

JACUMBA HOT SPRINGS (JHS) SPONSOR GROUP WILDFIRE PROTECTION PROGRAM (CWPP) RESPONSE

The Real East County Fire Safe Council, Ken Daubach, President asked The JHS Sponsor Group to provide input to the Real East County Fire Safe Council's Community Wildfire Protection Program. This Plan is essential to future fire insurance rating changes, future grant awards and the prioritization of various fire protection programs. This response was finalized and approved at the JHS Sponsor Group Meeting of 09/24/2013. Ken Daubach attended this meeting and was able to assist The Sponsor Group in formulating this response to the Real East County Fire Safe Council.

OVERALL JHS COMMUNITY FIRE RESPONSE EVALUATION

Jacumba Hot Springs fire station coverage scope and complexity has nearly doubled because of the following new programs and projects started in the past twelve months:

- Sunrise Powerlink was brought on line.
- ECCO substation covering 100 plus acres started construction in May 2013.
- The Boulevard Substation expansion, located between Boulevard and Jacumba started August 2013.
- Various interconnecting electrical lines are underway this year and some are pending (example, Sierra Juarez Mexico interconnect project is pending).
- The Pacific –Imperial Rail Road here in Jacumba is now in an inspection and repair mode plans to start trains again in January 2014.

Fighting fires in huge electrical substations, towering high voltage lines and on a 130 mile railroad with over 57 tunnels and bridges requires specially trained professionals, sophisticated electrical fire fighting and other specialized equipment This is borne out by the SDG&E documents referenced later. How will fire protection be provided?

The new San Diego County Fire Authority, as we read in their July 2013 "Master Plan" still plans to get by at Jacumba Hot Springs for at least 2 more years with a skeleton volunteer staff and a less than 24/7 coverage fire station. No mention is made in the "Master Plan" on the needs of the coverage scope and firefighting complexity expansion. SDG&E has just given the JHS Sponsor Group Two MOUS; SDG&E signed with the County and the Rural Fire Department, one dated 11/26/12 and signed by Chief Nissan and the other dated 01/25/13 signed by County Fire Authority Director Herman Reddick. It is beyond belief that the July 2013 San Diego County Fire Authority Master Plan dated five to seven months later did not detail the planned training, funds, new electrical firefighting equipment and professional personnel defined in the MOUS. I quote here from the SDG&E E-Mail from Cameron Durckel dated 09/24/2013

"Good morning Howard!

I hope all is well with you. I am unable to attend this evening, but I will be at the Real East County Fire Safe Council meeting on September 30. I have attached two East County Substation Project MOUs that are relevant to your discussion. As part of the process and the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for ECO, SDG&E is required to take significant mitigation measures to reduce the risk of fire ignition, minimize the effects of

**JACUMBA HOT SPRINGS (JHS) SPONSOR GROUP WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PROGRAM (CWPP) RESPONSE**

the project on firefighting operations, and reduce the potential wildfire impacts to the residences and/or structures near the project.

The MOU with San Diego Rural Fire Protection District will assist with the purchase and maintenance of a Type I engine with an aqueous film forming foam apparatus with a deck gun to apply a heavy stream. In addition, the funding will be utilized to provide for a volunteer stipend to staff the engine with firefighters as well as training for electrical firefighting for 10 personnel (2 per year on a 5-year rotation).

The MOU with the County of San Diego will provide proportional funding to the San Diego County Fire Authority for a Fire Code Specialist II position and for four volunteer/reserve firefighters as part-time code inspectors on a stipend basis for up to 90 days per year for the life for the life of the ECP Project.

I will follow up with you later today to discuss further.

Best regards, Cameron"

Further complicating planning and, tragically for those who suffer fires, the Boulevard Fire Station is currently mostly unmanned (only 7 days manned in the last ninety). Because of a shortage of personnel both in Boulevard and in Jacumba, fully involved structure firefighting in Jacumba (regulations require a minimum of 4 trained personnel) must wait for back up personnel to arrive from as far away as thirty and sometimes forty miles. In other words, fighting structure fires in Jacumba is virtually a lost cause. Additionally, we also understand that fires have gone unanswered or been drastically delayed because of a lack of trained and certified drivers.

