

# **BORDER AGENCY FIRE COUNCIL**



Cowboy Fire

## **Year End Report 2010**



## **Border Agency Fire Council**

The Border Agency Fire Council (BAFC) is made up of thirty-one United States and Mexican government agencies and organizations representing fire protection, law enforcement, legislators, emergency responders, natural resource managers, and elected officials that address public safety issues pertaining to wildfire along the U.S/Mexico international border. It is a fact that people from other countries have and will continue to enter the United States illegally by crossing from Mexico into the United States. In an effort to stop the flow of illegal immigration, in 1995 the United States government began “Operation Gatekeeper”, in an effort to tighten border security near the city of Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. It instead pushed the crossers to the rugged east of the county and started a new immigration pattern. In desperation, people started entering on foot from the eastern part of Tijuana and without knowing, a trip that formerly took a few hours along the coast, turned into several days and involved a strenuous hike through rugged wilderness. People were not prepared for the summer heat that swelters or the winter where the temperature drops below freezing at the higher elevations.

Many of these people simply didn’t understand the difficult conditions they would encounter and this lack of knowledge proved to be life threatening.

The Border Agency Fire Council was formally created during the 1996 fire season, with the first meetings conducted in the fall of 1995 due to a dramatic increase in wildfire activity in southeastern San Diego County. Investigators had determined that improperly extinguished campfires left by immigrants and torches being carried to guide their way at night were causing these fires, as they traveled through the San Ysidro Mountains. Fire agency officials concluded that these two activities were responsible for a huge increase in the number of wildfires and needed to be addressed. This meant hundreds of people were on foot every day in steep, rugged terrain with the potential of wildfires to start around them.

As people continued to accidentally set fires, local officials realized that they were putting their own employees in danger. Emergency response vehicles could not travel safely on the narrow dirt paths, there were no safe places for firefighters to stage at, there were no safe places for rescue helicopters to land and there was little cooperation between both countries on these border fires. The Border Agency Fire Council was formed with the goal of saving lives, property and to protect the sensitive habitat of the border area.

Three important goals of the Border Agency Fire Council Charter are:

1. Establish and maintain relationships with Mexican government agencies.
2. Strengthen awareness and cooperation on biodiversity.
3. Continue effective fire prevention, suppression, and emergency response.

Through collaborative efforts, the BAFC has altered the environment that runs along the border to allow better access into the wildland for emergency responders. At the same time, threatened or endangered species or habitat is now more protected and even improved because of the partnership brought together through the BAFC. Member agencies have enhanced communication among responders on both sides of the border, and have reached out to people in both countries with fire safety messages.

An unprecedented binational Mutual Assistance Plan is in place and working because of this program. In 2008, BAFC members from the U.S. and Mexico updated the Mutual Assistance Plan. This important agreement establishes dispatching and resource utilization procedures that enable participating agencies to work cooperatively to suppress fires and take appropriate actions on floods and other emergency situations on border lands of the U.S. and Mexico.

## **Highlights and Issues of 2010**

The key to success has been the ability to establish partnerships that allows difficult issues or hurdles to be overcome. Without such partnerships, individual departments may not accomplish goals or objectives in a timely manner, if at all. This section of the annual report is a continuing opportunity to identify significant events that are unreported in the media or appear to go unnoticed except for members of the BAFC. The year 2010 was no exception, as the organization continued to collaborate with information on problems and potential solutions in an open forum.

This summary is only a snapshot of the activities and issues that partner agencies address each year. The BAFC believes its efforts have saved lives and property! This organization needs to continue and not fall prey to the fire history cycle of periodic extreme fire and life safety situations, often followed by several years of more routine or minimal fire problems. The BAFC must always be on alert through its emergency response agencies and political partners to potential problems that wait in the future.

### **Fire Season 2010**

The 2010 fire season in San Diego County was very fairly quiet with all but one of the fires being put out before they grew out of control. That one fire was the Cowboy Fire which burned 827 acres in September of 2010, costing 2.5 million to suppress.

The San Diego County Fire Authority (SDCFA) is in its third year; its annual budget is \$15.5 million. The SDCFA contracts with CAL FIRE, fire protection districts and volunteer fire companies to provide fire and Emergency Medical Service response 24 hours a day. SDCFA have added the additional chief officers and key staff positions to recruit, train and supervise operations.

## **Visits**

BAFC members continue to invite guests to participate in the meetings and perhaps to become members of the organization.

## **International Fuel Break**

Otay Mountain, a section of an international fuel break located at the border between the United States and Mexico in San Diego County, California, was completed in 2002 and receives annual maintenance work. This on-going project has several goals that include protection of life and property in adjacent communities, improved endangered species habitat, reducing the risk of large scale fires in the protected Tecate Cypress groves along the border. It also enhances national security as a result of open areas that deter illegal immigration across the border. The ongoing work on the International Fuel Break is an excellent example of fire mitigation on an interagency basis that provides multiple benefits to the local communities in both the United States and Mexico. CAL FIRE, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Comisión Nacional Forestal (CONAFOR) and the private Mexican Conservancy Pronatura work in partnership, to protect citizens and habitat from fire. In 2010, the agencies continued to rehabilitate the international fuel break to protect life and property by providing fire suppression control line opportunities.

