



PMPO

www.PMPOinfo.com

Summer 2026 - Volume 37

The Palomar Mountain Planning Organization

Board Members: Lafe Ball, Robert Carlyle, Chris Clarke (Chair), Ryan Flohr (alternate Josephine Marcelino), Elizabeth Getzoff (Vice Chair), Jim Hamerly, Dylan Healey, Rosemary Johnston, William Meyst, Sandrine Miller-Montgomery (Treasurer), Nkechi Okorie, Michael Pique (Secretary), Yvonne Vaucher, Michael Walsh

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Protecting and Preserving Our Mountain Home

by Chris Clarke



As we look back on the past year at Palomar Mountain, I am struck by the unique blend of tradition and resilience that defines our community. Serving as your PMPO Chair is a responsibility I don't take lightly, especially as we navigate the challenges of maintaining our rural character while preparing for the future.

Modernizing for a Stronger PMPO

Our mission as a 501(c)(3) has always been to represent the interests of mountain residents, but to do that effectively, we need the right online tools. We are currently in the process of modernizing, including a transition to Google Workspace for Nonprofits.

While "digital infrastructure" might not sound as rugged as a chainsaw or a framing nailer, it is vital for our organization's longevity. By moving to a secure, centralized system, we are ensuring that the PMPO's archives, land-use documents, and community records are preserved for the next generation of board members. It's about more than just efficiency; it's about transparency and ensuring the PMPO remains a professional, reliable voice for our community.

The Constant Priority: Fire Safety

Of course, modernization serves a singular ultimate goal: the safety and preservation of our mountain. As we move further into 2026, Fire Safety remains one of our most critical priorities.

Living on Palomar is a DIY endeavor, and that extends to our collective defense against wildfire. We've seen great work from neighbors clearing brush and hardening their properties, but we cannot let our guard down. The PMPO continues to work closely with our Fire Safe Council and local fire agencies to advocate for grants and resources, but the first line of defense is always the individual property owner.

Continued on Page 10

Save the Date

MOUNTAIN HOEDOWN

SATURDAY
August 29, 2026

PMPO Annual Pancake Breakfast & PMPO Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 23, 2026

Breakfast 8am-10am

Annual Meeting at 10am

immediately following Breakfast

at the

Palomar Mountain Fire Station

21610 Crestline Road - Palomar Mountain



\$3 - Adults
\$1 - Children

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Palomar Mountain Planning Organization (PMPO)

Box 145 • PALOMAR MOUNTAIN, CA 92060-0145

This newsletter is produced annually and distributed in May of each year. Without the help of many volunteers, this newsletter would not be possible.

Coordinator: Michael Walsh

Publisher: Susan Humason

Editors: Michael Pique & Libby Getzoff

Photography: Michael Pique & Bonnie Phelps

Article Contributors:

Thank you to all contributors who make this newsletter possible.

Assemblers:

Thanks go out to the individuals, especially Michael Pique, who help each year with the assembly and mailing of the newsletter.

If you have any information that you would like to contribute to future newsletters, please email the information to

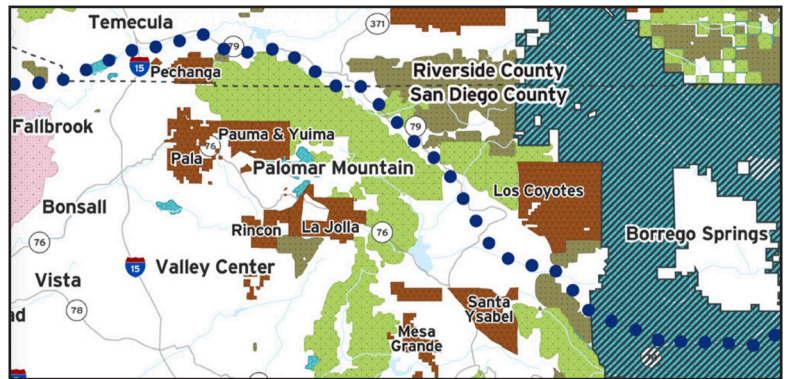
newsletter@pmpoinfo.com

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SAVE PALOMAR MOUNTAIN TASK FORCE

by Jim Hamerly



The Save Palomar Mountain Task Force—a dedicated committee of the PMPO—remains steadfast in its mission to preclude a cross-Palomar route for a proposed 500,000-volt transmission line. We are committed to protecting Palomar's unparalleled public value, its critical ecological significance (including endangered species), and its rich historical heritage. Above all, we are focused on guarding against the extreme wildfire risk this project would introduce.

The project was initially awarded to Horizon West / NextEra Energy, with whom we established a very successful working relationship. Unexpectedly, the project was transferred to SDG&E late last year. We are now actively engaging with SDG&E leadership, and gave them a comprehensive half-day tour of the mountain, so that they understand the unique risks of this terrain. Through our continuing public outreach and regional alliances, we are ensuring the community's voice is heard.

On April 14, 2026, SDG&E announced a preliminary route avoiding Palomar Mountain, generally following Highway 79 from Warner Springs to Temecula. [See Map Above] SDG&E will host both virtual and in-person community meetings goldenpacificpowerlink.com and will speak at our Pancake Breakfast/PMPO Meeting on May 23rd. We remain cautious, but hopeful that the final route will not involve Palomar Mountain. Our goal remains clear: keeping this line off Palomar Mountain.

The Task Force:

Steve Bond
Elizabeth D. Getzoff
Jim Hamerly
Alex Isaienko
Sandrine Miller-Montgomery
Bonnie Phelps
Michael Pique
George Ravenscroft
Yvonne Vaucher



2025-27 "YELLOW" PALOMAR RESIDENT TAGS *By Lafe Ball*



Hello Palomar Residents:

The 2025/27 Palomar Mountain Resident Tags are now available! These easy hang-in-your-window tags have helped access during snow days when there's been lots of traffic. When the sheriff deputy or CHP is restricting access to Palomar, they wave tag holders right through. We have a spot on the tag front where you can write your phone number should someone need your car moved during snow challenges.

