in your home. County Fire's website, sbcfire.com, is full of

safety preparedness programs. Below, we offer you an abbreviated preparation checklist:

Verify that your insurance is up to date.

Make a plan and preparations so that you can evacuate in minutes: The recent deaths resulted from people being caught by the flames in their homes or in their cars trying to flee. **DO NOT WAIT!** Discuss as a family what needs to be grabbed before you run and have those things in a box or bag in an easily accessible place in your home. Better yet, important documents or anything you cannot afford to lose should be kept somewhere else, such as a safety deposit box. Invest in a service for off-site backup of your electronic devices. Have a family plan for how and where to reunite in an emergency; cell-phone service will be slammed.

Call Station 15 to schedule an appointment to assess your vulnerabilities and suggest mitigations: Call 1-805-681-5515.

Register at awareandprepare.org: As we have learned, early alert systems are not foolproof, but everyone should be registered.

Fire Prep (cont. p.2)

MCA Officers & Directors

Jason Saltoun-Ebin: President; 364-3070,
jasonsaltounebin@gmail.com

Laurie Guitteau: Vice President; Fire, Membership chair, Newsletter, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG); 682-4474,
guitteau@cox.net

Ray Smith: Treasurer; Fire chair, Land Use, Santa Barbara Natural History Museum (Museum), SBBG; 682-5583,
ray@eri.ucsb.edu

Laurie Dahl: Secretary; laurie.dahl@yahoo.com

Kellam de Forest: Design Review, Museum, SBBG; 448-7091, deforek@aol.com

Alex Feldwinn: Webmaster; 770-2630, afeldwinn@gmail.com

Darby Feldwinn: SBBG chair, Traffic & Parking (T&P); 770-2630, feldwinn@chem.ucsb.edu

Karl Hutterer: 453-8162, khutterer@gmail.com

Barbara Lindemann: T&P chair, Web; 682-4949,
lindemannb@cox.net

Sandy Robertson: T&P; 451-6676, sanrob805@gmail.com

Erika Sharghi: Finance, Membership; 637-5453,
ebscany@gmail.com

Kevin Snow: Land Use chair, Museum chair; 448-6653,
haybarn@cox.net

Richard Solomon: Finance, Museum; 452-5839,
rsolomon2@cox.net

Hugh Twibell: Design Review chair; 687-9671,
htwibell@cox.net

Jean Yamamura: Fire, Land Use, Newsletter chair, T&P; 845-3051, jean.yamamura@gmail.com

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.

Fire Prep (cont. from p.1)

Be aware of neighbors who may need special help during evacuation. Set up a phone tree to alert each other. A hard-wired landline is currently the safest alert system.

Cover all vents, chimneys, stovepipe outlets, fire pits with metal screens: Fires destroy homes from the inside out, and vents are the culprits for entry.

Keep roof and gutters clean of debris.

Reevaluate your defensible space: Are there dead trees on your property? Get

rid of them. Defensible space means creating an area around your house that is clear of hot-burning flammables, a place where a firefighter or engine could safely make a stand and train a hose on your house. Review the excellent information at sbcfire.com. Remember to look critically at your land, all of it, with embers in your eyes.

We residents of Mission Canyon are fortunate to be a well-informed group who know, sadly, from experience what can happen. Santa Barbara County Fire personnel are ready and eager to help you prepare,

and Station 15 continues to do inspections for compliance with the defensible space requirements as well as respond to complaints.

Though the canyon is safer thanks to clearance done through grants and by conscientious homeowners, today's fires are more dangerous and more volatile. We cannot be complacent. We must be responsible for our safety and those of our neighbors.

Edison Proposes to Turn Off Power

by Jean Yamamura

They really don't want to, Edison reps told the crowd at Earl Warren. It goes against their whole company ethos of keeping the power on. But they may have to "de-energize" sections of the grid in a Public Safety Power Shutdown to avoid fire.

Part of the problem is Edison's aging and old-tech infrastructure; part is SoCal's drought-affected landscape. It's when the two collide during a hot, dry, high wind that the trouble erupts, as it did during the Thomas Fire and the Northern California firestorms last October.

At the meeting held at Earl Warren on August 15, Southern California Edison reps talked about replacing the old stuff—swapping 4,000 circuit miles of wire with insulated wire over the next eight years and adding fire-resistant poles, composite cross-arms, and more sensitive fuses to avoid the "spark and arc." One quarter of Edison's 50,000-square-mile territory is in high-fire zones, containing about 400,000 dead or dy-

ing trees. The company cut 39,000 dead trees last year, said Bill Chiu, Edison's director of transmission and distribution.

Shutting off power will be a vice-president level decision, said Tom Brady, a project manager with Edison. Crews on the ground will verify wind conditions. Brady said Edison's meteorologists in the new Situational Weather Awareness Center can forecast these events four to seven days coming, and warnings would go to the public within 48 hours of the shut-off.