We have checked with The Jacumba Community Services District that leases the JHS fire station to the county. They report that there are no expansion plans to handle the new electrical fire fighting trucks and equipment. Is it possible that the two fire Departments plan to send the new equipment to another area of the County? Please check with the county. The SDG&E/County MOU says that funds for the mitigation equipment, training and personnel will be available six months after construction starts (May 2013).

Obviously Jacumba Hot Springs has difficulty helping the Fire Safe Council with a comprehensive plan until we have answers to our questions about County support.

We also share with you our mutual concern about "Fire Protection" or the lack of it in

**JACUMBA HOT SPRINGS (JHS) SPONSOR GROUP WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PROGRAM (CWPP) RESPONSE**

Jacumba and the entire Far East County. The JHS Sponsor Group stands ready, as approved at the last meeting to join with the Real East County Fire Safe Council in a letter explaining the problems defined herein to Supervisor Jacob and The Director of The County Fire Authority and asking for solutions to the problems so we can move forward.

RESPONSE BY AREA

1. **JACUMBA SPRING AND LAKE AREA**

- a. General – Our spring and lake/marshes provide water, which in turn provide increased vegetation growth.
- b. Land Owners – Dave and Helen Landman
- c. Other Stakeholders – U.S. Border Patrol- Jason Bush of the Border Patrol contacted Howard Cook to find out how Tamarisk could be eradicated to reduce the amount of cover for Illegal traffic. Community Services District (Water Co.) - wells, pumps, access roads.
- d. Threats- Tamarisk infestation draws down lake emergency water supply, crowds out native plants, and provides cover for illegals, who have started wild fires in the past. Tamarisk diminishes citizen enjoyment of the lake. Tamarisk creates fast growing and hard to put out fire fuel.
- e. Possible Remedies- Tamarisk eradication and a three year program to apply herbicides and whack down any regrowth
- f. Other - Trails and bathhouse need a maintenance plan to enhance citizen enjoyment and diminish fire threat. Funds are also needed to pump additional water from Water Co. wells into lake. This will provide a larger emergency water supply to fight greater area wildfires and to assist in killing Tamarisk.

2. **JACUMBA TOWN CENTRAL**

- a. General – This area has available annual Sunrise Powerlink fire mitigation grants to parcels with houses up to \$2,000 annually each parcel. Lots without houses are not covered
- b. Land Owners – Various, Dave and Helen Landman (Spa, Commercial, houses and vacant land/lots)
- c. Other Stakeholders – U. S Border Patrol
- d. Threat no. 1- Weeds, grass and tree population adjacent to residences.
- e. Threat no. 2 - High cost of dumpsters and other disposal causes citizens to accumulate and not cart away old couches, trash etc.
- f. Possible Remedies- Fire Safe Council should inventory parcels with needs, help residents with mitigation grant requests, maintain a list of low cost weed eradicators and encourage citizens to use the fire mitigation money to fund eradication. To mitigate threat no. 2, The Revitalization Committee should have at least two community cleanups a year. Fire Safe Council should provide funds for the giant dumpsters necessary to conduct the community cleanups.
- g. Other –

3. **RANCH AREA**

- a. General – Farm acreage just east of town, about 460 acres

**JACUMBA HOT SPRINGS (JHS) SPONSOR GROUP WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PROGRAM (CWPP) RESPONSE**

