

Newsletter



Southern California Association of Foresters & Fire Wardens

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

2020-2021

OFFICERS

President— Tim Ernst—LFD
First Vice President — Nathan Judy—ANF
Second Vice Pres.— Dave Fowler—SLU
Secretary Tim Chavez—RRU
Treasurer Phil Johnson—ORC

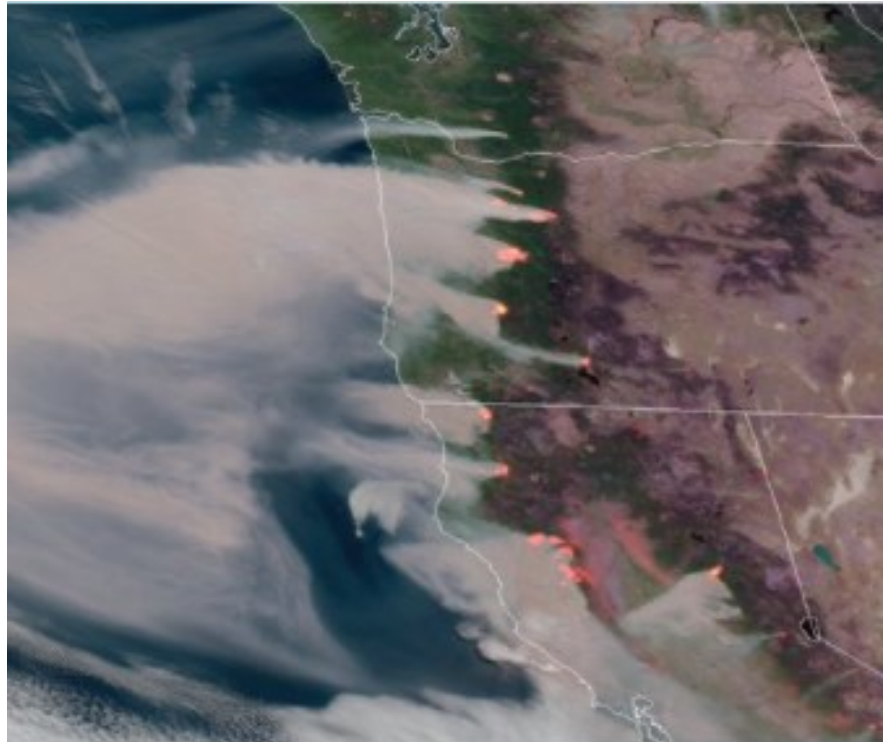
DIRECTORS

Dan Snow—BDF
Trevor Johnson—VNC
Kevin Johnson—LAC
Troy Whitman—SCE
Curt Schwarm-LPF
Bryan Gaines-SQF
Rusty McCulley—BDU
Chris Childers - SBC
Brook Spelman—CSR
Stan Hill—CNF
Josh Black—MVU
Ira Peshkin—KRN

Ed Shabro—Vendor Representative
Doug Lannon—Arrangements Chair
Don Forsyth—Safety Chair
Nick Ferrari—Publicity Chair

We, the members of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens, do band together for the purpose of strengthening inter-agency cooperation, fire safety coordination, and fellowship.

**An Association dedicated to the
Training and Safety of Southern
California Wildland Firefighters
for 92 years.**



Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens
April 2, 2021, held virtually.



Foresters and Fire Wardens Contact Information

Mailing: SCAFFW



c/o Tim Chavez 132 S. San Jacinto Ave., San Jacinto, CA 92583



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Did you or are you thinking of changing your E-mail address? Please remember to contact the SCAFFW at SCAFFW@GMAIL.com and let us know so we can send you your newsletters and other important infor-



2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF FORESTERS AND FIRE WARDENS

The board of directors will begin working on the programs and speakers for the **90TH Annual Wildland Fire Training and Safety Conference** that will be held on **May 5-6, 2022** at **Camp Pilgrim Pines** in beautiful Oak Glen, California. This promises to be another exciting and informative conference and we look forward to seeing you back at Pilgrim Pines.



You can now go directly to our web site by scanning the QRC (quick response code) with your smart phone.



Cover Photo

September 8, 2020, unprecedented fire activity in northern and central California.

Above left, El Dorado Fire in Yucaipa.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF FORESTERS AND FIRE WARDENS 90 TH ANNUAL WILDLAND FIRE TRAINING AND SAFETY CONFERENCE.

May 5-6, 2022

Check our web site for further information www.scaffw.org



BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING NOTES

The meeting of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens was called to order by President Ernst at 0902 hours at held via Google Meet on April 2, 2021.

