

# Snapshots

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November 25, 2005



Successful BLM Projects  
Supporting the National Fire Plan

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*Dave Vickery, editor  
Sheri Ascherfeld, layout and design*

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## California

### Fire Safety Without Wildfire

*Homeowners in Napa County Partner with California Fire Safe Council in Proactive Fire Safety Projects*

Homeowners in eastern Napa County's rural community of Circle Oaks are happy to admit they have never been devastated by a wildfire and they're working to keep it that way.

The California Fire Safe Council and Bureau of Land Management are partnering to fund two projects in Circle Oaks to continue to protect the area from potential loss of life or property from wildfire.

The Circle Oaks Homeowners Association's Fire Safe and Fuel Load Reduction Program is a cooperative effort that also includes the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection and Napa County



Area D - Before brush clearing

Public Works to coordinate in several areas. These include a vegetation management program, 100 acres of hazardous fuel removal, and home fire safety inspections, with all 184 Circle Oaks homes inspected. The effort included fire prevention education materials distributed via email, mailboxes and web site, a community vegetation dumpsite open every year from November to June, and rights of way clearance with maintenance of 5.6 miles of roadways.

Circle Oaks' 184 homes are nestled within 100 acres of common area that the group has been actively managing to

reduce fuel loads since 2001. Each homeowner owns one-quarter of an acre in a "circle" around their home and the remaining acreage is owned by

the homeowners association. Besides being a significant reduction in property taxes for the homeowners, they can retain management over the 100 acres to reduce the risk of life and property from wildfire. Over 50 percent of the annual homeowner association budget is aimed at the Fire Safe and Fuel Load Reduction Program- a healthy percentage considering it often takes wildfire to generate this kind of commitment, yet there has never been a loss to wildfire in Circle Oaks.

Their commitment has paid off. Compliance in home fire safety inspections has increased with only three of 184 homes failing. Treated acreage has risen from 40 to 100 acres, development of a strategic fire safety plan has minimized fuel removal costs and allowed the group to remove more fuel each year. A unique partnership with the Napa County Public Works has resulted in the removal and hauling of woody biomass from homeowner association community vegetation dumpsites to county sites. Residents use the sites to dispose of brush,

fallen limbs, and other vegetative material.

So far, the program has helped protect 184 homes with an assessed property value in 2005 exceeding \$70 million.

Contact: California Fire Safe Council Coast Region Grants Manager, Amber Gardner 800/372-2350.

### Getting a Jump on the Wildfire Season

*San Jose Neighborhood Association Partners with Santa Clara County FireSafe Council*

Homeowners in Almaden Valley's Montego Neighborhood realized that they needed to implement an aggressive fuel reduction plan if they were to keep their neighborhood safe from dangerous wildfires. The perimeter of this residential area, which borders several wildland urban interface areas including Quicksilver Park, was overgrown with poison oak, coyote bush and other "ladder fuels," posing a significant wildfire threat to homes and other property.



California's Almaden Valley Montego neighborhood before treatment of fuels.



Area D - After Brush Clearing

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*Same area following treatment.*

Working with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, San Jose Fire Department and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the group received a \$10,000 grant from the Bureau of Land Management to help cover a portion of the costs of this multi-acre clearing project. The Montego Homeowners Association also paid for part of this project so they could do more than the grant would cover. After reviewing the bids, the group decided to use the San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School – a local organization that provides youth with a quality high school education and teaches valuable work and life skills. “Using the Conservation Corps was a win-win for us,” said Joan Pereyra, Montego Homeowners Association Vice President. “We felt good about helping this organization and they provided us with the work we needed at a price we could afford.”

This project, which began in March, could not have been completed at a better time. Area firefighters predicted the worst fire season in years, due to higher

than normal rainfall and the subsequent growth of trees, shrubs, and grasses. Captain Juan Diaz, San Jose Fire Department Wildland Officer, urged homeowners living in rural

or unincorporated areas of San Jose or Santa Clara County to think “fire safety” now – before hot summer weather and the fire season arrives.

“This fuel reduction project is exactly what the San Jose Fire Department has been asking our residents to organize, stated Captain Diaz. “The Montego residents and the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council have raised the bar on community fire prevention, preparedness and team work.”

*Contact: Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Coordinator Jan Cokely, (408) 975-9591, JanC@SCCFireSafe.org, www.SCCFireSafe.org*

## California Kids Get Fired Up Connecting Fire Ecology, Technology and Local Environment

It’s every kid’s dream assignment – “put away your homework, we’re going to play computer games”. Now thanks to a BLM partnership with the Project Learning Tree program, kids

in 25 states are using Burning Issues, an interactive computer game on both DVD and CD-ROM to learn more about the role of fire in natural systems and fire management practices used to maintain safe and sustainable ecosystems.