2025-27 resident tags are \$7.50 each, mailed direct to you. We recommend one tag per vehicle in your household.

All proceeds go to the PMPO to support the varied activities here on the mountain.

When ordering your June 2025-June 2027 tag please provide:

- 1) Last Name, First Name
- 2) Palomar physical property address to verify eligibility -
 - a) Street address or assessor's parcel number
 - b) Crestline/Birch Hill easement road number, if available
- 3) Current tag number(s), if applicable. We will do our best to maintain your previous number(s)
- 4) Mailing address: where to send the tag to
- 5) Email address* - *Emails will be added to the PMPO distribution list for Palomar Mountain Specific information only.*
- 6) Phone number*


* Voluntary: to be added to the PMPO distribution list for Palomar Mountain-specific information only.

We are working to compile a complete list of residents and property owners to increase our options for communication. If you would like us to share this information with other Palomar Mountain organizations such as the Fire Safe Council and the Community Center, tell us we may.

The PMPO developed the resident tag in early 2019 to promote community engagement and neighbor recognition. If for some reason the Sheriff Deputy or CHP Officer has not seen them before (the personnel changes often) please enlighten them.

Ways to get these resident tags:

<p>Pay by using Zelle, Venmo, PayPal, or credit/debit card at pmpoinfo.com/donate</p> <p>Email: tags@pmpoinfo.com or Call: Lafe Ball at (909) 208-9401</p>	<p>pmpoinfo.com/donate</p> 	<p>Mail checks payable to "PMPO" to: PO Box 145, Palomar Mountain, CA 92060</p> <p>Checks may take a few days to process but we will get them mailed once checks are received.</p>
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 <h2>ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER ANYONE?</h2> <p>If you would like to receive the PMPO annual newsletter electronically in the future, please email newsletter@pmpoinfo.com and let us know. Your email address will not be shared or distributed in any way.</p>	<h2>PMPO NEEDS YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT...</h2> <p>PMPO, Box 145, PALOMAR MOUNTAIN, CA 92060-0145 PMPO IS RECOGNIZED BY FEDERAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES AS A TAX EXEMPT 501 (c)(3) ORGANIZATION. YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE 100% TAX DEDUCTIBLE. MAIL IN A CHECK OR DONATE ONLINE AT WWW.PMPOINFO.COM/DONATE PLEASE INCLUDE NAME AND E-MAIL TO RECEIVE TAX RECEIPT.</p>
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Palomar Mountain Volunteer Fire Department dba

PALOMAR MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY FIRE ASSOCIATION

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*By Robert Carlyle
and
Michael Pique*

In 2016, the Palomar Mountain Volunteer Fire Department (PMVFD) leased the fire station property to San Diego County, who then contracted with CAL FIRE to provide fire fighting and medical aid. Five years ago, PMVFD changed its business name to the Palomar Mountain Community Fire Association to better reflect our present situation. The PMCFA acts as a liaison with the County and CAL FIRE for the residents of Palomar. Now we have teams and equipment from both the County and the State on site. All the crews have been doing an outstanding job, and we are lucky to have them looking after us.

The US Forest Service has completed most of the brush clearing and prescribed burns in Fry Creek and Jeff Valley, making the densely inhabited areas on Palomar much safer from forest fires generated by the Santa Ana winds - which in the past, have been the worst threat. This has been a long time coming and we are in better shape than

we have ever been - thanks to the Forest Service and their hard-working contractors.

Tree clearing and brush removal efforts, coordinated by the Fire Safe Council, have also helped immensely, but our narrow and rugged dirt roads and driveways continue to challenge access for our emergency vehicles.

The PMCFA meets the first Saturday of every month at 0900h (9 AM), at the Community Center (next to the Fire Station). We also provide a Zoom connection for the meeting which I send out on NextDoor with the agenda. All are welcome; see our web site at palomar-fire.org.

The PMFCA's annual general meeting will be held at 9 AM on Saturday, September 5 (one week after the Mountain Hoedown). We will update the community on the status of our fire protection and hold elections for three of the five Board member positions.

BOARD MEETINGS
9AM
1st Saturday of the Month

BOARD MEMBERS
Robert Carlyle, President
Tom Mendenhall, Vice President
Mike Pique, Secretary
Keith Ronchetti, Treasurer
Mark Thompson, Member at Large

www.palomar-fire.org
21610 Crestline Road • P.O. Box 235
Palomar Mountain, CA 92060

THANK YOU
for supporting the
**Palomar Mountain
Community Fire Association**

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CAL FIRE - STATION 79 REPORT *By Captain Parker Durio*

I wanted to share an important update regarding recent changes at CAL FIRE Station 79:

- The rescue ambulance (RA79) has been transitioned to Medic 79 (M79) and remains a 4x4 unit.
- The state fire engine (E3387), Water Tender 79, and Medic 79 are now hard staffed, meaning each apparatus has dedicated firefighters assigned 24/7 year-round.
- Station 79 is now designated as a “must cover” station for both the ambulance and the state engine.

What this means operationally is that if E3387 or M79 is committed to an extended incident, the San Diego Unit will implement a plan to backfill those resources at Station 79 to ensure continuous coverage for the mountain area.

These changes are aimed at improving reliability and maintaining consistent emergency response coverage for the community.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or would like additional details.

Medic79 Ambulance



Photo Courtesy of Michael Pique

Palomar Mountain Planning Organization
2025-2026 TREASURER'S REPORT

By *Sandrine Miller-Montgomery,*
PMPO Treasurer

The Palomar Mountain Planning Organization's financial status, while robust, has not seen an increase in its balance in 2025-2026. We started 2026 with \$65,333.38, a decrease of -\$2,642.98, compared to 2025.

This is due to two main reasons:



1- An increase in our expenses to support the community:

- a. Additional dumpsters. This was a little over \$3,000 in support of the great work for fire prevention by the Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council (PMFSC).
- b. Improvement of the IT infrastructure of the Community Center.
- c. In the previous year, we budgeted funds to remove a specific large rock apparently blocking access for emergency vehicles. Fortunately, working in collaboration with CAL FIRE Captain Kowalski from our local Fire Station 79, we later determined that this rock removal was unnecessary.

