



NEWS



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Lovinggood champions \$1 million for High Desert crime sweeps

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: June 14, 2017, 4:29 PM



A crime sweep conducted in the High Desert in 2013. [File photo: Daily Press]

In the High Desert, \$1 million more will be directed to fund crime sweeps this coming fiscal year — an earmark championed by San Bernardino County Supervisors Chairman Robert Lovinggood, who represents the 1st District.

The \$1 million in discretionary general funding will be established in its own reserve account to pay for direct costs and overtime for law enforcement agencies that will conduct the sweeps.

The allocation, approved 3-2 on Tuesday, will re-direct \$1 million from a county \$5 million reserve fund, officials said.

“If we don’t shift this conversation, not only today, but next year and every year following, until you turn that tide (of crime), we’re at great risk,” Lovinggood said. “Each of our communities is at great risk.”

He added that the state’s push of responsibility to the county, without commensurate funding, has hampered law enforcement resources, particularly in the desert, where economic challenges are felt more.

“... If you think I’m satisfied at one point of hearing about a neighbor’s house being broke into, or my own — backdoor kicked in in the middle of the afternoon in a gated community, and have my teenage daughters walk into that,” he said, then adding: “Understand that we are in a position of action, and at least within the 1st (District).

“The critical need right now at this point is within the desert,” he continued, “and I have never come and frivolously wasted any dollars that I’ve been responsible for and that brought about the request, and I think it’s a pretty simple one to move forward with.”

Lovinggood had previously allocated funds for “Desert Guardian” crime sweeps in the Victor Valley.

In statements released Wednesday, Sheriff John McMahon and District Attorney Mike Ramos lauded the new financial commitment to sweeps.

“The additional \$1 million will help in funding crime suppression operations that have proven to make a dent in those (crime-fighting) efforts with the goal of creating a safer environment for the residents in our county,” McMahon said.

Ramos, who has agreed to partake in a forum on crime in the High Desert, equally praised Lovingood for pushing to combat crime in this region.

“Through this additional funding and our collaborative efforts with county officials and local law enforcement,” Ramos said, “we will make a significant impact in our community.”

Inmate fire crew restored

County officials Tuesday discussed the county’s \$5 billion budget for the coming fiscal year, which begins July 1, and also restored funding for the year to the Inmate Fire Crew, which had been at risk of being eliminated.

Supervisors agreed to re-direct \$1.5 million in general discretionary funding from the same \$5 million reserve account used for the crime sweeps allocation to keep the program afloat.

The **San Bernardino County Fire Protection District’s** recommended spending plan for fiscal year 2017-18 hadn’t carved out money to bankroll the four-year-old program.

County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig noted that the department would have maintained a seasonal inmate fire crew, meaning that the \$1.5 million shortfall would have equated to a reduction of capability — not an outright elimination.

But Supervisors had pressed for the program to be fully funded, with 4th District Supervisor Curt Hagman describing the benefit: “You get lots of bang for that dollar.”

Hartwig acknowledged it was a top priority, yet “unfortunately, I have more highest priorities than I do dollars coming in.”

Although it’s funded for the coming fiscal year, officials will have to identify a longer-term sustainable funding source in the near future.

Since its inception in June 2013, the program has afforded low-level and low-risk inmates, who might otherwise have been eligible for the state’s inmate fire crew program, the opportunity to respond to fires and to perform community beautification projects.

Inmate crews had responded to 783 requests for service as of calendar year 2016, according to County Fire Deputy Chief John Chamberlain, not including outside calls where County Fire provided aid to adjoining jurisdictions.

Crews logged nearly 85,000 hours last year, saving taxpayers more than \$2 million, Lovingood said Wednesday. The crews also spent nine days fighting the BlueCut Fire and helped collect 578 tons of trash around the High Desert.

The joint partnership between County Fire and the Sheriff's Department maintains 23 positions, including both men and women, Sheriff's spokeswoman Cindy Bachman recently said.
Wonder Valley fire station saved

Supervisors also restored \$1.5 million Tuesday for the Wonder Valley Fire Station that serves Interstate 40 between Barstow to the Arizona stateline.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170614/lovingood-champions-1-million-for-high-desert-crime-sweeps>

Lovingood secures \$1 million for High Desert crime sweeps

Victor Valley News Group

Posted: June 14, 2017

VICTOR VALLEY – (PRESS RELEASE) – San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman Robert A. Lovingood secured \$1 million for a series of law enforcement sweeps and other operations to both combat crime and set the stage for expanded economic investment.

During Tuesday's County budget hearing, Lovingood supported restoring \$1.5 million for the Wonder Valley fire station that serves Interstate 40 stretching from Barstow to the Arizona stateline.

The Board chairman also advocated restoring \$1.5 million in funds for an inmate firefighting crew program that has been critical in battling wildfires, including last year's devastating Blue Cut Fire. Funding for the inmate fire crew had been cut from the County's draft budget.