## **The Sunrise Fuel Break**

The Sunrise Fuel Break in the Julian area also continues to receive needed maintenance to help protect the greater Julian area from fire. BLM and CAL FIRE have worked as partners to complete this necessary project.

## **Cold and Warm Weather Rescue Kits**

Fire is not the only threat to human life in this area. Extreme temperatures in the rugged mountainous area of San Diego County in summer and winter have taken lives since the migration pattern changed over the years. During the winter, temperatures drop to well below freezing in the higher elevations. During the summer, temperatures can rise to around 100 degrees. The Border Patrol has placed emergency rescue kits in specially marked underground sites within the area. The kits contain blankets, basic medical supplies, food and water. Kits are checked and maintained annually by the Border Patrol.

## **Rescues**

The U.S. Border Patrol continued to provide rescue service to international travelers. In 2010, they conducted 475 calls for medical aids.

## **Partnership with Mexico**

Mexico's emergency response agencies have been valued cooperators from the beginning. In keeping with the Mutual Assistance Plan, U.S. and Mexican firefighters remain available to assist each other automatically for wildland emergencies. The U.S. and Mexican consulates also play key roles in the education information process. In addition, Mexican firefighters continue to receive wildland fire training from CAL FIRE and the U.S. Forest Service.

### **Mutual Assistance Plan with Mexico and the U.S.**

The BAFC Operations Plan is the parent document that allows the details of the Mutual Assistance Plan to be developed and implemented. A steering committee made up of BAFC members, addresses future updates.

This unprecedented Mutual Assistance Plan has continued since 1998. The agreement between Mexico and the U.S. allows emergency responders, and ground resources only, to cross the border to protect lives and property. The Mexican Consulate, Mexican officials and U.S. fire officials review the document annually. This agreement continues to save valuable time in crossing boundary lines without delays and red tape. Emergency responders call immediately to the U.S. and Mexican authorities through their communications network. The response personnel may proceed directly to the scene for any necessary action without waiting for any approval process.

In June 2009, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative required all emergency personnel responding to a fire in Mexico, to have a passport in order to cross back into the U.S. - no exceptions.

Air resources are not allowed to cross the border at this time. The BAFC is pursuing a future change through the U.S. and Mexican Consulates to allow aircraft to fly one (1) mile across the border in order to suppress fires in either country. It is a possibility that a new air operations protocol may be established between countries in the future.

### **Training With Mexican Firefighters**

The 6th Border Protection Wildfire Course took place in 2010 in Mexico. The course was organized and instructed by 10 CAL FIRE, 2 U.S. Forest Service, CONAFOR, and SEFOA and was based on S-130 and S-190 fire behavior courses. There were 80 participants from local community volunteers and officials from Tijuana, Tecate, and Mexicali, Baja California, attended the training. Many of the volunteer firefighters that participated are ranchers who help each other when a fire breaks out.

There were exercises on the proper use of hand tools, how to sharpen them and specialized equipment such as chainsaws. This training was the first time that many of them had used these tools. There were also exercises on the use of hose lays, fire shelter deployment, and helicopter safety so that participants will know what to avoid and what to expect.

The course was 5 days in length with 2 days of field exercise and 3 days of classroom. These annual training opportunities are allowed through the Mutual Assistance Plan between the U.S. and Mexico.

### **Sister Forest Agreement - Cooperative Training with Mexico**

The U.S. Forest Service – Cleveland National Forest continues to meet with partners in Mexico to increase cooperation between the two countries. An example of the training available is a 32-hour Basic Firefighter “train” the trainer module. Training materials in Spanish are given to participants for them to conduct the Basic Firefighter training at their home units. This type of training is conducted under the Sister Forest Agreement that was signed with Mexico in 2001. This agreement also allows departments to participate in the Binational Education Day Camp.

### **Forest Health - Oak Mortality, Goldspotted Oak Borer**

Since 2002, oak mortality has occurred throughout the Cleveland National Forest Descanso District and surrounding communities. The Forest Health Protection group discovered a wood-boring species not previously reported attacking oaks. The new discovery of insect-caused injury is playing a pivotal role in the oak mortality. Drought stress may be contributing to oak mortality and hastening decline, but is not the sole cause.

### **The Forest Area Safety Task Force (FAST)**

FAST is a consortium of agencies, private companies, and non profits groups, working to make critical areas throughout the county less susceptible to catastrophic fire. Vegetation management has been their key to success. BAFC supports the pursuit of grants to remove dead, dying and diseased trees. Many members of BAFC are also members of FAST.

### **Coordinating with Other Emergency Groups**

Firefighters in Baja California have actively trained community members throughout the year. Groups include private citizens, the Mexican military, Bomberos del Municipio of Tecate, Bomberos and Protección Civil de Tijuana.

The County Office of Emergency Services continues its wildfire awareness campaign with other county agencies and private industry to register cell phones so people could be notified by the County’s Emergency Reverse 911 calling system.