Edison will be installing 125 weather stations on poles in its territory, six in Santa Barbara County. Judging by the map company reps showed, the closest one to Mission Canyon would be near the Romero Trail. Five have been installed so far. (PG&E powers North County.) For our canyon, Edison will view the RAWS (Remote Automated Weather Station) information at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Brady later said, which is a reliable, maintained source.

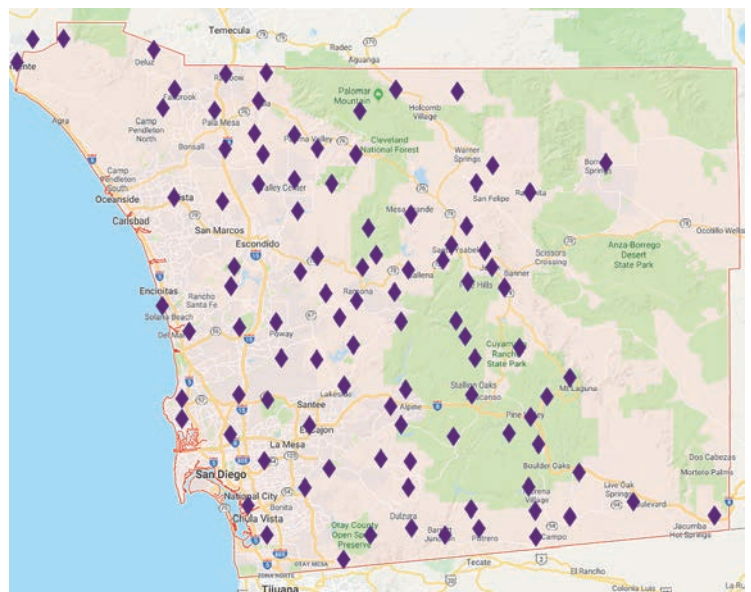
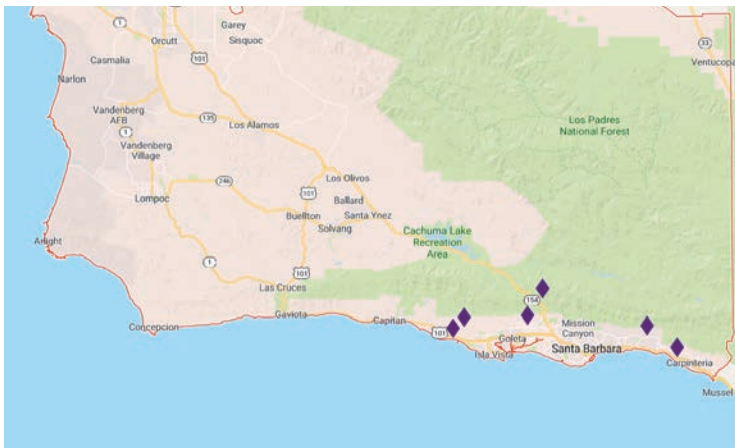
By contrast, San Diego Gas & Electric—which faces an out-of-pocket payout of \$374

million for the lethal fires it caused in 2007, such as the Witch Fire—has installed 170 weather stations in its 4,100-square-mile area. It's also placed 60 percent of its wires underground. When asked, Brady said underground is expensive and permitting can take "forever." It's quicker and cheaper to install insulated wiring and other transmission-pole hardening equipment, he said.

Where the winds will howl is difficult to predict, and it sounds like turning off the power could be a snap decision. The county's emergency chief, Rob Lewin, told the crowd at Earl Warren to be prepared—as they would be for a fire—with water, preserved food, and a hand-crank or solar set-up for battery charging for at least three days. Look around at what requires electricity, like garage doors or gates, and make sure you can open them manually. If you know the power's going out, stay out of elevators, said Lewin, to laughter from the crowd. Visit sbcfire.com for more info.

To aid the decision to de-energize the grid, SoCal Edison will put six weather stations in south Santa Barbara County (below). By contrast, San Diego Gas & Electric, which faces millions in payouts from 2007's lethal fires, has installed 100 of 170 weather stations (below right), set for San Diego County.

IMAGES: Lee Anne Dollison & Google Maps



What's Up at the Garden

by Darby Feldwinn

Parts of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) that the Botanic Garden operates under just don't fit very well. The Garden and a Mission Canyon Association com-

mittee met between 2012 and 2014 to tailor changes, for which the Garden is now completing studies, as requested by the county. In the fall, a public review process, with the Planning Commission, should begin; the changes will affect both the Garden's ability

to renovate its property as well as its operational procedures.

First, the Garden seeks to slow the approved pace of construction. **Table 1** shows the building and remodeling allowed under the current CUP (two phases), and **Table 2** the requested change (three phases). Once a phase has started, all items in the phase must be complete within six years.

Table 3 lays out the significant Operational changes between the current and proposed CUP. For a full list, contact the director of the Santa Barbara Botanical Gardens, Steve Windhager, at swindhager@sbbg.org.

