

**MOUNT
LAGUNA
IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION**



CABIN NEWSLETTER

OUR 62ND ANNUAL MLIA MEETING SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST

**10:00 am at Red-Tailed Roost,
10403 County Rte. S1,
Mt Laguna, CA 91948**

All members are welcome and invited to attend.

The meeting will address the following general purposes: Secretary, Financial and President's 2023-24 reports, current water system activity, election of officers and members of the Board of Directors, and transact other business as may be brought to the meeting. Voting instructions, the agenda and reports will be sent electronically in advance,

A listen-only zoom link will be available for people unable to attend in person. Email mlia@mtlaguna.org to request the link. Virtual attendees may submit questions prior to the start of the meeting by emailing mtlaguna.org.

WHO'S GOT THE WATER?

The Laguna Mountains are a dry forest perched on the edge of a huge desert. Weather and climate changes have caused Big and Little Laguna Lakes and streams to fill and shrink year-to-year.

Read the story about how our cabins got water in the early years starting on page 3.

DON'T FORGET!

- **FIRE SAFE Council** -
Saturday, Oct 19th
- **MLIA Board Meeting** -
Saturday, Nov 2nd
- **Fall Social Event** -
TBD! Stay tuned!

NEWS UPDATES FROM MLIA VP

Cabin Access –

Repairs are being made within cabin tracts by cabin owner "groups". We have a hauler that will deliver road material for a very competitive price. It can be hauled to your tract area, or lot, and stored for future repairs and use. Contact Carl at santeeduo@cox.net to discuss details.

Nominating Report –

Two directors are retiring from their service on the Board of Directors, Joanne Odenthal, MLIA Secretary, and Joe Cochran, Member, are both leaving the Board. There are two open positions to fill those spots, and Per Martin and Jay Moser have thrown their 'hats in the ring'.

Special volunteer Fire Clearance Project –

This was initiated with an announcement in the MLIA Spring Newsletter with a "flyer" notification of the Forest Service permit requirement to clear lots for fire

prevention. Subsequent inspection by volunteers found 15 lots in violation of Forest Service clearing guidelines. Our initial call outs to individual cabin owners resulted in five lots cleared with three using a contracted vendor. A second round of calls resulted in eight more clearings using the same contract vendor. We shared the progress of this Project with our FS Fire Protection partners. They are very excited to see the progress during their subsequent inspections. Although we did not hit our 100% ground clearance objective, we were very close!

Volunteers are already standing by to support this program again next year!!

*Carl Sessions
MLIA VP*

KEYNOTES ABOUT OUR ANNUAL FEES!

The annual fee billing for MLIA for water usage, NFH membership, operational and maintenance fees will be issued on October 1st. The Schedule of Fees for various assessments and billing items will be shared at the Annual meeting on September 21st at the Red-Tailed Roost.

Invoices will be sent to cabin owners through email, so please be sure that your email is up to date. If you have more than one email associated with your cabin, please verify that you have identified which email should be used for billing. Send your contact update to MLIA@mtlaguna.org. (You may want to add the MLIA email to your contact list so the invoice does not go to a spam folder.)

Invoices are due upon receipt. A late fee will be applied if payment is not received within 30 days of the October 1st billing. Zelle, a secure bank-to-bank transfer method is preferred. Zelle can be set up at most financial institutions without charge. Use MLIA@mtlaguna.org for your payment.

Invoices may also may be paid by check and mailed to: MLIA, PO Box 91, Mount Laguna, CA 91948.

*Mary Ladewig,
MLIA Treasurer*

Who's Got the Water

Water has always been an issue in the Cleveland National Forest. Perched on the edge of the Colorado Desert, the Laguna Mountains are a dry forest. The Laguna Lakes fill and dry in rhythm with changes in the weather and climate. Previously free-running streams and springs have dried and diminished in the past 100 years. New and deeper wells have been dug to access underground water reservoirs.