Fire Agencies distributed DVDs to homeowners showing them how to create defensible space around their homes, in the Before the Threat Campaign.

### **Emergency Medical Services at Border**

Border Patrol is working with the County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Mexico on a plan for safe border crossing for medics and paramedics to make crossing the border faster and safer.

### **Environmental Cleanup**

This year the U.S. Forest Service crews continue to pick up garbage left behind by undocumented immigrants. More than 7,776 pounds of trash were removed from the wilderness areas. This was discontinued in 2010 due to budget issues.

### **Roads Continue to Serve**

The Border Patrol continues to maintain Truck Trails and associated smaller roads, improved through the efforts of the BAFC. These roads have made a huge difference in getting fire engines and other emergency response vehicles into this remote area. Partner agencies in the maintenance process also include the California National Guard and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **The Natural Resources Guidebook**

The Resource Protection Committee (a sub-committee of BAFC) worked on updating this guidebook. The guidebook is a valuable tool for response agencies that work in sensitive habitat within the BAFC boundaries. The goal of the guidebook is to empower responders to perform their duties and protect the environment at the same time. The guidebook contains an agency contact list with phone numbers matched to map quads, especially for fire fighters from outside of San Diego County.

### **Outreach**

Members of BAFC are also encouraged to speak on issues pertaining to the work of the council whenever the opportunity presents itself. BAFC representatives serve on boards, commissions and committees and attend meetings of other organizations that have similar public safety and environmental missions.

### **Safety Messages**

BAFC recognizes the importance of reminding people who are thinking about crossing the border, just how dangerous it is to travel on foot through this area. The Mexican Consulate added a Hazard Response/Emergency portal to their website. Staff from the BLM have posted signs along the border with the BAFC safety message.

### **BAFC Website**

The website is posted as a link on the Cleveland National Forest site. This has been effective in reducing paper usage when distributing council annual reports. Access to the website is [www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland).

# **BAFC MEMBER REPORTS**



## USDA Forest Service Cleveland National Forest

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**Sister Forest Agreement Cooperative Training with Mexico** – We continue to meet with partners in Mexico to increase cooperation between the two countries.

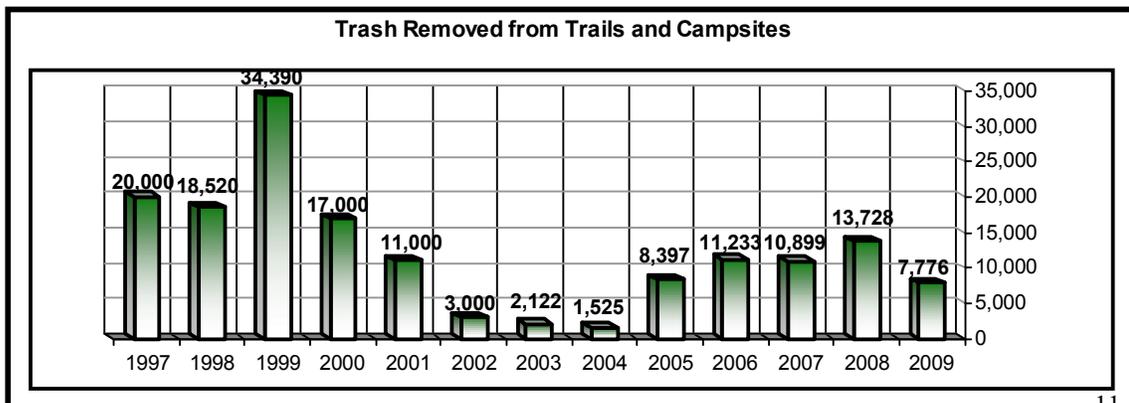
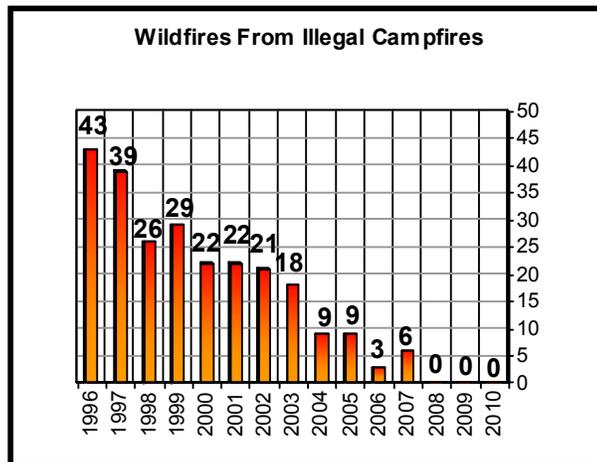
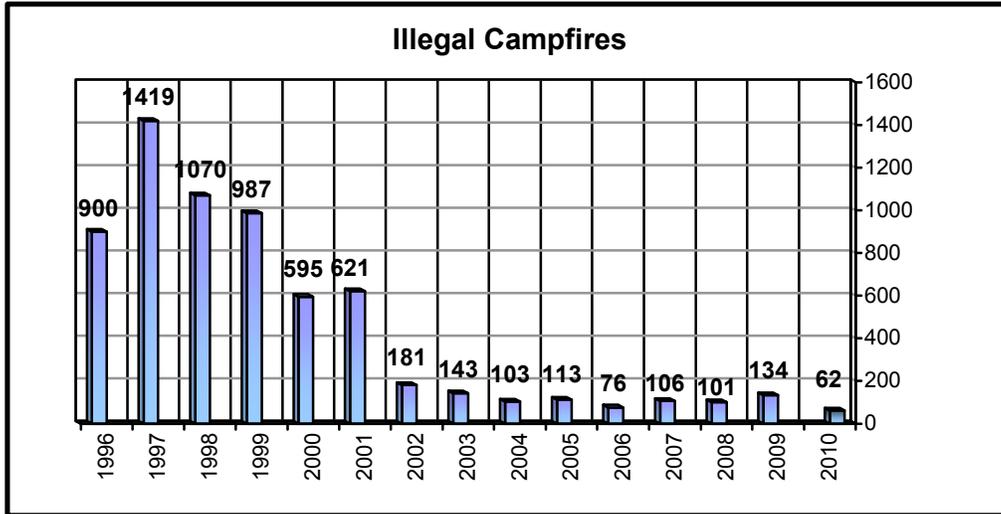
In 2010, the Cleveland NF, CAL FIRE, CONAFOR and SEFOA jointly sponsored and celebrated the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Binational Environmental Education event. The celebration took place in the US where children and adults from both sides of the border planted trees and participated in environmental education activities throughout the day. The children learned important lessons about natural resources and ecosystems that are shared between the two countries.

