

MOUNT LAGUNA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

CABIN NEWSLETTER

Volume 23 - Number 95



I hope everybody is spending time up at the cabins and enjoying our beautiful mountain island. I'm seeing that some cabins have already done the clearance work unlike myself who is currently working on doing my clearance work.

I was just commenting to somebody that it seems like every year the lot size seems bigger, especially when you're doing it yourself. Clearance inspections are usually slated to be completed by July 4. With that in mind, you still have time to make your lot safe.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

from Jay Moser

Tank update

The Ole tank project is moving along, but we had a little hiccup in that Superior could not get the plans drawn up correctly. We've spent about two weeks getting them to correct the drawings and include the right equipment on the tank. Frank Kalinoski, project manager, has put a lot of effort into ensuring that the drawings are correct and getting the equipment that we paid for. We think we're on the right path now and should be getting updated shop plans within a week or two. Once we have the plans in hand, I will deliver it to the State Water Board for approval. Approximately 12 weeks after we receive approval, we will start building a tank.

2028 recreational residence special use permit

I met with Ranger Smith on June 3, 2025 and talked about several issues, one of which was the special use permit. When I met with Ranger Smith, the letter from the District Superintendent regarding the special use permit had not been sent out yet. However, we did discuss some issues, one of which was for conditional acceptance of modifications to residences. Ranger Smith left me with the impression that they intended to be flexible on conditional acceptance. The point where conditional acceptance might be reversed is when the improvement or modification is degraded beyond 50%. *continued page 2*

Save
these dates

Fire Save Council
July 19th & Aug 16th

MLIA Board Meeting
August 2nd

Annual Meeting
& MLIA BBQ
October 4th

PRESIDENT'S REPORT, *continued*

At that point it seems like the Forest Service may have the ability to request removal of the modification.

One of the things that I think we all need to think about is getting all the modifications that we have, listed on the permit, so that it's covered as being conditionally accepted. That would include retaining walls, hand rails, deck, patios, walkways, and such, documented on the permit. I was concerned with some of the language in the Superintendent's letter, but my concerns are tempered by the manner and intent of the Ranger who will be making the decisions regarding our permits.

Recreational residence permit fees

Part of the Cabin fees will be used to fund our two Forest Service personnel in charge of the maintenance of the Recreational Cabin Program. In addition, Ranger Smith expressed interest in using the permit fees that are coming back to the district to enhance access roads to our cabins. The money would be used to pay Forest Service personnel to grade and properly maintain our access roads. Ranger Smith says that he would like to have a meeting to lay out his plan to all cabin owners in MLA and other tracks throughout the district. Look for information to come out about a meeting on this topic so that you can give your input on how the retained cabin fees should be used.

~ Jay

Treasurer Wanted - Soon!!

MLIA is looking for a cabin member who has bookkeeping knowledge and is willing to help the MLIA cabin community. MLIA will need a new board member to become treasurer in October.

Please contact Carl Sessions at santeeduo@Cox.net or Daniel Morris at danielmorris619@gmail.com for more information.

Welcoming New MLIA Board Members

It is with great pleasure that we introduce our newest MLIA volunteer board members.

Recently installed as an interim member and attending his first meeting in June was **Bill Cleveland**, Cabin 315 purchased in Jan, 2020. Bill has been involved with MLIA event planning and has volunteered for many community projects in the past. We look forward to Bill's involvement in our infrastructure maintenance and improvements in the future. He will fill a remaining term through 2026.

Barbara Bellini, Cabin 709, purchased Mar, 2024, recently volunteered, with her husband Allen, to help with our annual meter read project. Barbara and Allen found Mount Laguna to be the perfect location for star gazing and decided to check out cabins for sale in the community. She has served with other volunteer organizations for many years and will be a welcomed addition to our current group. Barbara was installed at our June meeting and will fill a remaining term until elections this October 2025.

~ Carl Sessions, MLIA VP



What a job that was!

We have 176 cabins within the ML community. Each of those cabins has a water meter that tracks water usage allowing MLIA to bill cabin owners in support of water system maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

On Saturday, May 3, a cool 9:00am morning on Mt Laguna, 16 community volunteers showed up. With gloves, shovels, and in most cases, little knowledge of what was in store for them, they shot-gun started to read meters for their assigned lots, most of which were in their own cabin tract. Each reader had a map with basic directions of where to find the meter they were to read. But, as we all know, this is not tract housing, so everyone got plenty of exercise and recognized the benefit of having a rodent proof meter box!

