



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301

December, 2007, MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

Thursday, December 13th 2007, 7:30 P.M.

The Place – Diamond X – Take Las Virgenes to Mulholland; turn left on Mulholland. For the next 3/4 mile, the King Gillette Ranch will be on your right. After you've passed Stokes Canyon Road, in about 3/4 mile, you will see a sign on your right with "Diamond X" and the National Park Service logo on it. A short distance past the sign a narrow road goes south at a right angle. This is Wickland Road, and, at this point you are entering the King Gillette Ranch. Follow Wickland about 300 yards until the road forks; take the left-hand fork; keep bearing left to lighted house. Park; get out of your car; go into the lighted part of the house.

Call to Order

Roll Call

Agenda Changes/ Approval

Officers' Reports

Correspondence/Announcements

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Old Business/ Reports

Delegates Reports

Modification of By-laws - Action

New Business

Calabasas Peak Motorway Activity Report

Corral Fire Update

Election of Officers

Holiday Party!!

Please bring something to share.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

It's that time of year again and the Nominating Committee (made up of Jess Thomas, Steve Hess and Joan Yacovone) have come up with the following candidates to be officers of the Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation for 2008. They are:

For President

John Low, Monte Nido

For Vice-President

Mary Hubbard, Malibu Canyon Community; Kim Lamorie, Calabasas Highlands

For Secretary

Kathy Berkowitz, Calabasas Park Estates

For Treasurer

Joan Yacovone, Liberty Canyon

LAS VIRGENES IS FIRE COUNTRY!

People come to Las Virgenes from all over the world dazzled by the spectacular views of our mountains, canyons, and distant ocean. Only gradually do they come to realize that Las Virgenes is also FIRE COUNTRY.

We have TWO SEASONS here – a “FUEL GROWING SEASON” in winter and spring and a “FUEL BURNING SEASON” in summer and fall..

In fact OUR LANDSCAPE HAS EVOLVED WITH FIRE, as evidenced by the ability of our shrubs and flowers either to seed abundantly after a fire or to recover by re-sprouting from the roots. In fact, some of our native plants cannot reproduce at all without periodic fires. This alone tells us that frequent fires have been part of our local ecosystem for millions of years.

After every major fire there is a media “witch hunt” for the “arsonist” who caused it. However, as an article in Sunday's *Times* points out, only 7% of our fires are known to have been caused by arsonists. MOST LOCAL FIRES HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY HUMAN MISTAKES OR ACCIDENTS, not by arsonists. Some of our most recent fires have been caused by downed power lines, late night partying, and children playing with matches. Major fires in the past have been caused by careless dumping of trash along the freeway, a transformer exploding in high winds, careless burning at a Newhall oil field, careless operation of a Navy firing range, a boy throwing firecrackers off the back of a horse, and unknown activities at a local fast-food place.

The media focuses our attention entirely too much on the cause of fire ignition and frequently fails to remind us that the experts have told us repeatedly that “FIRE IS INHERENT IN OUR LANDSCAPE”, and, therefore, should be treated as a common event in this part of the world.

SINCE WE CAN'T ALWAYS STOP FIRES FROM STARTING, WE NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON PREPARING OUR HOMES TO SURVIVE THEM.

Our skilled firefighters are able to contain the vast majority of fires that occur under normal weather conditions in less than 100 acres. The ones that get away and make headlines

throughout the world are the few that are driven by HOT, DRY, GALE FORCE "SANTA ANA" WINDS.

FIRES UNDER EXTREME SANTA ANA CONDITIONS CANNOT BE STOPPED, and, as in 1982, can even jump the Freeway and burn all the way to the beach. All the firemen in the world aren't going to stop a fire under such extreme conditions, so HOUSES NEED TO BE DESIGNED AND PREPARED TO WITHSTAND THE FIRES THAT CAN OCCUR UNDER THESE CONDITIONS OF EXTREME WIND AND HEAT.

The thing that people are often least prepared for in a SANTA ANA driven FIRE is the WIND. Fires do not burn slowly under Santa Ana conditions; they move rapidly blowing dense smoke and burning embers hundreds of feet down wind to start spot fires. Streamers of flame and superheated air 100' to 200' long dry out and ignite landscaping and wooden structures. Water from hoses is blown back in your face. Water from roof sprinklers is blown away without wetting down the roofs it is supposed to protect. IF YOU WAIT UNTIL THE FIRE COMES TO PREPARE YOUR DEFENSES, YOU MAY END UP LOSING YOUR HOME.

IT'S THE FUEL, STUPID! If you can't always prevent fires from starting, and you can't stop wind-driven fires once they start, there is one thing you can do – ELIMINATE ANY FUEL CLOSE ENOUGH TO ENDANGER YOUR HOUSE WHEN THE FIRE DOES COME. This not only means dry weeds and dead brush, but also such combustible landscaping plants as juniper, eucalyptus, cypress, and even old, dead ice plant. INTELLIGENT FUEL REDUCTION IS YOUR BEST WEAPON AGAINST A FIRE.