The cabin program, which began early in the 20th century, depended on the Forest Service for water from the beginning. The development of picnic areas, campgrounds, lodges, and cabins all depended on available water.

James Newland in his book *Historic Resources Survey & Evaluation Report: Recreation Residences: Descanso District*, reported:

The increased visitation [to the Lagunas in the 1930s] brought about the need for further development of the area water system. In 1934 a CCC crew had worked on deepening the well at the Laguna Campground (San Diego Union 9-9-1934:10). The growth of the Laguna area was such that in 1937 a completely new water system was constructed to meet the needs of the campgrounds, resorts, and the over 500 [planned] recreation cabins. It consisted of three small reservoirs (Chula Vista, Los Huecos, and Ole Hill) connected to a pump at Oasis Springs (San Diego Union 10-31-1937; Burkenroad 1981:16; Laguna Recreation Area Data 1938). II-63

As more cabins, campgrounds, and visitors came to Mt. Laguna, the water resources became strained. The system installed in the 1930s could no longer access sufficient groundwater and the distribution system became inadequate.

All during the 1950s and 1960s the search for new water sources became a major focus of the Forest Service and permittees. By 1956 the search for deep wells was already a priority (Descanso Report 11-8-1956: 4). In 1961 the Forest Service reservoirs were tapped and with the priority for the campgrounds, the summer home users were often left without water. The Boiling Springs Improvement Association blamed the Forest Service, causing tense relations (San Diego Union 7-18-1961: 13). Several public and private wells, including the "miracle well" of Mt. Laguna Lodge owner Clay Stuart were drilled in the 1960s and 1970s to help remedy the situation (Lower 1977:28-33) (Newland, II-101)

The Mount Laguna Improvement Association (MLIA) and the Boiling Springs Improvement Association (BSIA) both served cabin owners during this time. BSIA was formed to serve Boiling Springs cabins after WWII. MLIA, serving the other cabin tracts, had been formed prior to that but no fixed date has determined. *continued page 4*

Understanding Our Water System

Recently Dan Fritz, our Water Operator, took Jay Moser, Jack Splinter and Bunny Krall on a detailed tour of the MLIA water system. The tour provided the cabin owners with a better understanding of how the MLIA water system functions, and the maintenance and regular actions needed to deliver safe, clean drinking to our cabins.



Water operator, Dan Fritz, and cabin owner, Jay Moser.

A big thanks to Dan and MLIA Board members for all the hours of work that goes into supporting the system.

Water, *continued from page 3*

In 1961 BSIA and MLIA formed the Laguna Water Agency to work with the Forest Service to provide water to cabins. At this time the Forest Service informed cabin owners that they had no surplus water to share with cabins. Cabins were directed to supply their own water.

The first joint board meeting of MLIA and BSIA was in July, 1963. At this time there were six different water systems on Mt. Laguna: Forest Service, Air Force, the Stuart system, Jack Holmes, and Shrine Camp. MLIA and BSIA merged, becoming the Mount Laguna Improvement Association, serving all the cabins on the mountain. September 28, 1963 was the first official meeting of MLIA as a joint water system, with 176 members.

It was recommended to join the National Forest Recreation Association (now NFH) in order to keep informed of proposed cabin fees. In 1989, MLIA incorporated with the State of California as a 501(c)12 mutual-benefit corporation. The 501(c) designation covers organizations such as small water districts, HOAs, etc., where the membership runs the organization for the benefit of all members.

During the 1960s MLIA received water from the Forest Service if it could be spared and bought water from Clay Stuart. It was becoming imperative for MLIA to develop its own water source. In 1967 the Forest Service informed cabin owners that no more water would be available from them. In addition, Clay Stuart couldn't promise water going forward.

MLIA explored digging a new well in 1968. To pay for the well and the pipeline to the Los Huecos tank, a one-time special assessment of \$500 per cabin was needed. At this time the Forest Service, Air Force was looking into drilling additional wells, and Clay Stuart chartered the Mt. Laguna Water Co. (MLWC). At the 1969 Annual Meeting, 110 cabin owners approved the water project to consist of a well and a pipeline.