**Border Fire Prevention and Resource Protection Crew** - The Cleveland NF, located some five miles north of the international border with Mexico, is the southernmost of the national forests in California. Unauthorized travel, camping, and campfires in the southernmost portion of the Forest create significant resource impacts. The Cleveland NF has staff that hikes daily on user created trails to pick up trash, extinguish abandoned campfires, and rehabilitate damage to the land. In 2010, there were 62 fires within the Descanso Ranger District, but none of them escaped. The accomplishments of this crew have been the detection of over 6334 illegal campfires of which 241 escaped and burned 18,599 acres. The likely wildfire suppression cost savings of this early detection and suppression action is \$1 to \$5 million annually. Since 1997, more than 148,776 pounds of refuse has been collected and removed. In the past, the crew has also assisted the Bureau of Land Management with resource protection work in the Otay Mountain Wilderness Area.

**Safety Patrols** - During stormy conditions, CNF personnel along with Border Patrol crews check the roads and trails in the Forest for people who might have been caught unprepared. These interagency efforts have significantly reduced the deaths of immigrants during winter storms in the mountains.



# Cleveland National Forest Border Impact Statistics





## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

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CAL FIRE protects over 1.5 million acres of land within San Diego County. To support emergency operation over this area CAL FIRE operates a Monte Vista Inter-Agency Communications Center with the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) - Cleveland National Forest. CAL FIRE maintains 18 fire stations housing 26 front line fire engines. CAL FIRE supervises and fields 19 Inmate firefighter hand crews in cooperation with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation based out of four Conservation Camps located strategically throughout the county. Aerial firefighting resources are based at the Ramona Air Attack base jointly operated by CAL FIRE and the USFS, home to two air tanker planes and one air attack coordination plane. Additionally CAL FIRE operates 4 bulldozer units within the county. CAL FIRE also, through a Cooperative Fire Agreement coordinates the activities and response of the San Diego County Fire Authority (SDCFA). The SDCFA provides emergency response from numerous stations utilizing a combination of paid, reserve and volunteer firefighting personnel.

**Fire Season 2010** - San Diego County once again was in drought conditions due to minimal winter rains. This dry condition put the county at high risk of brush fires; however this same lack of rain prevented the growth of annual grasses thus reducing the potential for fires to get started. The sparse annual grasses coupled with strong public awareness of fire danger resulted in a very mild fire season for San Diego, with only one fire of consequence, which burned 827 acres.

**Binational Cooperation and Training** - CAL FIRE, in cooperation with other agencies from both sides of the border once again participated in the presentation of the 6<sup>th</sup> annual five day Wildland Firefighter Training Academy in Mexico. This training is presented jointly by CAL FIRE, USFS, CONAFOR, SEFOA and DPC to paid, volunteer, and military firefighters from throughout Mexico. Topics include wildland fire behavior and tactics, Incident Command System and emergency medical treatment. This years training was attended by 80 personnel.

**Cooperator Training** - CAL FIRE in cooperation with the USFS once again developed and presented wildfire safety training to employees of the US Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol. These agents are often working in remote border areas where fires are likely to start and rapidly spread. Having a basic understanding of fire safety will better prepare these individuals to take appropriate action to protect themselves should the need arise. This same training was also presented to members of the California Highway Patrol who also respond and assist fire agencies when large fires occur.