To help you decide what areas of your property to clear of fuel, try going out on the next Santa Ana wind day and throw up a handful of dust. Whichever parts of your property the dust reaches will probably be the areas most likely to be exposed to heat and wind-driven flames during a major fire. Those should be the first priority for fuel clearance. (The flow of dust in the wind may also give you an idea of the most effective locations for sprinklers immediately before a fire.)

A Cold Creek resident who went around after the 1993 fire said that most of the homes that burned were situated too close to the "break" between the pad and the downslope. That information might be useful to those looking for a replacement home after the next fire.

SHOULD YOU EVACUATE? That decision depends on a variety of factors, such as whether you can safely ride out a fire in your home and how safely you can escape if you have to and – most importantly – that you are prepared to face EXTREME CONDITIONS that may include 60 to 100 foot flames, extreme heat, high levels of carbon monoxide, a storm of flying embers and dense smoke. There may not be enough firemen to cover every house (which may be an argument for staying), so you may be on your own before and during the fire. Firemen may come by after the fire passes. If you do decide to remain you also need to be prepared to stay until the fire has passed because if you do decide to leave as the fire front approaches you will likely be driving through a "blizzard" of dense smoke and burning embers and this smoke together with decreasing oxygen may cause your car's engine to stop running leaving you exposed and vulnerable. We should note that the Los Angeles County Fire Department does not make the decision to evacuate a neighborhood capriciously. They take many factors into consideration before issuing a MANDATORY EVACUATION NOTICE and when that time comes they REALLY WANT YOU TO LEAVE. Timely evacuation will ensure that the roads are clear for the incoming firefighting equipment and personnel. Their first priority is to protect life and the second is to protect property. If you are there they will have to deploy resources to get you out that might otherwise be deployed for structure protection.

Because of the regular influx of new residents into our community and the infrequency of disastrous fires, member associations should consider distributing locally based fire orientation information to residents at regular intervals. Also, the L. A. County Fire Department will be happy to come to your association and present a program on preparing for and surviving a wildfire.

GPAC UPDATE

The next meeting of the GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE will be this THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6th, at 7:00 PM at CALABASAS CITY HALL.

The agenda will include,

- A review of the City Council and Planning Commission comments on the Draft Land Use Element/Discussion of potential changes

- "Reconsideration of Las Virgenes/Agoura Road Westside Village* Concept"

Though GPAC is back to meeting the same night as the Federation, affected member associations might be well advised to have someone attend this GPAC meeting.

(* Having fallen of the turnip truck a long time ago, most delegates probably realize that the part of town planners and developers designate as a "village" is usually the area with the highest development density, just as the developer who named "The Oaks" removed an all-time record number of them.)

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

MALIBU LAKE and MEDEA VALLEY residents were recently greeted with the spectacle of an orange glow on the ridgeline south of MALIBU CREEK STATE PARK. This was the recent CORRAL CANYON FIRE, which burned over 4000 acres and 53 homes on the Malibu side of the ridge. The fire apparently originated in a cave on the ridge top, which has long been a popular party site.

Investigators report that they have found several items in the cave including fingerprints on cans and some excellent sources of DNA, but no suspects have been taken into custody yet. As reported in Sunday's *Times*, people who start fires, either deliberately or by accident, are now being prosecuted to the full extent of both civil and criminal law, so the Malibu partygoers may soon pay the "wages of sin" down at the courthouse.

Meanwhile, this tragedy might give member associations plagued by similar party sites some leverage to get the Sheriff to crack down on these potentially dangerous night time activities.

LOOKING FOR SPONSORS

BRIAN ROONEY, who published *THREE MIRACLE MILES*, a history of the MALIBOU LAKE AREA is at it again. He is working up a rough draft of a new book to be called *SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS – The Wilderness of Los Angeles*. According to Brian it will be a “large format hardcover coffee table book filled with high quality black and white landscape images – many spread across two pages”.

Dedicated to the National Park Service and the “70 separate agencies and their volunteers that have and continue to work tirelessly to protect and keep these mountains open to the public.” The “primary target audience” for the book will be residents of mountain communities.

Right now Brian is looking for sponsors to cover the costs of printing up the book. Sponsors will receive a “prominent thank you” on the opening page of the book. Donations to cover the cost of printing the book will take the form of tax-deductible donations to the MALIBU CREEK STATE PARK DOCENTS, a non-profit, with the sponsor receiving the tax credit.

The book will consist of black and white photographs and accompanying text. In its hard cover format it should last for many years.

Anyone interested in becoming a sponsor or otherwise helping out in the publication of this book should contact BRIAN ROONEY at (310) 280-0200 or R7Media@earthlink.net