Lovingood has been a key proponent of increasing public safety funding, particularly to beef up law enforcement operations. He thanked fellow Supervisors James Ramos and Josie Gonzales in backing his request for crime sweeps. In years past, Lovingood allocated funds for "Desert Guardian" crime sweeps in the Victor Valley. The \$1 million allocation takes local anti-crime efforts to an unprecedented new level.

"I'm simply stating the fact that there's a need. It's a conversation that we've all touched on over the past several years and how we look at public safety," Lovingood told his Board colleagues.

"If we don't shift this conversation, not only today but next year and every year following until we turn the tide (of crime), we're at great risk. Our County and each of our communities are at risk."

Sheriff John McMahon said the additional funding will make an impact.

"Supervisor Lovingood made a promise in the past that if revenues improved, he hoped to further strengthen the Sheriff's Department by dedicating additional resources to fight crime and target quality of life issues in the county," McMahon said. "With that commitment, I praise the supervisor for coming through on these promises. With Supervisor Lovingood's help, we've made a huge impact on crime specific issues in the high desert. The additional \$1 million will help in funding crime suppression operations that have proven to make a dent in those efforts with the goal of creating a safer environment for the residents in our county."

District Attorney Michael Ramos agreed that the expanded sweeps will have a significant positive effect.

“Thanks to the efforts of Supervisor Lovingood we are going to be able to more effectively combat crime in the High Desert region,” Ramos said. “Through this additional funding and our collaborative efforts with county officials and local law enforcement, we will make a significant impact in our community.”

Lovingood said more affluent regions of the county have more revenue to spend on law enforcement. But the First, Third and Fifth Districts, he said, are more challenged economically, with a lower tax base and fewer resources. Combatting crime, Lovingood said, is vital to expanding economic development because companies looking to relocate consider crime rates before investing in communities.

The \$1 million funding, Lovingood said, will be coordinated by the Sheriff’s Department. As in the past to leverage funds, the County will offer to partner financially with local cities interested in participating in heightened enforcement.

Many law enforcement professionals agree that Propositions 47, 57 and AB 109 have put more criminals on the streets. And Lovingood said the State has stepped back from its law enforcement responsibilities.

“If the State won’t do its job in seriously attacking crime, then San Bernardino County will,” Lovingood said.

In other action, the Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 to restore funding for inmate fire crews. In 2016, inmate crews responded to 738 emergency calls, with that number expected to top 1,000 calls this year. Inmate crews also logged 10,560 hours of work in Victorville, Hesperia, San Bernardino, Needles and unincorporated County areas, including chipping operations in Wrightwood and illegal dumping operations throughout the High Desert.

“Inmate crews logged 84,894 hours last year, saving taxpayers more than \$2 million,” Lovingood said. “These crews spent nine days on the Blue Cut Fire and helped collect 578 tons of trash around the High Desert. Clearly, this is an outstanding program that is making a major impact on our communities.”

<http://www.vvng.com/lovingood-secures-1-million-high-desert-crime-sweeps/>

Fire services should have local accountability: Letters

Daily Bulletin

Posted: June 14, 2017, 12:39 PM

Fire services should have local accountability

Re “Upland, San Antonio Heights, you have more time to protest fire department annexation, here’s why” (June 6):

In regard to the protest against the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** taking over the Upland Fire Department, generally it is better to have local government services paid for locally by local taxes. The reason is that there is greater accountability for spending and taxes.

The Local Agency Formation Commission has a budget that has dramatically grown from \$792,176 in fiscal year 2011-12 to \$2,087,939 in 2016-17. It is they who set the \$150 annual fee for fire by individual parcel (regardless of the size or improvements on it), and this agency counts the protest votes against it!

It is understandable that city governments seek to get fire budgets off their books. But the tax revenue to pay for fire departments must be collected.

If LAFCo gets its way, accountability for dollars spent is further removed from taxpayers in one of the largest counties in the United States. City, fire and police should be kept local.

— Michael Y. Warder, Sr., Upland

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/opinion/20170614/fire-services-should-have-local-accountability-letters>

Small debris fire causes train to be delayed briefly at Fontana Metrolink Station on June 14

Mike Myers, Fontana Herald News

Posted: June 14, 2017, 8:23 p.m.



The San Bernardino County Fire Department responded to the Fontana Metrolink Station to extinguish a small fire on June 14. (Contributed photo by Mike Myers)

A small debris fire forced an eastbound Metrolink train on the San Bernardino Line to be delayed for an hour at the Fontana Metrolink Station on June 14.

No injuries were reported, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

At about 4:30 p.m., Metrolink train number 314 stopped at the Fontana station at 16777 Orange Way with a fire showing under one of the train cars.

The Fire Department responded to the location and observed that passengers had disembarked the train. The small fire under one of the train cars was quickly extinguished.

Some passengers said they could smell the fire, but didn't see any smoke inside the train car.

Metrolink posted a delay notice on its website, stating the train had struck debris on the tracks.

