

Day Fire Makes History

Ronni Wilde, Condor Editor

For the first time in Pine Mountain Club history, a major fire swept within a few miles of our picturesque community, seriously threatening to destroy life as we know it here. A recommended evacuation (the highest evacuation status the fire department can issue) sent residents scrambling to safety, packing only the most important personal items.

Meanwhile, dozens of fire trucks, countless firemen and scores of other emergency crews converged upon PMC to make a stand against the fire if it crested the top of Mt. Pinos and started down the mountain. Then, we all watched and waited, wondering if the Day Fire would come and how long it would take to find out what fate had in store for us.

Thankfully, the fire never came here, and by Saturday, Sept. 30, the evacuation was lifted and PMC residents cautiously began to trickle back into the area. On Sunday, Oct. 1, an unexpected, early-in-the-season rainstorm brought a welcome weather change and fresh, crisp air to PMC, and by 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 2, the fire was fully contained.

The Day Fire – which burned out of control in the Los Padres National Forest for a full four weeks – taught us many lessons both personally and as a community. This issue of the Condor – late to press due to the lost week we all endured – is dedicated to our collective experiences with the historic Day Fire.

The Day Fire History

On Labor Day Monday, Sept. 4, a small fire began in a remote wilderness area near Castaic. The day after PMC's Oktoberfest celebration, not much thought was given to the fire, which was miles away from this area. For the next week, the fire grew, burning in inaccessible, remote areas in the rugged

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Scenes such as this became all-too-familiar in the Mountain Communities in September.

PMCPOA Launches Dynamic New Website

Rosalie Maggio, member, Communications Committee

Have we got something for you! Although it's not exactly new, our PMC website has a new name, a dynamic new look, lots of new information, and a logical structure that makes it efficient and easy to use. See it at www.pinemountainclub.net.

Jerry Ferris, our able webmaster, completely re-designed and re-built the website to be more attractive, practical and helpful.

If you're used to www.pmcpoa.com you can continue to use it. You'll

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mountains around Lake Pyramid. Though the plume of smoke was disturbing and the skies grew smokier, the fire remained unthreatening.

By Monday, Sept. 11, however, the Day Fire managed to burn all the way to the Interstate 5 freeway, causing traffic closures in both the north- and southbound directions off and on for the early part of that week.

As the winds shifted and the humidity levels dropped, the fire seemingly developed a mind of its own, switching directions periodically and keeping firefighters guessing. One day, the flames would roar west toward Ojai, Santa Paula and Fillmore and the next, they would make their way north toward Lockwood Valley, skirting around Hungry Valley Recreation Area.

Over the next week, still not much thought was given to the fire threatening Pine Mountain Club, but Lockwood Valley residents were on alert, and were given a precautionary evacuation by the end of the week.

One week later, on Monday, Sept. 18, the reality of the Day Fire set in, when the wind shifted our way and the skies over PMC grew orange. By mid-afternoon, the smoke was so thick that Mt. Pinos disappeared in the fog, and it grew so dark outside that the crickets began to chirp in the middle of the day. As the ashes fell, tensions rose.

The next day, the first in what was to become a series of town meetings was hastily called, with about 150 local residents in attendance. The rest of the week, the fire stayed primarily on a westerly course, focusing most of the attention on the Ojai area.

On Saturday, Sept. 23, town meetings with representatives



An arsenal of equipment and aircraft was used to fight the fire.

from the Kern County Fire Department, National Forest Service, California Highway Patrol, Kern County Sheriff's Department and other emergency services were held, and though the tone was serious, we all still hoped for the best. Early the following week, however, the situation escalated, and the Day Fire jumped over lines at its south end, causing recommended evacuations of Lockwood Valley, Lake of the Woods, Pinon Pines, Cuddy Valley, Camp Scheideck and Pine Mountain Club, with a precautionary evacuation ordered for Frazier Park.

For three excruciatingly long days, residents of the Mountain Communities waited to see what would happen, watching television news reports, checking pertinent web sites and calling

anyone with information about the fire for updates. By Friday, fire crews had made substantial progress on the battle, and the danger began to subside. On Saturday, Sept. 30, another round of town meetings was held, and by that night, the evacuation was over.

As of this writing, the Day Fire is still burning within the lines of containment, and crews are working diligently to gain control over it, but it remains to be seen how long the flames will actually continue to burn. Life in PMC and a sense of normalcy have returned, and for that we are thankful and grateful. In the pages of this Condor, we'll take a look at some of the policies and procedures -- as well as the stories -- that came out of our experiences with the Day Fire.

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still arrive at the new, improved website.

Take a spin on the new site (www.pinemountainclub.net) and find detailed and accurate information about the Association, the Clubhouse, recreational opportunities, what to see and do in Southern California, coming events, important phone numbers, current weather data, hours of

operation for all local businesses, and more.

Our informative website will continue to be perfected until you can't imagine how you managed without it. Make it your first stop when you want to know anything about life on the hill. And if you can't find information that you think should be there, let us know and we'll hunt it up.

This is your website. Try it, you'll like it!