- b. Land Owners – Jacumba Valley Ranch, Dave and Helen Landman (60 acres)
 - c. Other Stakeholders – U. S. Border Patrol, County Public Works, Reagan Shallal, SDG&E, County Department Of Airports.
 - d. Threat1- Ranch is covered with very mobile and flammable tumbleweed. The tumbleweed frequently encroach upon the Old Hwy 80 roadway.
 - e. Threat 2- There is a danger from cross border fires
 - f. Possible Remedies- None for now. For Threat 2, suggest an additional 30 foot clearance of brush adjacent to the border barrier road, both in the farm area through the town and west of the bridges areas.
 - g. Other -
4. BOUNDARY AND CARRIZO CREEK AND RAILROAD AREAS,
- a. General –
 - b. Land Owners – MTS/Pacific - Imperial Railroad, Jacumba Valley Ranch, Dave and Helen Landman.
 - c. Other Stakeholders – BLM, Anza Borrego State Park
 - d. Threat 1- Tamarisks were cut down this past year in the Boundary /Carrizo Creek bottoms between Round Mountain and into De Anza Resort. The pest has regrown significantly. Evidently left over slash was not removed and herbicide was not applied in sufficient strength to stop the regrowth.
 - e. Threat 2 – The railroad has experienced many fires in the Carrizo Gorge. The Sponsor Group is not certain of responsibilities or any plans by the Railroad, the County or the Anza Borrego State Park for fire prevention or fighting fires.
 - f. Possible Remedies- Notify the landowners and stake holders of Tamarisk regrowth so they can contact those responsible. The Railroad and the County Fire Authority should be contacted for responsibility and any plans for fire fighting in the Gorge, at railroad yards, stations and on other tracks.
 - g. Other -
5. JACUMBA, WEST OF BRIDGES AREA
- a. General
 - b. Land Owners – Various, Miller Towing, White Sage Farms, BLM, SDG&E
 - c. Other Stakeholders – U.S. Border Patrol, Nature Conservancy, Anza Borrego State Park
 - d. Threats- Heavier brush than in Jacumba Town Central. The enlarged Boulevard substation, the announced solar panel farms along Old Hwy 80, along Interstate 8 and the planned Wind Farms (Tule) in McCain Valley will pose major fire threats to the area East of Boulevard (JHS) and possibly affect our water supply aquifers.
 - e. Possible Remedies- Suggest that brush be cleared from Old 80 and road shoulders expanded on each side of old 80 west of Jacumba as the County has already done on Hwy 94 and the far west part of old 80. Continue to challenge the County and BLM on the fire dangers of wind and solar farms planned around Boulevard and in McCain Valley.
 - f. Other -
6. JACUMBA, EAST TO IMPERIAL COUNTY AREA
- a. General –

**JACUMBA HOT SPRINGS (JHS) SPONSOR GROUP WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PROGRAM (CWPP) RESPONSE**

- b. Owners – BLM, County Department Of Airports, Southern California Glider Association, Reagan Shallal, Jacumba Valley Ranch, SDG&E, Sempra International Corporation, Desert View Tower and smaller parcel owners
 - c. Other Stakeholders – U.S. Border Patrol
 - d. Threats- Does SDG&E and Sempra International expect the County Fire Authority to respond to fire calls at their new facilities? I suspect they do, in view of their increased tax responsibilities and their MOUS with the county. Substations are notorious fire threats. It is very possible that a fire there could impact the entire Jacumba Hot Springs area.
 - e. Possible Remedies- As previously discussed, this huge new responsibility needs to be communicated to the County Fire Authority. The Authority needs to make Jacumba staffing, training and equipment plans for these facilities
 - f. Other –
7. DE ANZA RESORT AREA
- g. General –
 - h. Owners – Dave and Helen Landman
 - i. Other Stakeholders – Anza Borrego State Park, Pacific – Imperial Railroad
 - j. Threats- See previous Tamarisk threat descriptions and remedies. RV trailers are susceptible to fires. A safe evacuation route from De Anza to the Interstate is also of major concern. Currently there is only one narrow 3-mile unpaved road if emergency evacuation is required for visitors and the several hundred full time residents living there.
 - k. Possible Remedies- Suggest brush clearance for an additional 15 feet on each side of Carrizo Creek Road to facilitate emergency evacuation.
 - l. Other -

Sincerely,

Howard W. Cook, Jacumba Hot Springs Sponsor Group Chair