By 1:00 p, everyone was back at my cabin and a BBQ and with stories to tell of their day. A BIG thank you from the MLIA board of directors to all the meter reading volunteers. We look forward to the 2026 meter read project thanks to all 16 of you!!

~ Carl Sessions, MLIA VP



Pictured above: Seated L to R- Ken Binder, 751, Mary Walke, 751, Dan Fritz, Water Manager, Standing L to R- Gary Jensen, 1121, Bob & Anne Blessing, 739, Barbara & Allen Bellini, 709.

Meter readers not pictured: James Cook, 552, Jack Splinter, 472, Toni & Bill Cleveland, 315, Frank Sutil, 721, Per Martin, 607, Daniel Morris, 12, and Carl Sessions.

Welcome New Cabin Neighbors ~

John and Araceli Alduenda, Cabin 578

Both John and Araceli are long-time San Diego residents. Araceli is a high school math teacher and John runs a financial services company.

We love golden retrievers and zebras. (If you happen to see a zebra around your cabin, please return it to cabin 578!) We are looking forward to meeting our neighbors and enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

We have found heaven on earth at 6,299 feet. We are very happy to join the Mount Laguna community. Stop by to say hi anytime.

NOTE: Please see John's story on page 9.



Bill and Jen Lascurain, Cabin 761

Bill and Jen are thrilled to join the mountain community! Both are musicians and first met when Jen auditioned for Bill's band. Now happily married, the couple is embracing cabin life and all it brings.

Currently immersed in repairs and renovations, they're enjoying every moment of the process. The beauty of Mt. Laguna truly speaks to them, and they look forward to meeting more of their neighbors in this peaceful retreat.



Inspections and Fire Safety Grants

Forest Service and CalFire inspections are in progress. Please be sure your home, cabin and property is ready for this very important annual inspection. Your defensible space clean-up helps to reduce the wildfire fuels in our beautiful forest and community.

Thanks to The San Diego Regional Fire Foundation for this year's 2025 Safe Grant award of \$6,910 to the MLFSC. Again, this year, our grant was funded by the generosity of The San Diego River Conservancy.

Many
THANKS to
both great
organizations
and their
supporters



Left to right: **Joan Jones**, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation; **Meg Moore**, MLFSC Secretary; **Julia Richards**, San Diego River Conservancy Executive Director; **Ben Clay**, San Diego River Conservancy, Chairman.

Very important!! - Send your hours in!

Email your name, cabin number, dates and total hours, and hired help hours, for yard clean-up and home hardening work to mountlagunasafe@gmail.com

Your hours help your Fire Council get grants that keep those dumpsters coming.

Thank you to those members who have donated to the MLFSC. Your donation helps to sustain the Fire Safe Council now and for the future. If you wish to donate 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

Thanks to the Mount Laguna Community, US Forest Service, CalFire, San Diego County Fire Safe Council and the MLIA for their continued support of our Fire Safe Council.

~ Doug Reed, MLFSC President

~ Fire Safety ~ Coming Events

2025 Prepare in a Year Campaign Pop-up Events

"July 19th and October 18th
Mt Laguna CALFIRE Station
#49 9am to 10:30am

Hosted by San Diego County Fire
Community Emergency

SDGE Wildfire Fair

June 14, 9am to 1 pm.
Ramona, Community Center
421 Aqua Lane

July 19, 9am to 1pm
Rancho Bernardo, Community
Park, 18448 W. Bernardo
Drive

August 9, 9am to 1pm.
Alpine McQueen Middle
School, 2001 Tavern Rd

August 30, 9am to 1pm.
Valley Center, Bates Nut Farm,
15954 Woods Valley Rd,

Home Hardening Websites

readyforwildfire.org

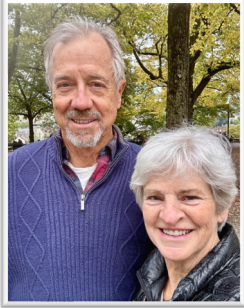
[sdge.com/our-commitment-
wildfire-safety](https://sdge.com/our-commitment-wildfire-safety)

[CalFire: fire.ca.gov](https://fire.ca.gov)

ResiliencySolutions@sdge.com

Welcome New Cabin Neighbors ~ John and Jean Kandt, Cabin 789

The Kandts have owned cabin 789 since the fall of 2024. John lived in San Diego for most of his life when his family relocated from Michigan. Jean moved here from Nebraska in the early 80's.



We are both retired now from IT and clerical jobs and have enjoyed traveling, fostering dogs, and for the past year, being host to our daughter's family while they added on to their home. Having six people (two under the age of 3) and four dogs was

somewhat overwhelming. We decided we needed a sanctuary to escape to, which led to looking at Mt. Laguna.