2- PMPO general donations decreased, from \$4,135.59 in 2024 down to \$2,630.51 in 2025. In addition, we collected \$4,708.06 in 2024 for the Save Palomar Mountain Task Force regarding the 500kV transmission line project. But in 2025, due to the low activities on the Horizon/SDG&E front, we collected only \$100. We may reactivate our fundraising based on the direction this project takes.

In 2025, the Certificate of Deposit generated \$1,590.27 in interest.

The Palomar Resident Tags program, under the care of Lafe Ball, remains a success in organization and financial management, generating a small surplus that supports our community.

As the treasurer, my goal is to ensure we are spending our resources wisely. As usual, do not hesitate to let us know what you think should be tackled to improve our precious Palomar Mountain. As always, ideas need to support most of our community. If a project is above our current means, we will attempt to cover it through grants and/or a targeted donation campaign.

You can send your project wish list to the board@PMPOInfo.com or directly to me at treasurer@PMPOInfo.com. I will be happy to share this with the board for their consideration.

As a reminder, the PMPO operates as a CA State-registered, charitable 501(c)(3) organization, and donations to the PMPO or its committees are tax-deductible. We do accept donations by PayPal, Venmo, Zelle, credit/debit cards, or checks. See pmpoinfo.com/donate/ for all information.

<u>January 1, 2025</u>	
Checking Acct. Balance	\$22,726.94
Certificate of Deposit 1 yr.	\$45,000.00
Savings Acct. Balance	\$ 249.42
Total Accts. Balance	\$67,976.36
<u>January 1, 2026</u>	
Checking Acct. Balance	\$28,720.76
Certificate of Deposit 4m.	\$36,587.62
Savings Acct. Balance	\$ 25.00
Total Accts. Balance	\$65,333.38
<u>Difference</u>	
Total Accts. Balance	- \$2,642.98

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PALOMAR OBSERVATORY



New Family Tours

This month on May 16th we are launching a brand-new Family Tour at Palomar Observatory!

This interactive experience is designed especially for younger visitors and curious families.

Together, we'll explore:

- An introduction to astronomy through how telescopes — like the legendary Hale Telescope — collect light
- How astronomers use light to learn about stars, galaxies, and the universe
- What it's like to work at Palomar Observatory
- And what you can do if you want to become an astronomer one day

From hands-on telescope models to live light demonstrations, this tour makes big science approachable and exciting.

For more information and to fill out a reservation form, please head over to this link: sites.astro.caltech.edu/palomar/visitor/tours.html

New Outreach Coordinator at Palomar Observatory

Longtime Outreach Coordinator Steve Flanders, who for many years ran tours, gave talks, and hosted star parties for the community, has retired. The following is reprinted with permission from "The Big Eye," Volume 19, #1: astro.caltech.edu/palomar/community/friends/bigeye.html

We're thrilled to welcome Ashley Wilkinson as our new Outreach Coordinator at Palomar Observatory.

Ashley brings a wealth of experience in science education, astronomy outreach, and student engagement. She joins us from the University of North Texas (UNT), where she spent several years in the Physics Department as an Undergraduate Coordinator and STEM Outreach Ambassador. Her work included organizing major solar eclipse events, developing public programming, mentoring students, and supporting department-wide initiatives that reached thousands across the community.

Ashley has also led planetarium shows, field trips, and virtual astronomy events, educating over 15,000 students annually through dynamic and accessible programming. Her passion for making science inclusive and engaging shines through in everything she does—from building astronomy trivia nights to mentoring young women in physics.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Education from UNT and has served in a wide range of roles, including console operator at the UNT Sky Theater, educator at the Frontiers of Flight Museum, and summer camp instructor in space and Earth sciences.

At Palomar, Ashley will coordinate on-site support for public, educational, and media-related events. She will also oversee the docent program, contribute to public outreach strategy, and help lead the observatory's social media presence—with a special focus on expanding our reach to young adults. Working closely with the Caltech Optical Observatories Director's Office, Ashley will play a key role in shaping the observatory's future outreach efforts.

We're excited for the creativity and energy she brings to our team—welcome, Ashley!

The Big Eye

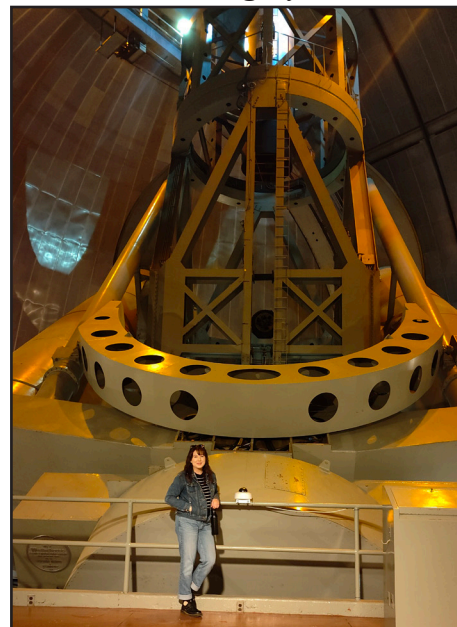


Photo Courtesy of Palomar Observatory

FRIENDS OF PALOMAR MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

By Rosemary Johnston, Friends' President

We had a successful Apple Festival (renamed the Harvest Festival) Saturday, November 1 with about 250 participants, including a busload from Pomona. Park interpreter William Meyst said he could have used more volunteers. Live music from the Leucadia String Band, board member John Bruce's bluegrass band, was a major factor in keeping the event lively and spirited. The weather also cooperated this year, and it was not unduly cold. It was suggested we move up the date to late September or early October.

Joann Rizzo is the new host at the park campground. She helps coordinate the sale of firewood, answers questions for campers, and recommends hikes and other activities in and near the park. Sharon Dall, in charge of merchandise sales at the kiosk, is looking into selling ball-cap-type hats. She said firewood and other sales have been low because campground use is low during the winter. Meyst reports there are some problems with the water supply at the Silverwood and Cedar Grove areas so the restrooms are not operable there currently.