Officers and Directors Present:

- Tim Ernst – President- Los Angeles Fire Dept.
- Nathan Judy –First Vice President- Angeles National Forest
- Dave Fowler –Second Vice President- CAL FIRE – San Luis Obispo Co.
- Phil Johnson – Treasurer – Orange County Fire Authority
- Tim Chavez – Secretary, CAL FIRE – Riverside County
- Doug Lannon – Arrangements Chair
- Don Forsyth – Safety Chair
- Nick Ferrari- Publicity Chairman- Los Angeles Fire Dept.
- Chris Childers – Santa Barbara County Fire Dept
- Stan Hill – Cleveland National Forest
- Ira Peshkin- Kern County Fire Dept.
- Kevin Johnson – Los Angeles County Fire Dept.
- Troy Whitman – Southern California Edison
- Curt Schwarm – Los Padres National Forest
- Brook Spelman – CAL FIRE – Southern Region
- Rusty McCulley – CAL FIRE – San Bernardino Co.
- Trevor Johnson – Ventura County Fire Dept.
- Dan Snow – San Bernardino National Forest
- Garrett Huff- Member- Santa Barbara County Fire Dept.
- Matt Ahern- Member- San Bernardino National Forest
- Josh Black- Member-CAL FIRE San Diego Co.

Officers and Directors Absent:

- Brian Gaines – Sequoia National Forest
- Ed Shabro – Vendor Representative

Guests:

There were no guests.

Minutes: President Ernst presented the minutes of the Special March meeting. Motion by Chairman Forsyth, seconded by VP Judy, to approve the minutes. The motion was approved.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Phil Johnson presented his report covering Feb 5 to April 2, 2021:

Balance as of	\$40653.75
Receipts:	
Dues and Conference Registration/Paypal	
\$184.53 (refunded)	
Total Receipts:	\$.00
Disbursements:	
Total Disbursements:	\$.00

Balance on hand:	\$40653.75
Last year at this time:	\$43522.53

Motion by Director Childers, seconded by Chairman Forsyth to approve the Treasurer's report as presented. The motion was approved.

Committee Reports:

Arrangements:

San Bernardino County is at the Orange Tier. This would allow Pilgrim Pines to operate at 25% capacity. And no overnight stay. If the group were broken up, the lodge could hold 100, 100 in the café. Their kitchen will not re-open until 6/1. It is possible we could have a conference June 9-11 with the kitchen open and the bunkhouses open. Their only commitment is a wedding on 6/4.

At this point a discussion/debate occurred on whether to cancel, hold a 1-day conference in May, or a 2- day conference in June. Items discussed were fire season, Pendleton Fire School, whether several speakers would be available, travel by Association members for a 1 day conference, the Board workload for a June event, a virtual option. At this point a motion was made by Director McCulley and seconded by Chairman Forsyth to have a vote for either cancel or 2-day conference in June. The result of the vote was 13 to cancel and 4 for June meeting.

There is a question whether Pilgrim Pines will roll our deposit over yet again for a 2022 conference. Arrangements Chairman Lannon will check into that.

Exhibits and Demonstrations:

No report

Registration and Membership:

Director Fowler proposed that we accept the \$5 Membership fee. We need to develop a process to send members their cards if they pay. Fowler and Trevor Johnson will get together with the web host and see what the options are.

Entertainment and Raffle:

No report

Publicity:

Historian:

No report

Safety:

No report

Newsletter:

Good results posting link to newsletter on various Social Media platforms.

Program:

VP Judy advised all the Board Members to contact their speakers and advise of the cancellation and confirm contact has been made.

Old Business: None

Life Membership Recommendations: None

Gary Helming Award Nominations: None

To be Discussion at next Board meeting.

New Business: None

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Directors of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens will be held May 7. Details to follow.



The meeting was adjourned at 11:45

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Chavez,
Association Secretary

MINUTES FROM THE EMERGENCY MEETING

MARCH 11, 2021

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING NOTES

The Ad Hoc meeting of the Southern California Association of Foresters and Fire Wardens was called to order by President Ernst on March 11 at 0900 hours via Google Meets.

