

**Meeting Notes – Southern California SAF Spring Meeting
Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District – Fire Station #4
March 31, 2006**

Shortly after 9:15 am J. Lopez welcomed everyone to the Southern California Society of American Foresters Spring Meeting and introduced Chair-Elect Ron Morrow who introduced the concepts that we would be exploring over the next day and a half.

Ron introduced our principal instructors, Rancho Santa Fe Fire Marshal Cliff Hunter and Urban Forester Mike Scott, who requested that the audience members complete individual introductions. Ranch Santa Fe Fire Chief Nick Pavone then welcomed the group and shared the pertinent facts regarding the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District (RSFFPD).

- 42 square miles
- 4 Fire Stations
- 55 Employees
- 17,000 Population

Small commercial, light industrial, estate properties (average 8000 sq. ft., large homes in excess of 59,000 sq. ft.). Last significant fire was in 1942.

RSFFPD is one of the few, if not the only, Fire Department in San Diego County that employs an Urban Forester.

Cliff Hunter then introduced the subject of “Shelter in Place.” The term Shelter in Place was first used in Australia where seasonal bush fires threaten lives and property. A Shelter in Place (SIP) community needs to be built from the ground-up. Infrastructure needs to be designed to meet SIP criteria. It is difficult to retrofit an existing community to meet SIP criteria.

To be a SIP Community, several criteria need to be met. They include:

- a structure that can survive fire
- defensible space around the structure
- good road access to structures
- a good water supply

There are five separate SIP communities within Rancho Santa Fe. They are:

- The Bridges
- 4S Ranch
- Cielo
- Santa Fe Valley
- The Crosby

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Cliff provided partial Firestorm 2003 statistics from San Diego County.

- Paradise Fire: 222 homes lost, 2 fatalities during evacuation; Cliff was a member of the Damage Assessment Team on the Paradise Fire
- Cedar Fire: 2,400 building lost, 9 fatalities

Rancho Santa Fe is striving to have a 'Proactive' versus 'Reactive' fire prevention policy. The goal of the Department is to use 'education' to gain compliance instead of using 'enforcement' to force compliance.

The difference between 'fire resistant construction' and 'ignition resistant construction' was explained.

Cliff stated that internal residential fire sprinklers are not intended to protect a structure from a wildfire, they are designed to suppress a fire that starts inside the structure and to give residents a chance to evacuate. The fact the CDF's original 30 clearance requirement was to prevent fire from traveling from the structure to the wildland was also discussed.

Total Attendance = 26

Day 2 – Palomar Mountain April 1, 2006

On a foggy, moist morning the group met outside the entrance of Fry Creek Campground atop Palomar Mountain. Forester and Project Manager Bonnie Burchill of Environmental Resource Solutions provided an overview of the work that is ongoing on Palomar Mountain. Bonnie provided a recent history of the mountain, starting with the drought induced mortality that took place on the mountain in the late 1990s, the 2003 firestorms, and the significant efforts that have been made to return the forest to a healthy condition. Although the project is ongoing and multi-faceted the three main goals remain:

1. Removal of dead and dieing timber within utility easements
2. Removal of dead and dieing timber within 200 feet of roadways
3. Removal of dead and dieing timber from private properties and government parcels within the forest

Through various programs approximately \$45 million was set aside to start the needed work. Most of the money has now been spent or is currently allocated. An income stream for future projects needs to be maintained but other recent disasters (Hurricanes Katrina and Rita) are taking up the majority of federal funds now.

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The Palomar District Ranger, Grace Terrazas and Anabele Cornejo, a Public Affairs Assistant also were in attendance and they provided their perspective on the work that is being completed.

Palomar Mountain Observatory

After our briefing at Fry Creek Campground we traveled to Palomar Mountain Observatory where we toured the museum and were provided with a brief, but informative behind the scenes tour of the 200-inch Hale Telescope. The cool air inside the dome (39 degrees Fahrenheit) reminded us of the hardships the astronomers used to endure during their long nights working at the Observatory. As our tour ended and the day remained wet, the picnic grounds looked less than inviting. District Ranger Terrazas opened up the local seasonal fire station, which was just around the corner, so we could eat our sack lunches in the relative comfort of the an exercise room and a tool room – Thanks Grace!

As lunch ended our meeting adjourned and we headed down the mountain under the rapidly clearing skies of San Diego County.

Total Attendance = 17

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