This past year, we started a quarterly newsletter - the Palomar Park Post - and created a brochure for distribution online and at the kiosk. The next newsletter issue should be out in May. Our annual fundraising campaign in late fall netted almost \$19,000.

Board president Rosemary Johnston was invited to participate in a tour of the sixth-grade camp facilities last June 25, together with virtually all employees of the Colorado Desert District. District staff are currently evaluating potential uses for the facilities, which include several buildings. A visitor center in the first building will be a priority.

We were saddened to learn of the recent sudden death of our newest board member John Bruce, 70. A retired captain of the Oceanside Fire Department, John was active in San Diego County Search and Rescue, played upright bass in his band, was an avid cyclist of many 100-mile (century) bike rides, and often fished at the park with his four children. As a child, John attended Patrol Boy camp at the sixth-grade camp. The standing-room-only crowd at his memorial service was testimony to his commitment to the well-being of his community.

Our treasurer Sandrine Miller resigned in February, and we are actively recruiting a replacement. If you know of anyone who would be interested in serving in this board position, please contact me at 619-384-6852. We are grateful to Sandrine for her service on the board the past year.



2025-2026

PMPO Board Members

Lafe Ball, Rosemary Johnston,
Dylan Healey, Robert Carlyle,
Cecelia Borland,
Michael Pique (Secretary),
Elizabeth Getzoff (Vice Chair),
Ryan Flohr (alternate Josephine Marcelino),
Jim Hamerly, William Meyst,
Nkechi Okorie, Chris Clarke (Chair),
Sandrine Miller-Montgomery (Treasurer)
Absent: Yvonne Vaucher, Michael Walsh



Photos Courtesy of Michael Pique



PALOMAR MOUNTAIN FIRE SAFE COUNCIL (PMFSC)

A 501(c)(3), non-profit organization dedicated to helping keep Palomar Mountain fire safe

By Yvonne Vaucher

**BOARD MEETINGS
9AM
4th Saturday
of the Month**

palomarfiresafecouncil.org

Our mission is to reduce wildfire risk and promote fire safety in our Palomar Mountain community. The PMFSC had another busy year in 2025.

Our on-site chipping and monthly dumpster programs continued throughout the late spring, summer, and fall, steadily improving our defensible space at no cost to residents by removing over 27 tons of debris and 5000 cubic feet of chipped vegetation. In addition, the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County funded a community chipping day in November that removed 6144 cubic feet of vegetation for those who could transport their chipping material to a central chipping site. Chipping and dumpster activities were generously supported by the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation SAFE grant, supplemented by the PMPO and the PMFSC.

Additional activities included hosting a San Diego County CAL FIRE Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) workshop which provided valuable information about wildfire behavior, evacuation procedures, and personal safety. We continue to work closely with the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County by participating in county-wide, bimonthly meetings and distributing announcements and educational material. The American Red Cross provides free smoke alarms for homeowners who are 62 years of age or older. burninstitute.org/applications/smoke-alarmapplication

We are now beginning the fourth year of our five year California Climate Investments (CCI) CAL FIRE grant to improve emergency access to, and evacuation from, homes on Palomar Mountain by removing obstructing trees and flammable brush from either side of our many narrow, unimproved, privately maintained roads. In 2025 we worked primarily on roadside improvement on the west side of the Summit, with continued maintenance in the Crestline-Birch Hill area. Visit our website palomarfiresafecouncil.org for PMFSC program updates.

The Dead and Dying Tree removal grant, sponsored and administered by the San Diego County Resource Conservation District (RCD), has improved defensible space by removing ~200 dead or dying trees from the Birch Hill area within the past year. For further information about the Dead and Dying Tree grant, contact Stan Hill, RCD Forestry & Fire Prevention Project 619-562-0096 Ext. 110 www.rcdsandiego.org

This year we hope to continue our PMFSC on-site chipping and PMFSC dumpster programs pending funding support. The dumpster is usually available on the first Saturday of April to October from 8AM-12PM and is located at 33409 Bailey Meadow Rd, just off State Park Rd, a mile from the Summit. Announcements are posted on Palomar Nextdoor. The dumpster usually fills up fast, so arrive early to be sure there is still space for your load. Our PMFSC contact for dumpster information is Cecelia Borland 760-594-4688. We chip when we have enough individual sites scheduled to completely fill a chipping day. Robert Carlyle 760-742-1891 coordinates and schedules all our PMFSC on-site chipping.

Our 2026 goal is for Palomar Mountain to join the national Firewise community. The Firewise program decreases residential wildfire losses by encouraging home hardening and improved defensible space within individual communities. Firewise membership benefits homeowners by reducing fire insurance premiums. Currently, we are assessing the home hardening and defensible space status in the Palomar community. Based on this information, we will develop a three-year action plan required for requesting Firewise community membership.

A very special thanks to everyone who participated in our PMFSC programs this past year and to those who have generously contributed to support PMFSC Palomar Mountain activities! This past year individual Palomar donors contributed \$1922 and individual PMFSC members provided over 300 volunteer hours valued at \$12,000 of in kind donations to support all PMFSC activities.

All Palomar landowners and residents are members of the PMFSC Foundation, a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization. We appreciate your ideas and welcome your participation at our monthly Board meetings held at 9 AM on the 4th Saturday of each month in-person and by Zoom at the Community Center of Palomar Mountain. Notifications of PMFSC activities are posted on the Palomar Nextdoor, and on the PMFSC website: palomarfiresafecouncil.org.

PMFSC BOARD MEMBERS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Yvonne Vaucher, President</i> | <i>Michael Pique, Member at Large</i> |
| <i>Robert Carlyle, V President</i> | <i>Linda Thorne, Member at Large</i> |
| <i>Gina Aven, Treasurer</i> | <i>Libby Getzoff, Member at Large</i> |
| <i>Cecelia Borland, Secretary</i> | <i>Miriam Munoz, Member at Large</i> |

Together we can protect our Palomar Mountain community from wildfire!