In July of 1970 a 420,000-gallon steel bolted Ole was tank erected at cost of \$22,000. In August of 1970 a well was drilled to 394' with 50' seal with sustained pumping of 7 ½ gallons per minute. This was NOT

enough to meet the needs of 176 cabins. There was also research into installing a 100,000-gallon water tank at Los Huecos. MLIA was still able to receive about 20,000 gallons of water per month from the Forest Service and buy water from Stuart, Shrine Camp and Holmes. In 1974 the pump on Well#1 failed and in 1972 bids were sent out for a second well.

The new well (#2) was drilled in May, 1975, and consisted of an 8" hole, 78' to solid granite, and a 6" hole to 651' with water at 260 feet. In June, the Los Huecos 126,000-gallon storage tank was erected. In December Well #2 started and San Diego County rated the water safe to drink in January, 1976.

Well output was sufficient to supply the cabins, although MLIA agreed to buy some water from Holmes for 3 years at \$1.50 per 1000 gallons.

1975 marked the first year that MLIA had an independent source of water, sufficient for the needs of all the cabins. We are still using Well #2, the Los Huecos and the Ole tanks today.

Joanne Odenthal

Sources:

Kalinoski, Francis. MLIA Water System History: notes compiled from the minutes of the MLIA board meetings. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mount Laguna Improvement Association, September 2022.

Newland, James D. Historic Resources Survey & Evaluation Report: Recreation Residences: Descanso District. Cleveland National Forest, USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region. September, 1995.

Joanne has worked tirelessly in support of the MLIA as its Secretary. She provided stability, a solid voice on our Executive Team, a champion for innovation/change, and a firm stand on our rules and by-laws. She (and Eugenie) are remaining as cabin owners, thankfully, so that her experience and historical knowledge will be a resource for our new Secretary and our community.

Thank you, Joanne, for the years of service to MLIA. The good news, we'll all see you at the next social event or in-person board meeting!!

~ Carl Sessions

It would be difficult to give a short anecdote about Joanne Odenthal. During my tenure as MLIA President [Nov 2012 - Sep 2023] each member of my executive committee [Dan, Carl, Karen & Joanne] provided a unique and valued service to help the MLIA to move forward. Joanne was the "admin glue" that helped coordinate the varied moving parts - executive board, directors and cabins. It was quite like herding cats sometimes]

I could not have done my job without her assistance. This lady was organized!! I learned quickly to not get in her way.

Joanne made sure things got done, as exemplified by her meeting minutes and the associated action items. When Joanne took on a task, she was meticulous and thorough and saw the job to its completion, (the word 'tenacious' comes to mind), as painful as it might be. She spent many frustrating hours trying to adapt our in-person ways of communication to the new, required remote form of communication and meeting and voting.

I could bounce ideas off Joanne and be assured I would get a clear and insightful answer. Sitting on the deck at #505 with an IPA beer was always helpful. Her lifetime of knowledge about Mount Laguna was unsurpassed and she often shared it in the quarterly newsletter.

Joanne was truly dedicated to her cabin and Mount Laguna and the MLIA.
Take a bow, Joanne.

~ Frank Kalinoski

Take a bow, Joanne!



Thank you, Joanne!

Thank you, Joanne for ALL your years of Service to MLIA; I really don't know how you lasted that long - it's dedication. Thanks too for being such a special person.

I feel so blessed that I have gotten to know you better and possibly understand you. I cherish our friendship and look forward to spending more time together. Glad you are close by.

You have taught me so much about the secretary role and tips on how to deal with all the challenges that come with the role. I'm sure there will be many phone calls to you and don't forget our commitment to bi-monthly luncheons.

Appreciate you!

~ Bunny Krall

I am very grateful to all of Joanne's years of hard work and partnership as she's been showing me the ways of the secretary.