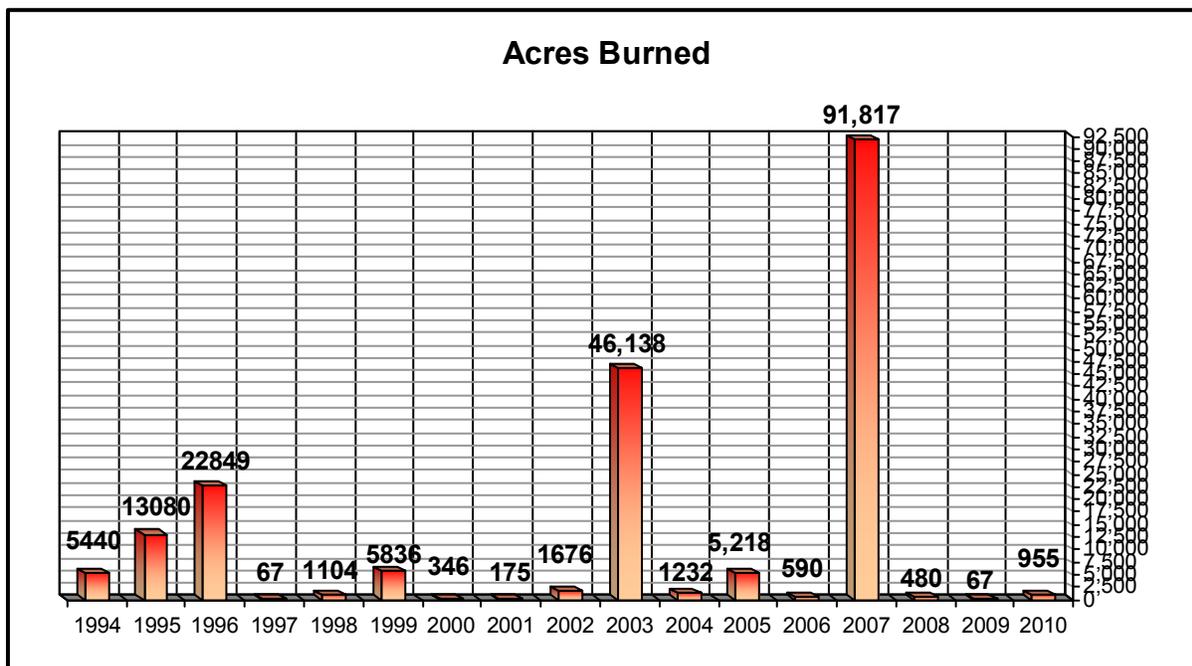
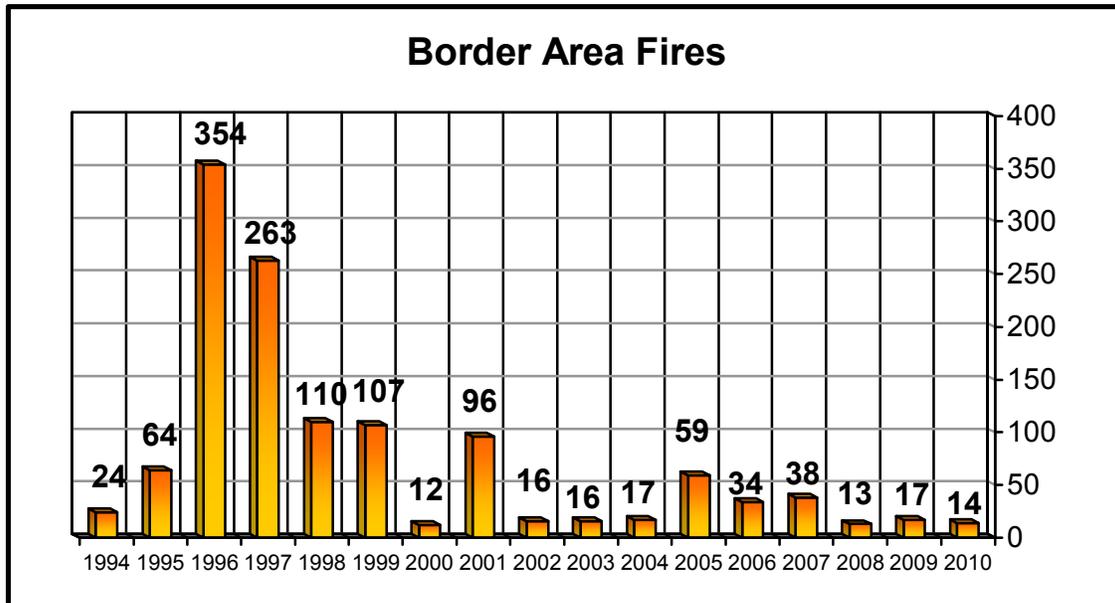
**Fuel Reduction and Community Protection** - CAL FIRE continues to plan and implement fuel reduction projects, both individually and in cooperation with other agencies. These projects are designed to enhance community protection in an environmentally conscious process. These projects, vetted through the Units fire plan, though BAFC and take place throughout the county as well as the border area.

