

Bennett Valley VOICE

Vol. 17 No.4

Bennett Valley Homeowners Association

Fall 1994

FIRE SAFETY IN BENNETT VALLEY

Savage wildland fires throughout California have again reminded us of the nature of the terrain where we live: *it is designed to burn*.. Yet it is possible to live in a fire-prone area and still feel reasonably safe about surviving a wildfire.

Confidence depends on two important notions: that you understand that fire may well happen to you, and that *you become your own line of defense*. Even though our Bennett Valley Fire Protection Department is the "best", we cannot rely totally on them in a major brushfire outbreak; we must take responsibility for creating our own firesafe homes and surroundings.

FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Is there flammable vegetation dangerously close to your house? Brush and flammable vegetation, especially when dry, are tinder for fire. Clear a space at least 30 feet from your home. Cut all overhanging branches down, they can shoot a fire right to your roof.

Have you landscaped with the right plants? Fire resistant plants (lawn, ivy, iceplants, rosemary, periwinkle, etc.) help slow down a fire once it has started.

Will your roof burn? Research has shown that wood shingle roofs, treated or not, are the most susceptible to the spread of fire. Use fire resistant materials. Clean all needles and leaves from the roof, eaves, and rain gutters.

Is your chimney safe? Have you put spark arresters on all chimneys and other vents where flames and sparks can escape?

Is your neighborhood firesafe? Talk to your neighbors about setting up a firesafe program in your community. Unprotected homes are threats to your own.

CDF PROPOSAL FOR BENNETT RIDGE

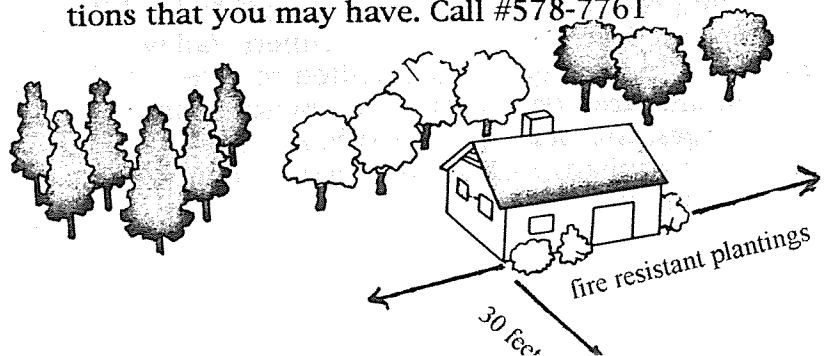
The California Department of Forestry and the Bennett Valley Fire District have approached the Bennett Ridge Community Association with a proposal that could significantly reduce the hazards of a wildfire situation in their area. The proposed project would be large-scale and could involve hundreds of acres in and surrounding the community. These fire agencies are interested in doing a community wide fuel abatement project which would serve as a model for other communities.

The project could include:

- *Professional assistance to determine what trees and bushes constitute a fire hazard.
- *Equipment and labor provided by CDF, PG&E, and other agencies.
- *Emergency facilities such as helicopter access and alternative roadways.
- *Insurance rate adjustments.

The Bennett Ridge Community Association has agreed to serve as the convener for a community meeting to discuss this proposal which would potentially involve every homeowner on the Ridge. Many of the details of this project are open to discussion, and it is very important to have community input to determine the viability of such a project.

Bennett Ridge is scouting the way for the rest of the Valley to be involved in similar projects. If you have specific questions about the fire safety of your home or property, our Bennett Valley Fire District gladly answers any questions that you may have. Call #578-7761





MAJOR SUBDIVISION PROPOSED ON SONOMA MOUNTAIN

Sonoma Mt. serves as an inspirational backdrop to all of us in the Valley. Because the proposed subdivision is in a section of the mountain which is included in the County's Scenic Landscape Unit (SLU) category, and is zoned Scenic Resource (SR) plus a Scenic Corridor designation, there are very restrictive development controls to protect its visual beauty.

Developer Ron Neuman, working with consultant Mike Morrison of Common Ground, has submitted a proposal to subdivide this 200 acre parcel into 8 building sites. The property has split zoning; the portion above the 1200' contour line is zoned 40 acre density, while the part below is zoned 15 acre density. Sonoma Mt. Rd. bisects the property at approximately 1100' level. Mr. Neuman proposes 5 lots on the upper (south) side of the road, and 3 lots on the lower (north) side. He is transposing lots in the higher density area to the area "protected" by a lower density designation.

The B.V.H.A. Board, the Sonoma Mountain Pres-

ervation Committee, and the Bennett Ridge Community Association have expressed their major concerns in letters to the County, Mr. Morrison, and to Supervisor Cale. It is imperative that any development on this property be sensitively planned in order to minimize any irreversible negative impacts. Specific protective measures as dictated by the General Plan and the Bennett Valley Area Plan need to be rigorously applied to this project in order to protect the mountain and valley.

Our sincere intention is to work cooperatively with Nick Chase, County Planner, and Mike Morrison in order to produce a development plan that will be of long term benefit to everyone. We welcome your input to the county. Contact Nick Chase at County Planning, #526-3577. (A.P. #055-121-02, MJS 94-509)

Lack of space has precluded including a more detailed statement of our concerns, but for further information or suggestions of what you can do, please leave a message on our Hotline #526-3577.