~ Laura Bier

Forest Service Cabin Fees

What is happening?

Monies from our cabin fees start coming back to the Cleveland National Forest in 2025. NFH successfully crafted and helped pass in Congress the Cabin Fee Act 10 years ago which established this program.

These monies are to be used for the USFS recreation residence (cabin) program and other recreation programs in the Cleveland National Forest. The MLIA President has been in communication with our District Ranger with suggestions about how these funds should be spent.

The Forest Service (FS), Washington Office, will delay issuing the 2025 fee invoices, for this year only.

This is being done to ensure that Mount Laguna cabin fee payments made to the

USFS for 2025 will be part of the funds returned to the Cleveland National Forest in 2024. (This is applicable to all cabin fees in all national forests, not just ours.) Again, the monies will be used in the administration of the Recreation Residence Program which includes cabin and other recreation purposes.

When should you pay them?

- All bills will be issued by email/mail at the end of December 2024.
- Make your payments for 2025 permit fees AFTER December 20, 2024.
- The payment due date will shift to February 1, 2025 for this billing cycle only.

<https://www.nationalforesthomesteaders.org>

We appreciate you, Joe!

Joe Cochran (and Joannie) are committed to community service. Their cabin door is always open to friends, family, and community members. Joe can always be counted on to assist in road repairs, water infrastructure projects, and social events. He and his good friend and neighbor, Dennis Wilkinson, have teamed up to dominate many MLIA corn hole tournaments!

Thankfully, Joe's retirement from the board is not because he is selling his cabin; he (and Joannie) will remain on the mountain. As usual, your friends and neighbors will be knocking on your door to share a tale and a toast!!

~ Carl Sessions



Joe has been on the MLIA board of Directors for 10 years. He served as President of the Mt Laguna Fire Safe Council for four years. He and Joannie have been long time Mt Laguna residents, first in the Shrine Camp and now in Boiling Springs tract.

Thanks, Joe. I have always appreciated your steady and commonsense leadership in our community. ~ Eugenie Newton

Staying Fire Safe on the Mountain

Doug Reed, President, MLFSC

Fire Prevention Battalion Chief Cindy Petrich and Patrol Officers Kevin and John have been attending our Fire Safe Council meetings to update us on all things fire prevention in Mt. Laguna. They have also been answering questions from the attendees and listening to our concerns to better help the community and the forest. Cindy plans to attend the future FSC meetings, so come to the next meeting to ask your questions and to say hello and thank you.

The Forest Service and CalFire are in the process of re-inspections and may be completed by now. If you have any questions regarding your FS inspection, please call 619-445-1725. If you have any questions regarding your CalFire inspection, please call 619-590-3100. If you are not in compliance with your defensible space clearing, please do so as fast as possible. This helps to reduce the wildfire fuels and risk in our beautiful forest.

The Forest Service Fuels Reduction crew, stationed at the old Volunteer Fire/CalFire station across from the Roost, has been creating all the brush piles around town. The Camp Ole fire crew will burn these piles as soon as the weather permits. Please do not add to these piles, take your brush to the community brush pile at the Old Air Force Station.

**Report Volunteer Hours
for home defensible space cleanup to
mountlagunasafe@gmail.com.**

These hours are now required to submit for SDRFF/SDG&E Grant reporting records.

**Next MLFSC meeting
Saturday, October 19th, 10:00am
Red Tailed Roost**

A meeting reminder, agenda and notes of the previous meeting will be emailed prior to the October.

Meeting agendas and notes are posted on the MLIA website, under the Fire Safe Council heading.

November 16th will be our last meeting. Elections will be held at this meeting. If you are interested in a Board position or Director position, please contact me at ohio0411@hotmail.com.

**Thank You
to those members who have donated
to the MLFSC.**

If you wish to make a tax deductible contribution to the Fire Safe Council, please mail your check to: Mt. Laguna Fire Safe Council P O Box 292 Mount Laguna, CA 91948.

Need Equipment to Clear Brush?