We have enjoyed spending time at the cabin but much of our time has been taking care of deferred maintenance from previous owners. There is still lots on our "to do" list from the Forest Service, but

Need equipment to do cleanup?



Contact Fire Safe Council equipment managers, Jack Splinter @ 858-472-4368 or Richard Willis @ 619-990-1404, to schedule equipment pick-up and return.

Gas powered available:

- weed whackers, pole saw \$20 for 1-2 days
- trimmers \$20 for 1 day
- wood splitter \$30 for 1 day.

we will get there. In the meantime, we enjoy mornings on the deck, a "surprise" snowfall, and inviting friends to navigate their way carefully along to the cabin.

Wildfire Clearance & Fuels Reduction Important Information

Cabin owners are required to fire proof our lots per terms and conditions of our cabin Special Use Permit. An inspection of our lot, has been/or will be, conducted by a Forest Service agent. If the lot is not in compliance a cabin owner may be subject to a fine and/or permit revocation.

Your **Mt Laguna Community** is here to help if you have difficulty clearing your lot properly because of the following circumstances: 1. Probate pending a sale or transfer, 2. Cabin vacancy or non-occupancy, 3. Inability to physically perform fuels reduction tasks. We have volunteers willing to help you.



Send your request for help to Carl Sessions at santeeduo@cox.net. ALL requests for assistance require a detailed description of your circumstances and an on- site inspection of work needed for compliance. If you are simply looking to hire a clean-up crew, please go to the Resource Guide at mtlaguna.org to find recommendations & contact information.

Fire safety is everyone's responsibility. We ask for your support in our mission to do everything possible to mitigate wildfire risks to our Cleveland National Forest community and maintain compliance with the terms and conditions of your cabin permit. Thank You.

CHANGING LANDSCAPES: NAVIGATING WHAT'S AHEAD FOR FORESTS & THE CABIN PROGRAM NFH NATIONAL CONFERENCE MAY 2-3

I attended NFH's 2025 conference in Anaheim along with cabin owners, Suellen and David Butler (570) and Evelyn Fraser (460). NFH set up breakout sessions about Cabin Insurance, Permit Reissuance, Advocacy and Stewardship. A few highlights to know are:



Left to right: Dan Krall, Bunny Krall, David Butler, Suellen Butler, Evelyn Fraser.

- Retained Permit Fees are at the Regional Level and should be coming back to the forests in which they originated soon (This was part of the Cabin Fee Act that NFH enacted 10 years ago).
- Permit Reissuance for the Cleveland National Forest will occur in 2028. The District Ranger states inspections have already begun. Scott Tangenberg, Forest Supervisor, sent a letter with a checklist to all cabin owners to help cabin owners prepare for permit reissuance. It was sent by email from Daniel Walsh, USFS, on June 4th.
- Fix any issues now that may be in noncompliance. Permits will be renewed for each individual cabin, not as a collective group.
- NFH is starting to introduce new legislation called the Cabin Program Restoration Act (CPRA) which is meant to protect and restore lost cabins to the cabin program. Read more at <https://www.nationalforesthomeowners.org/page/CPRA> ~ Bunny Krall, NFH Liaison

NFH EMAIL ALERT: SELLING FOREST LANDS

All MLIA cabin owners received an email alert from NFH on June 20th about the possible sale of forest service land and other public lands.

Please look carefully at the email. If you oppose selling public land and want to tell your congressional representatives to vote NO, click on the link in the email.

This is a critical issue for the future of our cabins and your consideration is appreciated.



Tired of having to dig out your meter box from rude, annoying, and disgusting gophers and squirrels?

If you are, I have a solution for you consider. It will save you time and effort and will help our meter

reading volunteers. Additional benefits may

be avoiding attacks by spiders and stink bugs when you put your hand in the box!

Although not guaranteed, I came up with a way to avoid the dirt hassle for most enclosed valve vaults. It consists of hardware screen, plastic ground cover, and long spikes. So far it has worked for me.

If you would like a very reasonable quote to have this installed in your meter box call Jeff P. at (442) 305-9227.

Our meter reading volunteers will thank you!!

~ Carl Sessions

Welcome New Cabin Neighbor s~

Don and Evelyn Fraser, Cabin 460

Our cabin purchase happened in November of 2024. The leaves on the trees were so beautiful, yellows and browns shimmering in the wind. We were looking for a getaway place from San Diego and found the perfect spot in Mt Laguna. Having driven Sunrise Highway many times, it seemed familiar and right.