US FOREST SERVICE REPORT

Update on Palomar Mountain Fuels as of April 16, 2026

By Dana Barre,
Palomar Ranger District Fuels

Our prescribed fire season started November 15, 2025. We've continued burning planned projects throughout the season, carefully done according to weather and environmental conditions. Prescribed fire projects in the lower elevations were conducted first, with prescribed fire starting on Palomar Mountain in January, just after the holiday season.

As of January, prescribed fire operations have been focused on Birch Hill, Fry Creek, and Jeff Valley on Palomar Mountain. USFS Crew personnel did cut/pile work on 74 acres. Prescribed burns totaled 266 acres: 97 acres pile burn and 169 acres broadcast (understory) burn.

As we enter the beginning stages of fire season, we are monitoring weather and fire activity and as conditions allow, we will continue with the prescribed fire work until the priority of staff time shifts to wildland fire response (typically around Mid-May). We have more units available to burn in Fry Creek and the Aguanga fuel break (near High Point lookout - 102 acres).

We have a pending Fuels Reduction Contract (FY26/27) that should be awarded in May this year – planned mandatory project area is 449 acres, with optional project areas (up to 492 additional acres) to be exercised depending on bid pricing and funding availability. Palomar Mountain would benefit from 770 acres of this contract.

Palomar Ranger District Fuels Staff:

Fuels Planner - Dana Barre 619-873-7119

Fuels Officer - Chris Brenzel 760-415-4910

Fuels Tech - Jonathan Polansky 619-930-6577

*Prescribed
Burn*



Photo Courtesy of Dana Barre



PALOMAR CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE CENTER

Celebrating God's Faithfulness — 75 Years of Ministry

By David Hasty

This year marks a significant milestone for Palomar Christian Conference Center as we celebrate 75 years of ministry. Since our founding in 1951, God has faithfully used this place to impact lives, drawing people closer to Him in a unique and powerful setting. Over the past seven and a half decades, we have been blessed to serve hundreds of thousands of guests, and we look ahead with gratitude and anticipation for the years to come.

A Summer of Lasting Impact

This past summer was a powerful reminder that God continues to move in meaningful ways through the ministry of camp.

During one of our work camp sessions, we were encouraged to see that over two-thirds of the girls expressed a desire to be baptized when they

returned home. This is a clear indication of hearts being transformed and lives being surrendered to Christ.

In another group, leaders shared that over 100 students made decisions to trust Jesus. These are not just numbers—they represent real lives, real stories, and real transformation. Each decision reflects the work of God using this place to reach the next generation.

A Place Where God Moves

Stories like these are just a glimpse into how God continues to use the campgrounds to draw people to Himself. Whether through quiet moments in nature, powerful teaching, or meaningful community, Palomar remains a place where individuals encounter God in life-changing ways.



Looking Ahead

As we celebrate 75 years, we are filled with gratitude for all that God has done—and with hope for what is ahead. We are excited to continue this mission for many years to come, trusting that God will keep using this ministry to impact lives across Southern California and beyond.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. You are a vital part of what God is doing here.

“To God be the glory, great things He has done.”

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR *by Chris Clarke (Continued from Page 1)*

A quick reminder for the season:

- **Defensible Space:** Ensure you have a 100-foot buffer around your home.
- **Seasonal Maintenance:** Keep gutters clear of pine needles and debris. Trim lower branches (ladder fuels) from trees.
- **Evacuation Planning:** www.readyforwildfire.org

Activities in the past year:

- Events at the Community Center, including the 3rd Annual Mountain Hoedown featuring a silent auction, community vendors, artists, and music by the Palomartians (Chris Clarke & Friends) at the newly renovated amphitheatre (thank you Palomar Mountain Community Fire Association volunteers)
- Continued outreach from the Save Palomar Mountain Task Force, regarding the proposed 500kV power transmission line
- Continued support and engagement with the Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council, Palomar Mountain State Park, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Palomar Mountain Community Fire Association (PMCFA), US Forest Service, and Community Center of Palomar Mountain
- \$8,000 allocation for roadside rock removal (ultimately not needed based on CAL FIRE assessment)
- A special thank you to the Palomar Christian Conference Center for donating the food for the 2025 Annual Pancake Breakfast

Looking Ahead

The PMPO’s strength comes from the mountain itself—from the residents who volunteer their time and the neighbors who watch out for one another. Whether we are discussing zoning, land use, or community safety, our goal is to ensure that Palomar Mountain remains the place we all fell in love with.

Thank you for your continued support and for being such active participants in this community. I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual Pancake Breakfast coming up on May 23rd at 8 AM.

Stay safe and stay vigilant,

Chris Clarke *Chair, Palomar Mountain Planning Organization*

SEQUOIA SENTINELS

by Jim Hamerly



Sequoia Sentinels™, the premier non-profit dedicated to establishing Giant Sequoia groves in Southern California, held its 20th Anniversary Celebration, on April 18–19, 2026.

Over the last 20 years, we have:

- Assisted in planting hundreds of Giant Sequoias.
- Cataloged over 1,000 trees across six southern California groves.
- Built a global network of nearly 100 sequoia growers.

These trees are more than just carbon sinks; they are living legacies that will outlast us all. This anniversary honors the volunteers and scientists who have turned a bold idea into a flourishing reality. It’s a testament to what local stewardship can achieve for our climate and our future.



In late 2023, Jeff Von Urff of Caltech’s Palomar Observatory discovered our first of several naturally regenerated seedlings. Now two years old, it is growing at the base of an oak stump, just 50 feet from its 100-foot-tall “mother” tree. Why is this significant? Statistically, a Giant Sequoia produces nearly one billion seeds in its lifetime, yet only about ten will ever successfully grow into trees in the wild. Furthermore, viable seeds typically come from trees 150–200 years old. Seeing a 100-year-old tree produce a successful offspring is a testament to the unique health and vitality of the Palomar grove.

Looking forward, Sequoia Sentinels™ is thrilled to announce a high-profile partnership with the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive. Together, they will establish a brand-new grove in the Greater Los Angeles area to coincide with the 2028 LA Olympics. This initiative marks a significant expansion of the organization’s mission, bringing the majesty of the sequoias to an international stage.