Once students learn about fire-prone ecosystems, they often take a bigger step and get involved with projects in their communities to help homes and important areas survive wildfires.

In California, for example, after the devastating wildland fires in San Diego County in 2003, ten 4-H clubs chose to learn more about chaparral fire ecology and share this information with their community. With support from a variety of sponsors, including a Burning Issues workshop for club leaders and youth hosted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Community Forests Foundation, teams of 4-H club members were assigned a location to begin a “fire recovery photo-monitoring project”. The teens learned a variety of skills including environmental research and geospatial techniques, followed by an assignment to gather data on multiple sites including BLM lands near Jamul, in San Diego County, California.

This post-fire activity served to help build a network of youth engaged in acquiring valuable technical skills and interactions with agencies and their communities.



*4-H students participating in working on fire recovery photo monitoring project in California.*

*Contact: Kay Antunez, Project Learning Tree Coordinator, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, [Kay.Antunez@fire.ca.gov](mailto:Kay.Antunez@fire.ca.gov), or Steve Dasher, San Diego County 4-H Advisor [hsdasher@ucdavis.edu](mailto:hsdasher@ucdavis.edu)*

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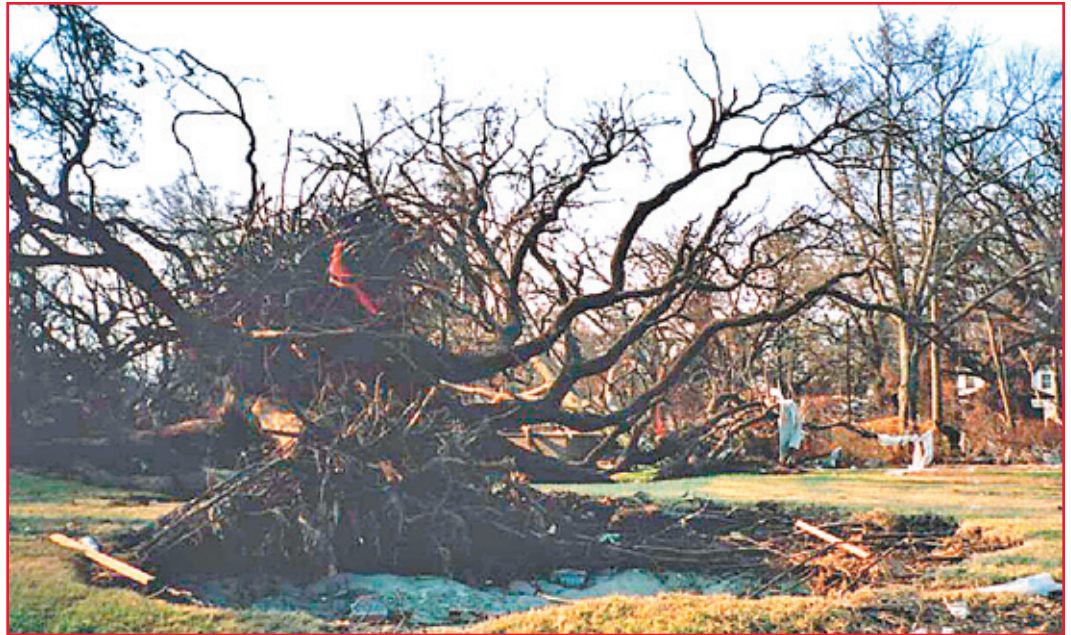
## Eastern States

### Hotshots Assist with Relief Efforts

This year marked an unprecedented hurricane season as two of the strongest hurricanes ever, Katrina and Rita, made landfall weeks apart just a few hundred of miles from each other. Since this region is considered home base for the Jackson Hotshots, they have been extremely busy assisting with relief efforts. First, they spent several weeks on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and then moved to Texas to assist with Rita's aftermath.

In Texas, they spent several weeks working in shelters assisting the thousands of displaced families and in recovery work. Next, they moved back to the Mississippi Gulf Coast to the Desoto National Forest to assist with salvage and recovery. The damage is widespread and much work still remains to be done. Currently five saw crews are working daily to help alleviate the tremendous workload.

Contact: Shayne Banks (601)  
977-5405



*The Mississippi Gulf Coast lost many of its ancient oak trees. The clean up and debris removal will take several months to complete.*



*Crews arriving in Mississippi faced a monumental debris removal job as a result of Hurricane Katrina.*