Not knowing much about the Forest Service cabin program, we have been learning about the rules and regulations and attending the MLIA meetings to learn more about the cabin program and its nuances.

I attended the National Forest Homeowner's conference in Pasadena

and heard from many owners about what cabins mean to them and their families. We heard about the legacy provided by grandparents and parents building or working on the cabins passed on to them. Also, I met many new owners who are energized and working to protect the program as well as national officials who are managing the program from Washington.

Breakout sessions dealt with cabin issues and advocacy. National recognition to the community of cabin owners in various categories were awarded.

I feel grateful to have discovered this group of people who are protecting the cabin program started in the 1930's and to know that all across the country, unique cabins in wonderful places are being preserved for generations. All are working to protect the forest and the peaceful natural beauty they are set in.



What to do with all that brush cleanup debris?

Thanks to the US Forest Service we can take it to the community only dumpster and the brush pile at the Old Air Force station. This is for Mt Laguna community members only; no contractors allowed.

Open seven days a week.
8:00am to 6:00pm **only**.

- Our lock has yellow tape wrapped around it.
- Always close and lock the gate behind you when you enter and lock the gate when you leave.

Follow the posted signs to and from the brush pile and dumpster **only**. No access to other areas allowed; drive slowly.

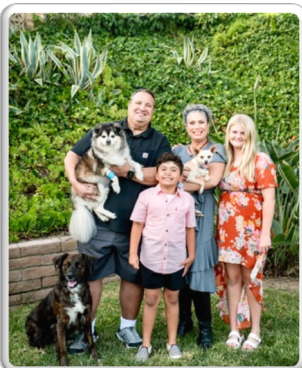
DUMPSTER

- Leaves, grass/weed cuttings, pine needles and pine cones **only**.
- **No dirt, rocks, wood chips or bags allowed.**
- Unload everything to the back & up to the top of the dumpster first
- Please close the doors when done.

BRUSH PILE

- **Native shrubs, brush and branches up to a maximum of 6" in diameter only,**
- Unload toward the back of the brush pile first.

Always keep the site clean!



Rob and Gretchen Rock, Cabin 729

Hello, we are the Rock family and have lived in San Diego for 10 years. Rob grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he and his family frequently visited their family cabin up in the Pecos Wilderness of New Mexico. Gretchen grew up in Spokane, Washington, and spent lots of time outdoors. We were both happy to find our cabin in Mt. Laguna.

Our children are 13 and 8, and we have 3 dogs named Niko, Millie, and Pepper. You will probably see us walking a lot through the cabin trails. We are so excited to be part of the Mount Laguna community!

Will Mount Laguna Recreation Area Be San Diego County's Next International Dark Sky Park?

Striving to “Keep it Dark” in special places throughout San Diego County, DarkSky San Diego County has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to protect the night sky above Mount Laguna Recreation Area.

With aspirations to achieve International Dark Sky Park certification, the effort began several years ago after a group of Los Angeles high school students camped on Mount Laguna and saw the Milky Way galaxy for the first time! They knew this place was something special, and it needed to be protected from the intrusion of light pollution.

The students started Hidden Skies Foundation, a non-profit organization and reached out to the USFS and Dr. Robert Quimby, Mount Laguna Observatory (MLO) director. They began taking sky quality measurements and designed a drone system to gather measurements above the forest. A lighting survey was conducted to identify light fixtures that may require re-aiming or replacement. The high school students went off to college and asked the local Dark Sky chapter to carry the project forward.

An International Dark Sky Park is an area with exceptional night sky quality, prioritizing responsible lighting, programs to educate the public, and promotes astronomy-based visitor experiences. The Mount Laguna Recreation Area has it all! Commitment to protecting natural darkness allows us to experience the tranquility of nighttime while protecting wildlife and ourselves from the harmful impacts of exposure to artificial light at night.

Volunteers from Dark Sky San Diego County, Julian Dark Sky Network, and Borrego Dark Sky Coalition look forward to partnering with the USFS, MLIA, Laguna Mountain Volunteer Association, and San Diego State's Observatory staff.

Learn more by contacting DarkSkySanDieg@DarkSky.org or HiddenSkies.org. View “Our Work” tab for information.

Welcome New Cabin Neighbors~

Beth and Aaron Duggan, Cabin 527

Beth is a retired theatre professor and visual artist, and Aaron owns a property management company in his hometown of La Mesa and enjoys photography and writing. Both have fond childhood memories of cabin life. Beth's from summers spent in



Pennsylvania, and Aaron's from right here in the Laguna Tract (Cabin 326). They're excited to return to that rhythm of life, now together.