Please contact one of our equipment managers, Jack Splinter at (858)472-4368 or Richard Willis at (619)990-1404, for availability and to schedule equipment pickup and return.

- Gas powered weed whackers, trimmer, and pole saw for \$20/1 or 2 days.
- Gas powered wood splitter for \$30/1 day.

**Equipment available for community
member use on Mt Laguna only.**



Wine-A-Bit August 17th

Good fun,
good food.



"Olympic" Cornhole Championship



Allen and Barbara Bellini, Cabin 709, are excited to have a place on the mountain to get away from town and enjoy nature with their sons' families.



Welcome!

Allen retired in 2022 after many years in shipbuilding and Barbara retired from banking in 2023. Allen's Christmas present in 2022, present was an 8" Celestron telescope. Living in Chula Vista, there was too much light!! Unbeknownst to Allen, Barbara had started looking at cabins on the mountain.

We're very happy with cabin 709 (aka "Cookie's cabin") and are busy making memories. The grandkids can hardly wait for snow this year!

It has been a productive year!

Cabin owners can be pleased with all that has been accomplished by a very active Board group. Just to mention a few are the development of emergency plans for our water, an overhaul of our website, mtlaguna.org, a new email system with enhanced communication capabilities, work with our local Forest Service regarding the return of cabin fees to the Cleveland, development of a clear process for new septic system approval, water system improvements, creation of defensible space clearing teams. And more, a lot more.

Be sure to come to the Annual meeting on September 21st at 10:00 am, Red Tailed Roost on Sunrise Highway. Learn more about everything being done!

CABIN PERMIT HOLDER RIGHTS: DO THEY MATTER?

This article from Desiree La Maggiore, Field Director with the National Forest Homeowner organization, explains key issues affecting out cabin permits as they come up for renewal in 2028.

NFH is going to introduce a bill in Congress to address new and long-standing issues with Forest Service administration of the Recreation Residence Program. The bill is expected to be introduced in the near future.

The bill, the Cabin Program Restoration Act (CPRA) addresses:

- Over 500 cabins have been lost in the last five years, primarily to wildfire. Forest Service decisions and practices restrict recovery by denying rebuild authorization, refusing to issue new permits to co-owners or family members wanting to rebuild, and prohibiting the sale of surviving improvements. Forest Service policies must change to stop the accelerated decline in cabins nationwide.
- Cabin Fee Act (CFA) provisions have yet to be fully implemented, most notably fee adjustment for impaired access or occupancy. Also, beginning in 2025, our annual permit fees will be allocated to the Forest Service through fee retention. Most funds will go to the regions and forests with cabins. Cabin owners must have input regarding priorities for using the funds and transparency on how they are spent.
- By 2028, the Forest Service will complete permit reissuance for nearly all Recreation Residences nationwide. However, changes in permit language could impact what's previously been allowed. For example, your local Forest Service may arbitrarily remove "conditionally accepted" improvements from your permit (think of your shed, deck, or patio). The new permit severely limits permit holders' right to appeal decisions. All decisions must be appealable.

Learn more about our legislative efforts to protect permit holder rights at www.nationalforesthowners.org/cpra.

Desiree La Maggiore, NFH Field Director
desiree.lamaggiore@nationalforesthowners.org

Cabin night life



Red fox
Ben Schindler



Mountain lion
Doug Reed

MOUNT LAGUNA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION



Founded in 1935,
the Mount Laguna Improvement
Association acts as a liaison between
the cabin owners and the Forest Service
addressing water, roads and
wood removal.

Stay current with the mountain
and
your cabin.

Visit our website at
<https://mtlaguna.org>

Water Maintenance Issues?

Report immediately
to
Dan Fritz
at **(619) 405-1452**

Keep MLIA Up-to-Date!

Have you moved in the last
year? Changed phones or
emergency contacts?

Use the
"update preferences" link
at the bottom of any MLIA email
to make changes!

Eugenie Newton, Editor
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