B.V.H.A. ADVISORY BOARD NOW OFFICIAL

All of you loyal readers of the "Voice" are aware that in the last few years there have been several occasions when we felt that forces beyond our control were directing matters of immediate concern to us, and that we were without a decision-making voice. As you will recall, community meetings culminated in the formation of a group to explore ways in which Bennett Valley residents could obtain control of our own "destiny."

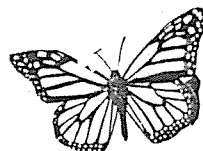
Out of all this activity came a Board of Supervisors' Resolution, adopted July 12, 1994, that gives the B.V.H.A. official recognition. This Resolution states that the B.V.H.A. is hereby recognized as an advisory body to the County of Sonoma and shall be responsible for reviewing and making recommendations on proposed development projects within the Bennett Valley Study Area, including, but not limited to general plan and area (specific) plan amendments, zone changes, use permits, and subdivisions, regarding compliance with the Sonoma County General Plan and the Bennett Valley Area Plan. The B.V.H.A. shall also serve as a forum for

community participation in the formation of policy and/or regulations that materially affect Bennett Valley, and provide a bridge for communication between governmental agencies and the general public.

We are grateful to Supervisor Mike Cale for this Resolution, and with your support and input, we now know that our voices will be heard.

Bennett Valley Community Day

Bob Simas, President of the B.V. Volunteer Firefighter's Association wants to thank the community for their wonderful participation in Community Day which even exceeded the success of years past. We want to thank Bob, his fellow firefighters, and the MacIvers for providing us with such a fun-filled day at beautiful Matanzas Creek Winery.



articles contributed by Michael Bates, Tamara BoulbeeDoug Martin, and Marge Simon.

MEMO FROM THE BOARD

ELECTION NIGHT OCTOBER 19th

7:30 p.m. Fire Station

Each October, three of the nine Board positions are open to election. This year Tamara Boulton and Jerry Toso (who was appointed to Michael Bates' remaining term) are running for re-election. Nancy Bateson, after two decades on the Board, has decided to retire. She was a dedicated and loyal Board member, and we owe her many thanks for her many years of service.

If you are interested in being a candidate, please call Sam Dakin at 526-3577. Serving on the Board is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in the Valley. The only requirement is to be a member of the B.V.H.A. and to have a strong commitment to uphold the tenets of the Bennett Valley Area Plan.

In an effort to streamline the election process, we are requesting that candidates submit their intention by October 17th in order to be placed on the ballot. There can be no nominations from the floor on election night. We want to encourage you to participate in this process because we need committed leadership in our ever continuing efforts to preserve our Valley.

Enclosed in your "Voice" is a brochure which we designed to inform newcomers of Bennett Valley happenings, services, and organizations. We thought that our membership might also find it useful, so we expanded its distribution. We would appreciate any suggestions for revisions as we will update it from time to time.

In the January Voice we will have an in debt discussion of possible plans for the Dane property (hill slope behind Woodside). We will also be requesting your opinions and concerns about this plan via a returned survey slip.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Sam Dakin	Treasurer
Eve Boling	Voice Editor
Bill Sullivan	Geoff Hornsby
Marge Simon	Jerry Toso

VALLEY VIEWS

A new column of tidbits and bits for your information



Litter, Litter, Everywhere

You must have noted with growing disgust the accumulation of trash along Bennett Valley Rd. Efforts to have the County provide clean-up have been to no avail because there is simply not the manpower to deploy to this task.

Some spirited residents have braved the traffic and removed some of the debris, and for this we are very grateful. Because it has become our responsibility to do our own litter-management, we encourage you to plan to take time (with a bag and plastic gloves) to clean up a few feet of the road at times when you are not hurrying into town or dashing home. You can be like the Brownies who secretly did the chore of others.

We will not know who you are, but bask in your anonymity knowing that you have done a grand and glorious thing and we thank you.

The Golf Course Update

As you may have recently read in the Press Democrat, golf course land acquisition negotiations between Santa Rosa and developer Dennis Hunter are in the final stages. After many phone calls to key players in this scheme, we have been unable to glean any further definitive information.


The article in the Press Democrat contained several misleading statements which the staff writer persisted in printing even after the truth was pointed out to him. The most blatant misinformation was that "Hunter had received permission years ago to build 17 exclusive homes on the property..." The truth is that he obtained permits only for a seven home subdivision. Since that time he acquired an additional 37 acres across Bennett Valley Rd. which he could subdivide into 3 additional home sites. The difference between 17 parcels and 10 parcels puts a different price tag on the property.

Know that we will continue to be very involved in each stage of the complicated planning process ahead, and we will keep you abreast of any new developments.

GRANGE SPAGHETTI FEED
Sat. Oct. 29 5 to 8 pm
Grange Hall

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SANTA ROSA, CA
PERMIT NO. 945

BENNETT VALLEY
VOICE
BENNETT VALLEY
HOMEOWNERS ASSOC.
P. O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405



Special Community Meeting with

Sheriff Mark Ihde

**Tues. November 1st at 7:00 p.m.
Bennett Valley Fire Station**

Our county is growing and along with that growth comes change. Sheriff Ihde wants to hear from us and discuss our concerns regarding law enforcement in our community.