This cabin is a place to slow down, connect with nature, and spend meaningful time with friends and family. They're looking forward to shared meals, long hikes, and a lot of reading. With deep appreciation for this special place, they plan to keep it in the family for generations to come.

NOTE: See Aaron's article about the cabin resource list on page 10.

Mike Marks and Em Allen, Cabin 752

Mike and Em recently moved back to San Diego after four years living in Alaska. In Alaska, they fell in love with the tranquility and beauty of living away from the hustle of the big city. Now that they're back in their beloved Ocean Beach abode, they are thrilled to find a place to escape in the mountains. With any luck, they'll be able to put their cross-country skis to use once in a while here as well.



In the meantime, they look forward to slower days, gorgeous trails, clear night skies, and plenty of DIY projects.

Bear Necessities of Writing

Here is a short story about my Mount Laguna experience so far...
(No writers were harmed in the writing of this story) Thanks, John Alduena

Henry McHale fancied himself the next great American novelist. So naturally, he did what any tortured genius would do—he purchased a rustic cabin on top of Mount Laguna, determined to finish his novel, *Murder on the Tucson-El Paso Express*.

On his first morning, Henry brewed a pot of artisanal coffee, sat on the porch, opened his laptop, and typed:

"The wind whispered through the trees like an ancient song—"
Then a squirrel dive-bombed his keyboard.



It stared at him, wide-eyed, cheeks bulging, tail twitching like it had just downed a Red Bull.

Before he could react, the squirrel scurried across the keys, typing "aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa" and knocking over his coffee.

Day two, Henry tried again.

"The stars looked down like distant gods—"
A raccoon appeared. Not just any raccoon, a raccoon wearing what he was almost sure was his missing sock as a hat. It casually strutted onto the porch like it owned the place, opened his cooler, stole a string cheese, and left, locking eyes with Henry as if to say, "Write about that, loser."

On day three, he decided to write indoors

"Alone in the forest, he felt a peace he'd never known—"
He heard buzzing. Then more buzzing. Then the swarm. Apparently, a bee colony had taken residence in the wall. Thirty-seven bees poured out like tiny, fuzzy hooligans, circling his head like he owed them money. He dove out the window, flailing his manuscript, which promptly got wedged in a pine tree, fluttering like a literary flag of surrender.

By day five, he was desperate. He even set a trap: a decoy laptop and a sandwich laced with cayenne. But instead of catching an animal, he attracted a turkey. A giant, noisy, wrecking ball of a turkey who perched on top his porch railing while maintaining unbroken eye contact. Henry whispered, *"Please don't break my laptop,"* just as the turkey strutted over to the laptop and dropped a load onto it.



On day seven, Henry was awakened by a loud chirping outside his window. In a rush, he ran outside thinking it was his car alarm. Getting to his car, he noticed the chirping was now coming from the cabin. He was able to glimpse a squirrel running away with his last remaining bagel. Utterly defeated and hungry,

Henry gathered his things and drove down the mountain for more supplies and possible reinforcements.

MOUNT LAGUNA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

mtlaguna.org

Getting things done - Cabin Resource List on mtlaguna.org

My name is Aaron Duggan. (*Introduction on page 8.*) My wife and I are new cabin owners here on the mountain. Like many of you when you first arrived, we've been figuring things out as we go. One of the most helpful things we've discovered is how valuable it is to have trustworthy, local vendors when you need them!

To that end, I've volunteered to update and maintain the MLIA' online Resource List of recommended service providers. My goal is to ensure every cabin owner, whether brand new like us or here for generations, has a reliable list of people they can call when something needs fixing, trimming, clearing, or cleaning.

The Resource List is only as good as the recommendations behind it.

I'm inviting every cabin owner to reach out directly to me with names and contact info for anyone you've had a great experience with. The more options we can include, the more helpful this resource will be. We're especially looking for trusted providers in the following areas:

Handymen, painters, carpenters, contractors
Brush clearing and cleanup and Tree trimming
Attic cleanup and insulation
Fireplace and chimney maintenance
Housecleaning, hauling, grading, and pest control

Plumbers, electricians, roof repair
Propane tank service and septic tank work
HVAC and appliance repair
Stonework and retaining walls
Internet service

Contact Aaron Duggan at aaronandbeth@me.com with your recommendations.

Keep MLIA Up-to-Date!

Have you moved recently?
Changed email or phone
number?

To make changes
use the
"update preferences" link
at the bottom of any MLIA
email

Water System Problems?

Immediately contact
MLIA Water Supervisor
Dan Fritz
at

(619) 405-1452

Eugenie Newton, Editor
evnewton8@gmail.com