Officers and Directors Present:

- Tim Ernst – President- Los Angeles Fire Dept.
- Nathan Judy –First Vice President- Angeles National Forest
- Dave Fowler –Second Vice President- CAL FIRE – San Luis Obispo Co.
- Phil Johnson – Treasurer – Orange County Fire Authority
- Tim Chavez – Secretary, CAL FIRE – Riverside County
- Doug Lannon – Arrangements Chair
- Don Forsyth – Safety Chair
- Nick Ferrari- Publicity Chairman- Los Angeles Fire Dept.
- Chris Childers – Santa Barbara County Fire Dept
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- Kevin Johnson – Los Angeles County Fire Dept.
- Troy Whitman – Southern California Edison
- Curt Schwarm – Los Padres National Forest
- Brook Spelman – CAL FIRE – Southern Region
- Josh Black– CAL FIRE – San Diego County
- Ed Shabro – Vendor Representative
- Trevor Johnson – Ventura County Fire Dept.
- Dan Snow – San Bernardino National Forest
- Garrett Huff- Member- Santa Barbara County Fire Dept.
- Matt Ahern- Member- San Bernardino National Forest

Officers and Directors Absent:

- Stan Hill – Cleveland National Forest
- Rusty McCulley – CAL FIRE – San Bernardino Co.
- Brian Gaines– Sequoia National Forest

Guests:

Life Member Chief John Hawkins

An ad hoc discussion of the plans for the upcoming conference occurred as follows:

SITUATION REPORT

- San Bernardino in RED Tier. Schools are open. If the county goes to the Orange tier as anticipated, they will allow 20% capacity indoor meetings.

- Camp Pilgrim Pines has approval to hold an in-person event with attendance restrictions (per identified sites/buildings) based on the County Tier
 - o Lodge 56 occupancy load
 - o Cafeteria 65 occupancy load
 - o Bunk Cabins 6 occupancy load (unless “module as one”)
 - 2. IN-PERSON CONFERENCE DISCUSSION
 - Don Forsythe & Curt Schwarm will develop our COVID SOG document which will establish Board requirements for all attendees for entirety of event
 - Due to attendance restrictions, we will need to develop/confirm an overall camp occupancy limit, and offer a virtual streaming opportunity for anyone interested (reduced fee)
 - Due to specific camp facility restrictions, (i.e., main lodge 56 person max occupancy), we will need to livestream presentation into alternate camp location (e.g., cafeteria) This has implications to feeding, bingo, raffle
 - After date of the next Board meeting, we will have an on-site meeting/tour of Camp to finalize proposed COVID SOG’s, confirm IT capability to livestream, and confirm location(s) for overflow presentation viewing. All welcome, recommended attendance = Safety, Arrangements, Ist VP, 2nd VP, Pres. Snow and Lannon will conduct walk-through
- Internet bandwidth is a concern for virtual co-presentation There are three possibilities at this point
- In-Person
 - In-Person with virtual option
 - All virtual

- 3. VIRTUAL CONFERENCE DISCUSSION
 - Off-site virtual conference (mirroring live conference) attendance fee. Motion by VP Judy and seconded by Childers to be \$25 total (includes \$5 annual membership fee). 6 hours per day or single day possible
 - 4. PRESENTATION OF CURRICULUM
 - VP Judy will have program set by April 2 meeting.
 - 5. NEW BUSINESS
 - All Board members requested to assist BC Ferrari with recommendations for increasing our social media presence (send ideas, pictures, etc)
 - Ernst will write a SIT-REP for posting on website with update on 2021 Conference
 - Ernst will send correspondence to Agency heads with SIT-REP and request for support
 - 6. REMINDER OF NEXT MEETINGS
 - a. APRIL 2, 2021
- The meeting was adjourned at 1030

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Chavez,
Association Secretary



Excerpted from the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center Blog,

Rethinking When, Where, and Why We Carry Fire Shelters

[FEBRUARY 23, 2021](#) / [WILDFIRELESSONS](#)

By Brent Woffinden, Fire Management Officer

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Park Service – New England States

The pending 2021 fire season will be my last as a permanent federal employee. Over the years of my service I often had pause in carrying a fire shelter when I knew that it would not be a useful component to my Personal Protective Equipment.

The thought of being involved in a fire entrapment or burnover incident is a real and serious concern for all wildland fire fighters. The ubiquitous presence of fire shelters as a significant component of our PPE numbs us to its importance. Our most important tool in entrapment avoidance is the collective knowledge of weather and fire behavior that should guide how we interact with the dynamic nature of wildfire.

While I am not an advocate for eliminating the use of fire shelters, when we understand and train for their proper application and importance, we will be able to move beyond our reliance on shelters when their presence is either unnecessary or dangerous.

Sound Decisions on Proper Engagement and Disengagement of Tactics

My career began in 1985 working as part of the Cal Poly Max 2 Crew, a 20-person wildland fire crew comprised of college students. Our first shift of our first fire of the season was on the Wheeler Fire near Ojai, California.

We had started to cut handline off a road going up Matilija Canyon when the fire blew up and made a run down the canyon. As engines momentarily disengaged from



structure protection, we did the same, leaving a partially completed fireline to escape the advancing fire. By the time we had reached the crew buggies, the fire was on both sides of the road and engulfing the vehicles as they made a slow egress to safety. As this was my first fire, I thought all this was normal.