FOREST FIRE LOOKOUTS ...Eyes in the Sky

By Ernie Cowan

From now until late fall, the Palomar fire lookouts are the essential “eyes in the sky” for Southern California.

Trained volunteers with the Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA) officially began the daily watch for wildfires on May 1 at the Boucher Hill Fire Lookout tower. With a commanding view that stretches from the Mexican Border in the south to the San Gabriel Mountains of Los Angeles County, these eagle-eyed volunteers are often the first to spot brushfires in remote forest areas or along rural highways.

Historically, two towers have served Palomar: the 70-foot High Point Tower, located east of Palomar Observatory, and the 30-foot Boucher Hill Tower, situated at the west end of Palomar Mountain State Park. Sadly, the High Point Tower will not be operational this season until needed structural repairs are completed.

Essential Training and Impact

The FFLA volunteers undergo rigorous training focused on monitoring and recording weather conditions, accurately locating fires, and communicating critical information to the U.S. Forest Service dispatch center via radio. To pinpoint a fire, lookouts use the Osborne Fire Finder, landmarks, and maps. This precise information allows fire engines, hand crews, aircraft, and other equipment to be dispatched rapidly to the location of the smoke.

The lookouts are highly effective. Last year alone, the High Point and Boucher Lookouts reported over 100 incidents, ranging from small, illegal campfires and vehicle fires to lightning-caused and larger wildland blazes. Additionally, lookouts at Boucher Hill record and report significant weather events to dispatch, such as high winds, sudden changes in wind direction, building thunderstorms, and lightning strikes.

Life in the Lookout

A typical shift for a lookout runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., though hours may be extended during periods of extreme fire weather. The shift begins with a tower inspection, morning weather recording, and an official radio check-in with the dispatch center.

Lookouts spend their time constantly scanning the horizon visually and with binoculars. When not searching for smoke, there is ample opportunity to enjoy spectacular views that, on a clear day, can include ships at sea and the distant islands of San Clemente and Catalina.

The experience offers a front-row seat to the seasonal changes on Palomar Mountain. Early in the season, clouds may shroud the tower, but as summer heat arrives, windows

and doors are opened, and lookouts may sit outside and enjoy a cooling breeze under a shady roof.

Wildlife Encounters and Grand Vistas

The tower is a wonderful location for wildlife viewing. It's not unusual to spot a passing bald eagle or watch the beauty of courting red-tailed hawks flying around the tower. Visits from bobcats, deer, wild turkey, or a covey of quail with chicks are also common. During an active incident, firefighting aircraft will often make close passes by the tower, offering a salute with a wing wag.

From the grand vistas that extend from the mountains to the ocean, there is truly no better view in San Diego than gazing from the catwalk that surrounds the lookout tower.

Visitor Information and How to Volunteer

The public is always welcome at the Boucher Lookout Tower. Lookouts also serve as State Park Docents, offering visitors a chance to talk about fire safety, area wildlife, wildflowers, trails, and mountain history.

When Boucher Lookout is open, a paved road provides easy access to a parking lot and observation platform just below the tower. This platform is a great viewpoint if you would rather not climb the 42 steps into the cab of the 16x16-foot enclosed tower, which sits at an elevation of 5,438 feet. A restroom is adjacent to the parking area, but there is no available water.

Come on up, the lookouts love the company.

If becoming a volunteer fire lookout interests you, please visit ffla-sandiego.org for additional information.

Ernie Cowan, 760-518-8050

author of “There’s a Marmot in My Pack,”
available at Amazon Books



Photos Courtesy of
Ernie Cowan

PALOMAR MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

*By William Meyst, Interpreter I,
Cuyamaca Rancho State Park & Palomar Mountain State Park*



Spring comes early, mid-April frosts threaten apple crops

It was an extremely mild winter on Palomar Mountain this year. Save for one storm that dusted the mountain, we sustained almost no snowpack. One might even say that Spring came early this year when a hotter than usual weather pattern triggered early blooms for several tree and flower species.

Mid-April frosts threatened apple blossoms which might affect apple crop yields come fall.

California State Parks Week

Please join us for California State Parks Week this year! Our event is called, “Pages of Palomar: Nature Journaling at Palomar Mountain State Park.”

Palomar Mountain State Park provides the perfect opportunity to take up your favorite artistic tool, be it a pencil, a paintbrush, or perhaps even prose or poetry. Join us for a peaceful day of guided nature journaling at Doane Pond.

The nature journaling program on Friday, June 12th, 2026, begins at 1:00 PM and ends at 5:00 PM. Limited artistic materials will be provided.

San Luis Rey Intertribal Pow Wow

The San Luis Rey Tribe of Mission Indians will be hosting the 26th Annual Inter-Tribal Pow Wow at the San Luis Rey Mission on Saturday, June 13th from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Sunday June 14th from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. CA State Parks will have a booth at the event on both days. There will be arts & crafts booths, food booths, dancing and drumming, an opportunity drawing, and contest dancing.

California Conservation Corps Projects at the Park

The California Conservation Corps has been working with our district on several projects. The Campfire Center received great improvements from the CCC’s in summer of 2025. The pathway leading to the campfire center was brought up to code for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), making it accessible to those with low mobility. They also restored the historic stone stairway that serves as a “shortcut” from the campground road to the pathway. They also graded the center and even added square footage to the rear areas using boulders and fill. As a result, the campfire center is in a much-improved state.

The California Conservation Corps will be returning this year in late spring/early summer of 2026; they will begin work on improving and rerouting the Thunder Springs trail. While much of the trail remains well traversable, many sections have fallen into disrepair – ruptured by thick roots from nearby oak trees and eroding into Doane Creek. The corps will be rerouting the trail farther from the creek and further up hill. Ultimately the accessible portion will terminate with a boardwalk and viewing platform in the woody area nearby where Thunder Springs itself flows out of the ground. This project will likely take several years to complete and may present some inconveniences to hikers, but the results will be vastly improved conditions on the pathway at Doane Pond and the Thunder Springs Trail.