**Environmental Sensitivity and Fire Fighting** - Balancing the need to suppress wildland fires with the preservation of the environment has long been a challenge to firefighters. To facilitate this balance and assist fire managers with tactical decisions, the BAFC facilitated the creation of the Emergency Response Guide Book. A copy of this book is maintained in every firefighting piece of equipment under the control of CAL FIRE and is utilized to insure sensitive areas are protected, to the extent possible, during wildland fire suppression efforts. This guide book was released in early 2010.

**Mutual Assistance Plan** - The Agreement was developed through efforts of the BAFC in 1996 to facilitate cross border movement of firefighting resources and personnel when mutually beneficial for life safety and to expediently suppress fires. This unique plan is implemented several times throughout the peak fire period and has proved an effective tool in keeping border fires small and protecting the natural resources of both countries. CAL FIRE and other participants of this plan are continually working to improve both communications and response procedures covered by this plan.



# CAL FIRE Border Impact Statistics





# San Diego County Fire Authority

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During 2010 the San Diego County Fire Authority (SDCFA) moved to Public Safety where they have an annual budget of 15 ½ millions dollars. SDCFA was under the Department of Planning and Land Use within the County structure. Now with County Sheriff, Office of Emergency Services and district attorney and law enforcement it will be better for supporting emergency services in the field with our volunteer program. The change took place at the Board of Supervisor meeting on Sept 14, 2010.

Ray Fernandez is the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Howard Windsor is the Fire Chief. Internal issues are being worked out and that will improve the chain of command.

**FIRE SUPPRESSION** - Starting in 2004, San Diego County and CAL FIRE signed contracts to provide year-round, 24-7 coverage in remote areas of the rural backcountry. The Board of Supervisors continues to consolidate fire and life safety services in 1.56M acres of the unincorporated rural backcountry.

**FIRE AND BUILDING CODES** - County leaders improved the local building codes by adding new requirements to use more ignition-resistant materials. For structures built in the most fire-prone areas, the requirements were ratcheted up even further.

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT** - The County and local agencies spend millions to remove dead, dying and diseased trees (3D Program) in the Palomar Mountain and greater Julian areas. The focus is along evacuation roads and exit corridors (roughly 244 total road miles).

**LAND USE PLANNING** - All discretionary projects must submit Fire Protection Plans for their specific sites. The plans answer questions: How close are emergency responders? How quickly could they arrive? What water supplies are available? They address code requirements about: fire sprinklers, ignition-resistant construction; defensible-space; and long-term vegetation management.



## California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

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The year 2010 marked the sixty-fourth anniversary of cooperation between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) in the Conservation Camp Program. Our state pioneered the employment of incarcerated individuals in wild land fire protection. Since its inception, the program has expanded into a highly mobile work force engaging in all forms of risk disaster mitigation, pre-fire fuel management, the development and maintenance of fire defense improvements and facilities; and the performance of conservation related projects for local, state, and federal agencies. This program provides convicted felons with the opportunity to give something back to California citizens while paying their debt to society.

In addition to the missions listed above, the Camp Program is an active participant in the Border Agency Fire Council (BAFC). There are three Conservation Camps located in San Diego County that act as first responders to border fire emergencies. These camps are:

- Puerta La Cruz (Female) Warner Springs 132 inmates 5 Crews
- La Cima (Male) Julian 90 inmates 4 Crews
- McCain Valley (Male) Boulevard 110 inmates 5 Crews

Combined, these camps have the ability to provide a total of fourteen hand crews in a very short time to isolate, contain, and mitigate wildland fires. Puerta La Cruz also houses a Mobile Kitchen Unit (MKU) that is dispatched to larger fires to provide full meal service to the participating agencies.

In 2010, one or more of these Camps played a direct role in controlling the 11 wildfires that occurred on the border between the United States and Mexico involving nearly 1100 acres of wild land. These efforts saved California taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. Additionally, crews from these camps also responded to Highland California the week of Christmas to mitigate damage caused by massive mudslides.





## **San Diego County Sheriff's Department**

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The San Diego County Sheriff's Department is proud to be one of the founding members of the Border Agency Fire Council. Working in partnerships with our communities as well as fellow members of BAFC, deputies assigned to the Rural Law Enforcement Division continue to provide quality service to the citizens of these areas.

Working with our partners in the fire service, we assist in numerous fires that occurred throughout the backcountry portion of San Diego County. These fire emergencies are truly a team requiring effort and partnership with our fire department colleagues in these critical incidents.

The Sheriff Departments' excellent working arrangement with the various fire and law enforcement agencies in the backcountry areas has proved very useful at both fire and disaster scenes. Deputies assigned to the Rural Law Enforcement Division of the Sheriff's Department carry fire turnout gear, extra water for rescue personnel and victims, as well as the ability to utilize common radio frequencies to talk to other agencies.

Adhering to our mission statement of ***"In partnership with our communities, we provide the highest quality public safety services"***, the Sheriff's Department continues to support the Border Agency Fire Council and participates in their various projects.





## **U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) continues to actively participate with its cooperators who share membership in the Border Agency Fire Council.