We continued to engage in suppressing the Wheeler Fire for the next 19 days as it moved onto the Los Padres National Forest. Three years later, as a member of a 20-person Alaskan hotshot crew, while engaged in suppressing a large tundra fire near Alaska's Warring Mountains, a wind switch occurred, rapidly changing direction of the fire and forcing our crew to use an escape route to a previously identified safety zone.

In both of these situations—in California and Alaska—crew leadership made sound decisions on proper engagement and disengagement of tactics based on fire behavior that remain with me to this day.

Actions Taken in a Compromised Situation

In 2005, while serving as a Fire Management Officer (FMO) based on the Texas coast we were applying fire on Matagorda Island. A trainee from the Fire Use Training Center and I were doing some interior ignitions when we temporarily lost radio communications with the primary ignition crew and were in a compromised situation.

The trainee asked if we should find a location to deploy fire shelters. With the average fuel loading exceeding 8 tons per acre this was not a viable option. He did not have a familiarity with the terrain and fuel type. I assured him that we would find a suitable spot where deployment of shelters would not be needed and if no such spot could be located we would use one of the several different types of firing devices to create a suitable safety zone. We found a suitable area where the fire worked its way around us without the need to exercise the emergency firing option.

The Questioning of Carrying a Fire Shelter



I share these three examples because, while in all three instances fire shelters were carried, they definitely would have led to a much worse outcome if a shelter had been deployed in fuel conditions that would not have been survivable.

Since that auspicious initial fire and the 36 years of wild and prescribed fire since, like the vast majority of U.S. fire personnel, I have never exercised the option of deploying a fire shelter. As much as I would like to attribute this to the application of sound fire practices and tactics, luck has also played a role as there are times when circumstances dictate the need for such use. Having the ready option to deploy a fire shelter should therefore be available. That being said, there are also times when carrying a fire shelter has a neutral or negative consequence for wildland firefighters.

Consider Eliminating Fire Shelters on Prescribed Fires

For instance, when planning for and implementing prescribed fires, the need to carry fire shelters in most, if not all, cases should be eliminated through proper planning. The planning process for prescribed fires requires us (federal employees) to assess the risk to firefighters when completing the “complexity analysis” of all prescribed fire plans. If on the high end of the complexity analysis, we must ask ourselves why we are engaging in the implementation of a high-risk operation.

Furthermore, if the risk is both required and accepted by line personnel and leadership, then fire shelters should be considered and discussed in the operational briefing. If on the moderate to low end of the complexity analysis, then fire shelters should not be carried or provide the option to not carry one as they are unnecessary.

This spring my current home unit plans on implementing prescribed fires all with low to moderate risk based on the completed complexity analysis. Those on the moderate end of risk are due to other factors not related to fire behavior. One example is a planned burn on a small island in the middle of a river in which we plan to burn three acres of grass. This risk is on the boat ride to the island in which having the extra bulk and weight of fire shelters

would reduce safety rather than enhance it. The other planned fires are on coastal islands, in urban areas or open fields with insufficient vegetation to allow for Rx fire to get out of control sufficient to require shelter deployment.

If a local unit accepts the rationale for implementing high complexity prescribed fire, then by all means fire shelters should be carried. During the briefing, it should be explained why such a tool is needed and reinforce the measures taken to avoid its use. In the same line of thinking, if a high level of risk is taken, then that risk should be acknowledged via hazardous duty pay for those that qualify (line assignments and employment status).

When, Where, and Why

In summary, as the risk of engagement with wild-fire will continue to increase, we should rethink when, where, and why we carry fire shelters.

WHEN: When engaged in initial attack or certain large fires. Fire managers and incident commanders should be able to decide when there is a need to carry fire shelters. (For example, when mopping-up in the rain the need to carry a fire shelter is not necessary and having it in one’s gear subjects it to undue wear and tear as well as adding weight and reduced efficiency to individual firefighters.)

WHERE: Where the fuels would allow for rapid safe deployment. (For instance, not in boreal or palmetto forests or other fuel types where deployment is detrimental to survival.)

WHY: If there is valid rationale for fire personnel to carry a fire shelter then the only reason for use would be as a last resort when all other options are not viable (retreating to the black/safety zone, etc.). By thinking about When, Where, and Why to carry fire shelters—rather than having our shelters be a heavy, bulky and expensive resource that sits in our packs being sat on and subject to abrasion by dirt, dust and smoke—will make us all better students of fire and how we engage with it. See Comments at : <https://wildfirelessons.blog/2021/02/23/rethinking-when-where-and-why-we-carry-fire-shelters/>