Staff Updates

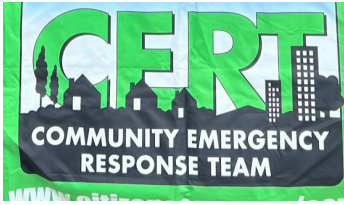
Ricardo Linares has been promoted to Park Maintenance Chief I for the Montane Sector (Palomar and Cuyamaca). This will allow maintenance staff to better allocate workload and organize projects at both parks.

Sheryll Loftin was hired as the new Administrative Chief for Colorado Desert District. Sheryll is a new CA State Parks hire from Borrego Springs. Her position is the backbone of operations at the district, which will make almost every aspect of our operations smoother.

Rama Ewing was promoted from Research & Data Analyst / GIS Specialist to District Planner and Environmental Coordinator. Rama is now the supervisor for the Interpretation team at the Colorado Desert District, which means that our Interpretation programs again have “someone at the helm.”

If you have any questions or program inquiries regarding Palomar Mountain State Park, please feel free to reach out: william.meyst@parks.ca.gov, 760-522-7622.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM



Are you ready for a disaster? CERT can help!

Look for our booth at community events for in-person information.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.palomar-fire.org/cert.php>

For disaster preparedness information, go to readysandiego.org

**SDCF CERT Northern Division
Palomar Mountain Program Manager:**

Bill Leininger, 760-807-6923



PALOMAR MOUNTAIN MUTUAL WATER COMPANY

By James Marugg

The Palomar Mountain Mutual Water Company was founded to support the water needs of our community. It was established by friends and neighbors to the betterment of all users of a very precious resource. We strive to ensure that spirit lives on and we can continue to provide safe, dependable and sustainable water supply today, tomorrow, and long into the future. That goal presents us with unique challenges based on the age of our infrastructure, rising costs, new regulations and requirements along with a warming climate.

Much of our water system has been in the ground for a very long time. As much as we would like to think things last forever, the facts don't support that wish. We experience leaks, failing meters or pumps, and an occasional tank issue. Our Operations Manager does a fantastic job of restoring water flow to the affected areas and keeps ahead of as many issues as possible through preventative maintenance. We continue to work to develop plans to modernize for efficiency and to comply with requirements for accurate metering, compliant delivery and sanitization systems, and ensuring the required testing is performed and reported to the California State Water Board.

Our General Manger has worked diligently to provide our shareholders with both open office hours and timely, responsive support for their needs. To make payments easier, we now have an online option. Modernization efforts across the organization allow us to remain compliant with state regulations while stabilizing costs over the long term. Our General Manager is working with vendors to implement cost-effective solutions that will support best water management practices to deliver wholesome potable water to the community. Integral in our efforts to maintain our system is research into past practice and documentation. Our records are being digitized so that we can preserve and retrieve documents as required.

A note from the water company would not be complete without a plea to conserve. As you all experienced a relatively dry Winter, I would be remiss not to remind all property owners that our entire water supply comes from snow melt and rain. We are not connected to any transported water supply and are on our own to manage our supply. As we move into the warmer months it is imperative to monitor usage and minimize waste so they we can all enjoy the luxury of having water flow from the tap.

The Palomar Mountain Mutual Water Company Board encourages you all to be Fire Safe as we move into fire season. Clearances around homes and buildings, removing dead and dying vegetation, and general property management are all important for our community. We thank you for your efforts and applaud your desire to help us remain a resilient community on our mountain.

Thank you and have a safe and enjoyable Spring on Palomar!

As most of you know, this is the second time for us on Palomar. We bought our house in 1975, sold it a few years later, bought it back in 1998 and started Palomar Mountain News. In 2000 I was encouraged to get my Real Estate license. It has been a very interesting and wonderful career. I've learned so much about how to make the most of living or weekendending on Palomar with all the trades and entities that service our area. Within these PMPO Tidbits, I'll pass on some of my gleaning from the pros, and community tidbits.

TREE AND ROOT DAMAGE

Do you love trees? I sure do. In the early days, trees were often cut down to have room for the cabin, evidenced by the stumps found under the structures. Some trees were left standing for shade. Now those trees have grown and damaged foundations, up-rooted driveways, shifted walls and so much more. There was a tree planting project in the 1970's and some are fine but some have done so much costly damage. The trees always win. Would you like to go on a little tour with me? Before you plant any trees today, think about how big they will be in 10, 20, or 50 years.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS - When Palomar cabins were built decades ago, there were no guidelines for septic systems. Now, new installations require permits and must comply with current regulations. The last time I checked, the county requires a 300-foot leach field layout, with 15-foot spacing between lines on level land, and a matching reserve. The field can run only on cleared land, thus requiring very costly tree removal in some cases. Most septic system repairs have been done without permits but there might come a time when contractors cannot do the repairs without permits. So, it is important to keep open areas around your home to avoid the expense of cutting down trees later.

INSURANCE

Our winter storms have brought heavy snow and strong winds, resulting in much tree and structure damage. Most insurance inspectors now require that no branches overhang a structure. Some allow no tree to be within 10 feet of a structure nor branches within 10 feet of a chimney. Some of those little seedlings of cedar and fir I planted in the 1970's now have a canopy reaching out 20+ feet from the trunk. Other species of trees can grow much larger. Think ahead before you plant.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE - CAL FIRE

conducts an annual defensible space inspection for all properties. Moreover, all Real Estate transactions now include a section stating that either the seller or the buyer must agree to have the required work done. One of the requirements states "if you have dead or dying trees on your property the entire tree needs to be removed..." See CAL FIRE form at fire.ca.gov/dspace

SDG&E EASEMENT

TREE TRIMMING - We are a part of the Cleveland National Forest area, which has guidelines requiring that no stump be left taller than 8 inches. Look around: some of our dead stumps are cut 30 feet tall. Before you allow contractors to trim on your land, be sure to remind them that no stumps are to be more than 8 inches. I recommend you being on site for the job and, unless you want the wood, make sure they remove it. SDG&E has realized that those tall stumps do need to come down. If you have tall SDG&E stumps on your land, call Noe Fuentes 619-605-9280 and get on his list. SDG&E will put the stumps on the ground and, for the Crestline and Birch Hill area, our dead and dying tree grant managed by Stan Hill 951-553-3013 will take the unwanted wood away.