Two Field Offices, Palm Springs-South Coast and El Centro of BLM's California Desert District suffer impacts due to immigration and smuggling activity. Among many, these impacts include wildfire and its associated impacts to BLM's neighbors on adjacent privately owned lands. This relationship requires a commitment to the public with appropriate sensitivity and is demonstrated by Fire Mitigation Education efforts, traditional fire prevention actions including fire patrol, signing and public contacts. Hazardous Fuels mitigation efforts adjacent to communities and restoration of the International Fuel Break system to assist CAL FIRE, our fire suppression service provider. Assigned biologists, archaeologists, geologists, wilderness specialists, range specialists, public affairs officers, and managers all contribute as requested to facilitate the safe use of BLM Administered Public Lands in the Border area.

BLM Fire management activities include continued service delivery under BLM's *Community Assistance Program* to provide grants to FireSafe Councils, participate in the development of Community Wildland Fire Protection Plans and sit upon the Board of Directors of the FireSafe Council of Greater San Diego. The *Rural Fire Assistance program* helps offset costs incurred by underfunded Volunteer Fire Departments on wildfires on BLM Lands by providing grant opportunities for wildland firefighting equipment. The *Ready Reserve Program* allowed BLM to pay student tuition, materials and instructor costs through presentation of the course "Fire in the Wildland Urban Interface" (ICS S-215) to area volunteer firefighters.

BLM remains committed to the continued success of the Border Agency Fire Council.



## U.S.D.I. Fish & Wildlife Service

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fire Management Program in Region 8 includes National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries throughout California, Nevada, and Oregon's Klamath Basin. In San Diego and Orange Counties, FWS manages about 15,000 acres of wildlands on a complex of four National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) that provide 12 critical habitat areas that are home to 21 threatened or endangered species. FWS representatives attend the Border Agency Fire Council to facilitate communication and coordination for fire and law enforcement between all BAFC agencies.

It was a mild fire season for the zone with little wildfire activity on refuge lands but a number of local and regional support efforts.

The zone supported a number of interagency fire training efforts including the San Diego County Wildland Fire Drill, Department of Interior Engine Academy, Southwestern College Wildland Firefighter Academy, and Swift Water Rescue training.

It was a busy year for the fuels program with over thousands of acres treated, primarily in the wildland urban interface. The largest part of the program is creating and maintaining fuel breaks and includes discing and mowing, roadside clearing, and invasive species removal at refuge boundaries. Continued projects under Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation plans from wildfires in 2007 at San Diego NWR and Hopper Mountain NWR (Ventura County) are remediating impacts to infrastructure and controlling invasive species in critical habitat.

The zone coordinated supported a number of interagency committees and teams including the Border Agency Fire Council, Forest Area Safety Taskforce, and Border Management Task Force. The zone continues to support numerous fire safe council activities and in 2010 helped with development of four different community wildfire protection plans.



## United States Border Patrol

*"To enforce the rule of law along the border, enhancing the quality of life of the people we proudly serve."*

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The San Diego Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol is responsible for 66 linear miles of the U.S./Mexico border, and nearly 7,000 square miles, roughly corresponding to the boundaries of the County of San Diego. Since the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper in 1994, illegal entries in San Diego County have steadily declined.

The success of Operation Gatekeeper has enabled the San Diego Sector to appropriate more resources to the development of search & rescue teams, anti-smuggling investigative units, public outreach programs, and border safety initiatives. The availability of personnel and resources has enabled the sector to become more proactive and the leader in innovative uses of new technology. San Diego Sector has evolved from the most neglected area of the southwest border to the flagship of the U.S. Border Patrol and a model of effective, efficient, and humane border control.

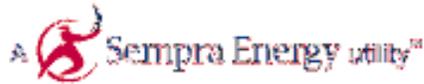
**Border Safety Initiative** - The Border Safety Initiative (BSI) began in San Diego in 1998 as an effort to make the international border safer for everyone. BSI addresses related concerns in the following areas: **Prevention** of illegal entries through potentially hazardous areas, **Search and Rescue** capabilities and commitments, and interactive support in situations requiring the **Identification** of deceased persons.

The San Diego Sector issues emergency response supplies to agents as one facet of the Border Safety Initiative. Backpacks were loaded with a variety of items appropriate for summer or winter emergency aid. Each bag is packed with enough supplies for more than one individual. Easily digestible food, such as special granola "trail mix," dried "tropical fruit mix" and carbohydrate energy gel replaces earlier food items. "Gatorade" is included along with water and electrolyte tablets. Basic medical response supplies as well as first aid guides are included. Additional instant "cold-packs" were added.



## San Diego Gas & Electric

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San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) is pleased to be a member of the Border Agency Fire Council and shares the council's commitment to work cooperatively with all agencies involved in protecting life, property, and native habitat in the border area of San Diego County. SDG&E has been an active participant since the council's beginning and became a formal member in June 2005.

In 2010, SDG&E worked collaboratively with Campo Reservation to fund 50 acres of fuels management and hazard mitigation efforts along a section of the Southwest Powerlink on Native American land. Other opportunities to partner in fuels management projects are being assessed where mutual benefits can be obtained.