Table 1: Current Approved CUP

Phase 1 (should be complete by 2020)	Phase 2 (could not start until 2023)
Infrastructure improvements (completed)	Reconfigure Entryway and Parking Lot
Build Conservation Center 11,500 ft ² (completed)	Move Cottage to 1140 Tunnel Rd. and remodel
Build Horticultural Building 3,527 ft ² (not complete, would need to start construction immediately)	Build Education Center 7,941 ft ² Build Children's Lab 2,678 ft ² Remodel Library

Table 2: Proposed CUP

Phase 1 (completed)	Phase 2 (could not start until 2020)	Phase 3 (could not start before one year after completion of Phase 2)
Infrastructure Improvements	Build Horticultural Building 3,527 ft ²	Remodel Cottage*
Build Conservation Center 11,500 ft ² xx	Remodel Library	Build Education Center 7,941 ft ²
	Reconfigure Entryway and Parking Lot	Abandon plans for Children's Lab building

*1140 Tunnel will be taken out of CUP and considered a residential lot for the purposes of rebuilding.

Table 3: Significant Operational Changes to CUP

Current CUP	Proposed CUP
Meadow Art Installations: Do not need HLAC permission.	Meadow Art Installations: Will need HLAC permission.
Allowed Class Times: 7:30am–5pm; 6pm–10pm	Allowed Class Time: 7:30am–9pm
Special Event Staffing: Requires one Garden staffer	Special Event Staffing: Varies based on event size but no less than one Garden staff person
Events (activities closed to public and attended by over 80 people): 17 Events total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Fire (May–Nov): No more than one per month, up to 205 guests, must end by sunset Low Fire (Dec–April): No more than two per month, up to 255 guests, must end by sunset 	Events (activities closed to public and attended by over 80 people): 16 Events total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Fire (May–July and Nov): No more than one per month, up to 170 guests, must end by 9pm High Fire (Aug–Oct): No Events Low Fire (Dec–April): No more than three per month, up to 255 guests, one Event up to 400 guests (must be in Feb–Apr), must end by 9pm
Event Shuttles (for activities closed to public and attended by over 80 people) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Fire Season (May–Nov): All guests must arrive via shuttle Low Fire Season: Guests can use personal cars or provided shuttle. 	Event Shuttles (for activities closed to public and attended by over 80 people) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year Around: Guests can use personal cars or provided shuttle.
Close to the public under red flag conditions	Close to the public under red flag conditions as well as less severe conditions stipulated by wind and humidity

What Does Red Flag Mean?

by Laurie Guitteau

It's all about fire. A Red Flag Warning is issued for weather that could result in extreme fire behavior in the next 12 to 72 hours. In Mission Canyon, parking is prohibited at the Tunnel Trailhead and the Botanic Garden closes. Residents point their cars downhill.

The National Weather Service makes the call on Red Flag, basing its decision on wind, temperature, humidity, and potential dry lightning strikes. Extreme vigilance and caution is necessary during Red Flag periods because a single spark could cause a major fire. People cause 95 percent of fires, according to Cal Fire. In Santa Barbara County, those catalysts have included welding, trailer chains, bare wheels, catalytic converters, kites, and brush cutting with weed whackers.

"No Parking" signs clearly announce Red Flag days on Tunnel Road at Montrose and at Mission Canyon Road. Cars parked beyond the signs are towed by the CHP. These measures are to ensure the quick evacuation of residents on our narrow, winding roads.

County Fire staffs up with manpower and equipment during Red Flag, but we all need to take precautions and understand that evacuation might come next.





Mission Canyon Association
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Fire & Edison & Home Prep Garden Seeks Permit Changes

New Trail Relief

by **Barbara Lindemann**

If you hike Tunnel trail or live at the end of Tunnel Road, you've probably noticed a porta-potty and receptacles for trash and recyclables now installed at the parking area just above the Moody house. When homeowners at the trailhead complained of hikers using their property and the trail itself as places to drop their trash and relieve their bowels, your Mission Canyon Board considered solutions.

We dismissed the idea of a porta-potty at the trailhead because for near-by residents that could be a worse solution than the problem. The site chosen is ideal, owned by the county, hidden by brush on the canyon side, and obscured by parked cars just enough not to be an eyesore, but visible enough to would-be users. After a trial period of three months, paid for by your MCA dues, the Board recognized success: Many people were indeed using

the facilities, Tunnel Road residents were not suffering the same problems, and the trail overall was cleaner.

Our 1st District supervisor, Das Williams, appreciated our efforts to find a

solution for the problem, and agreed to share the expense, paying from his personal office expense account half the cost of MarBorg's bi-weekly cleaning and trash pickup.



Mission Canyon's county supervisor, Das Williams, cut the ceremonial "ribbon" for Tunnel Road's porta-pottie.
PHOTO: Ray Smith