FLOWERS and FRUIT TREES

50 years ago Palomar had so many very fragrant lilacs blooming this time of year. Many of the bushes don't bloom anymore. Why? They need full sun but are now under the shade of big trees. Wondering why your fruit trees aren't producing? They need full sun, too. Lilac and daffodils can be separated to replant in sunny locations. Some of us planted 1000's of daffodils all along the roads. Alas, now the County Road crews are required to spray herbicides for fire safety, so make sure you plant on your own property.

DO YOU HAVE A TRUST OR A WILL?

People have enough to deal with when they lose a family member. It is really tough when there isn't a trust or notarized will in place. Most properties then need to go through an expensive probate with the state taking a huge percentage. A Trust is usually best, but make sure it is kept up to date and you have all your real estate named in the trust.

AT&T LANDLINES NO MORE

According to AT&T, their plan is to discontinue landline service by October 2026. You might want to plan ahead. Good cell service? From my experience, AT&T cell phones seem to work the best up here.

DELIVERY WOES?

There are many mapping programs now and some don't get your packages to the right place. You might want to invest some time correcting your directions online. Be sure to have your address number posted out on the public road but they still might not make it to you. Another option is to have small packages sent to the Post Office, 33124 Canfield Road, your PO Box number, Palomar Mountain, CA 92060. Then be sure to pick up your package the same or next day.

MORE TIDBITS from Bonnie

PALOMAR HISTORY



It is always interesting to learn history of our favorite mountain. Recently I sold the cabin where author Bob Litchfield penned his Palomar Views Volumes I and II. You can find copies of those books and so much more at our Mountain Historian's site. Many thanks to Peter for his years of work for our viewing pleasure:
peterbrueggeman.com/palomarhistory

SPACE-X VIEWS

Perhaps the best location for a front row seat is Palomar Mountain. Check out the schedule at spacex.com/launches and go outside or gather along the rim and look to the northwest. There are always a few cars at the lookout on State Park Road and Fern Meadow.



ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GATHERING

The past few years we have been treated to a delightful evening of caroling by Bruce and Rita Druliner at the Community Center. This year we will plan to have it on Saturday, December 19th so weekenders will hopefully be able to join us too.



PHELPS FAMILY NEWS

Many of you knew our family when they all lived next door. Our four 'Treasures' had a firewood and egg business stand in our driveway. They sold apples at the top of the grade in the fall for funds for their little theater group. They were quite the entrepreneurs with a jewelry business, too. Those four are teenagers now and appreciate all your support and friendships over the years. Four years ago, we thought we were all pulling up stakes and moving to Missouri. As it turns out, they are here on Palomar about as much as we visit them at their farm. So, we're staying put. You are invited to pop by anytime. Take advantage of StarStrucks, our free beverage counter open 24/7. Glad to get your questions answered and help in any way.

Bonnie Phelps 760-533-1742

PALOMAR MOUNTAIN GENERAL STORE & MOTHER'S KITCHEN RESTAURANT

A Message to Our Community

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's hard to believe that the Palomar Mountain General Store and Mother's Kitchen Restaurant have been part of this community since Memorial Day of 1977. The General Store reopened in June 2020 after the COVID-19 pause and has been going strong ever since. Mother's Kitchen, however, remains closed indefinitely — progress on the kitchen repairs has been slow, and finding skilled contractors willing to come this far up the mountain, along with the staffing realities of our small population, continue to make a proper reopening difficult.

This past summer brought another set of challenges. The General Store was vandalized — twice — with our display window broken and merchandise stolen and damaged on each occasion. As disheartening as those incidents were, we picked ourselves up, cleaned up, and kept going, the way mountain folks tend to do. The vicissitudes of running a small store in a remote place are nothing new to us, and your continued support has made all the difference.

The General Store itself is thriving, and we are deeply grateful for the years of patronage and encouragement from our local community and visitors alike. Seeing your smiling faces when you pop in is one of the genuine joys of doing what we do. We love serving the community of Palomar Mountain and everyone who makes the trip up to this beautiful and special place. We wish you all the best in 2026, hoping you and your families are well and thriving, and we look forward to continuing to serve you.

Warmly, Your Friends at The Palomar Mountain General Store & Mother's Kitchen.

**Local Postal Customer
Palomar Mountain CA 92060**

**PMPO BOARD
ELECTIONS**



*By Michael Pique, PMPO Secretary
secretary@pmpoinfo.com*

The PMPO Board consists of up to 15 volunteers, five of whom are up for election this year.

Membership on the PMPO Board is open to any individual resident, property owner, or business person in the Palomar Mountain area of San Diego who wishes to contribute time and effort to achieve the purposes of this Organization. Members may be elected for consecutive terms. Board members serve without compensation. Board members must meet the attendance requirements as stated in the PMPO By-laws article 7.6. The Board meets a minimum of four times a year. A description of the PMPO and its various Committee activities, Articles of Incorporation, and By-laws can be viewed on the PMPO website, **PMPOinfo.com**.

Election of PMPO Board Members will be accomplished at the Saturday May 23, 2026 Annual General Meeting, 10 AM, following the Pancake Breakfast.

We need to elect replacements for the following board members whose terms are ending or who have left the board for other reasons:

- 1) Robert Carlyle
- 2) Ryan Flohr (alternate Josephine Marcelino)
- 3) Elizabeth (Libby) Getzoff
- 4) Jailene McGervey
- 5) Michael Walsh

Of the above Board members, all except Jailene McGervey have agreed to run again.

To nominate a Board candidate, including yourself, email secretary@pmpoinfo.com.

Please visit:

PMPOinfo.com for information on the PMPO, and its Annual General Meeting and Elections.

Thank You For Your Service to the
Palomar Mountain Community