SDG&E continues to work to improve fire coordination with all fire agencies in its service territory. This year, SDG&E provided 64 training sessions on electrical and gas safety for first responders among fire department and law enforcement personnel. A focus was placed on training San Diego County Sheriffs, successfully reaching more than 300 deputies. SDG&E also participated in the County Wildland Fire Drill providing both classroom training and a practical field exercise. The Border Agency Fire Council continues to be an excellent conduit to foster these special cooperative relationships.

SDG&E has hired a Fire Marshal to coordinate and facilitate wildland fire protection mitigation measures during the construction of the Sunrise Powerlink. The Fire Marshal will provide expert guidance to contractors during the construction of Sunrise and will coordinate with fire departments responding to emergencies within the construction area. In addition, a type 1 heavy-lift helicopter, purchased by SDG&E for construction of Sunrise, also was made available to fire departments for fire suppression response within the county. The "Sun Bird" air crane (copter 927) already responded to several fires in the border area last year, including the Cowboy fire, and assisted in the suppression efforts. The Sun Bird will continue to be made available to county fire departments in the future when it is not committed to construction.

SDG&E is always looking for new ways to expand its coordination efforts with public safety agencies. Our goal is to provide for the safety of first responders and the public on both sides of the border, and to facilitate quick & aggressive suppression efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this dedicated and vital organization.



COMISIÓN NACIONAL FORESTAL

# Comisión Nacional Forestal Gerencia Regional I Península de Baja California

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The National Commission of Forestry (Comisión Nacional Forestal - CONAFOR) was created as a decentralized federal agency, as depending from SEMARNAT (Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources) on April 4, 2001. Its mission is to inspire the participation from Mexican society to make the necessary changes to create new sustainable forestry development policies in Mexico. Its general goal is to develop productive activities and forest conservation and restoration.

According with the Mexico's General Law of Forestry Sustainable Development, CONAFOR is the federal agency responsible for the coordination of the wildfires prevention, detection and suppression in the country, with the assistance of other federal, state and county public administration agencies, including volunteer groups.

## Binational Activities

**8<sup>th</sup> Binational Children's Camp – Forest Environmental Education** - For the seventh consecutive year the Binational Children's Camp, took place in the US, which was organized by USFS, CAL FIRE, SEFOA and CONAFOR. It was a great party-education day for children from both sides of the border.





## **Tecate Fire Public Safety (Bomberos de Tecate)**

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Oscar Gutierrez, a Chief for Tecate Fire Department, stated that most wild fires in Tecate are started by ranchers burning vegetation on their property to clean it up. The ranchers become careless and lose control of the fire. Another problem is builders not taking the necessary precautions when building new structures. Another cause of wildfires in area is careless campfires, when the weather gets very hot many people go to cooler areas and camp but do not properly extinguish their camp fires.

The biggest problem that Tecate faces is the lack of equipment. Many times fire personnel must use their own vehicles when responding to an emergency and many of these vehicles are sedans, pickup trucks and SUV's, not fire engines.

There is some education in the schools, but have found it is difficult to get the ranchers to attend meetings and there is no ranchers association of any kind as a way of getting information out. They try to use the tourism board to help get fire safety information out.

Tecate Fire does have a contract with a helicopter company for air assets but it is not used often and that the majority of the work is done with hand tools on the ground.

Firefighters are out for days or weeks at a time fighting a wildfire, so they have to rely on local ranchers for food and water. They do not have a system in place to feed and house firefighters when they are on a fire.



## **BAFC Membership**

Thirty-four organizations and elected officials are active members of the Border Agency Fire Council. Each contributes staff and funds to this unique collaborative effort.

**California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection**  
**California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations**  
**California Department of Fish and Game**  
**California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection – CAL FIRE**  
**California Highway Patrol**  
**CONAFOR (Comician Nacional Forestal), B.C., Mexico**  
**Direccion de Bomberos de Tijuana**  
**Director de Proteccion Civil del Estado, B.C. Mexico (Baja OES)**  
**Estatad de Forestal y Fauna Ensenada, Mexico (SEFOA)**  
**FireSafe Council San Diego**  
**Joint Task Force 6**  
**Mexican Consul General San Diego (Associate Member)**  
**Office of the Governor**  
**Office of Supervisor Dianne Jacob**  
**Rural Fire Protection District**  
**San Diego County Department of Health Services Agency**  
**San Diego County Department of Planning and Land Use**  
**San Diego County Office of Emergency Services**  
**San Diego County Sheriff**  
**San Diego Fire and Rescue Department**  
**San Diego Gas and Electric**  
**San Diego Trauma Hospital Administrators**  
**San Miguel Fire Protection District**  
**Southern California Watershed Fire Council**  
**Tecate Fire Public Safety (Bomberos de Tecate)**  
**U.S.D.A. Forest Service**  
**U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management**  
**U.S. Border Patrol**  
**U.S. Attorney’s Office**  
**U.S. Consulate General Tijuana**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**