At about 5:30 p.m., the train was declared safe. Passengers were allowed to board the train and continue to the San Bernardino station.

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/small-debris-fire-causes-train-to-be-delayed-briefly-at/article_0841cee2-517a-11e7-9c10-734d394b4155.html

A Million Dollars Up in Smoke

Heidi Fron, Mountain News

Posted: June 15, 2017



A lamentable loss, this lovely home on Pigeon Hawk Road in Cedar Glen was being marketed for sale when it burned in the early morning hours of June 8.



Firefighters pour water on the charred remains of the Cedar Ridge home that burned to the ground.

A luxury Cedar Ridge Estates home, listed for sale at \$1,080,000, burned to the ground in the early morning hours of June 8. The fire destroyed the home, which was owned by James and Lisa Smetana of Indo.

According to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department's** public information officer, Eric Sherwin, the first call came in at 3:37 a.m. "We received multiple reports," Sherwin reported. "Most people reported a large orange glow from a fire in the trees in the Cedar Glen area."

Medic Engine 91 was the first to arrive at the scene. "The fire had fully engulfed the home, and was in the canopy of the trees," Sherwin said. "Once the house is beyond saving, the firefighters focus on trees and prevent it from spreading to other homes in the area."

The fire was knocked out completely at 4:48 a.m. "It was a pretty intense fire fight," Sherwin explained. "It took just over one hour to put the fire out, and the extensive mop-up terminated around 11:33 a.m."

The reportedly unoccupied house was 3,324 square feet with three bedrooms and three-and-a-half bathrooms. The master bedroom was on the main level and its bath included a spa tub, sauna and a sitting area with a fireplace. Another fireplace was in the great room, which had wood floors and large windows, ideal for entertaining.

The 37,001-square-foot lot (just over 0.85 acre) had both a deck and a patio for enjoying the landscaped outdoor areas. The house and deck were a total loss, and firefighters worked to protect the trees and landscaping. No other houses were threatened.

The county firefighters received back-up assistance from Cal Fire, Sherwin said. They notified the U.S. Forest Service, but no one responded because the forest service is not staffed at night, according to Sherwin.

Another of several reports about the fire reached dispatch at 4:11 a.m. In that report, the address was given as the 28900 block of Hook Creek Road in Cedar Glen, according to an entry on www.socalmountains.com. Cross streets were listed as being North Cumberland Drive and Oak Terrace.

At 4:28 a.m., the address on www.socalmountains.com was corrected to Pigeon Hawk Lane, near Redtail Hawk Court in Lake Arrowhead. These inconsistencies might be a clue as to why so much of the house burned before firefighters arrived. One firefighter mopping up after the fire commented that the location was difficult to find and getting there was a challenge.

Cause of the fire is under investigation. There were no reported injuries to civilians or firefighters.

[\(Print Edition Only\)](#)

Illegal Fireworks Crackdown

Mike Harris, Mountain News

Posted: June 15, 2017



A San Bernardino County multi-agency task force as of June 11 confiscated more than 10,000 pounds of illegal fireworks.

The crackdown against bringing illegal fireworks into San Bernardino County has thus far halted more than 20,380 pounds of the incendiaries from being sold on the street, with more than 81 citations issued to persons attempting to smuggle them into the county.

“The interdictions have taken place at several locations around the county, at undisclosed locations – for obvious reasons,” County Fire Marshal Mike Horton told the *Mountain News* on Wednesday. “Our goal is to get as many of these fireworks off the street as possible.”

A San Bernardino County multi-agency task force led by **San Bernardino County Fire Department’s** Fire Investigations Unit has been the driving force behind the crackdown.

With San Bernardino County facing a dangerous wildland fire season, the San Bernardino County Fire Department (SBCoFD) is partnering with law enforcement agencies to increase its vigilance in enforcing state and county fireworks laws in order to protect public health and safety.

“We reported that on the weekend of June 3, we collected 11,240 pounds of illegal fireworks and wrote 44 citations,” Horton stated. “On the following weekend of June 10, we were able to confiscate 9,140 pounds of dangerous and illegal fireworks and wrote 37 more citations. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg.”

Each, Horton added, carries a penalty of \$1,250 for the person receiving the ticket.

Additionally, property owners may be cited if they allow fireworks to be possessed, stored or used on their property, Horton noted.

“The interdictions will continue throughout this month and into July, as well, as we work with local agencies and county sheriffs to imbed fire prevention staff with their enforcement teams,” Horton stressed.

Using people’s driver’s licenses to determine where the illegal fireworks were heading, Horton explained that it appeared that, of the 20,380 pounds confiscated to date, more than 10,000 pounds were headed for Los

Angeles County, nearly 2,000 pounds for Orange County, just over 1,000 pounds for Riverside County and almost 3,400 pounds for San Bernardino County.

Horton expressed his appreciation to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, as well as police and fire departments from several cities in the valley.

As the Fourth of July weekend approached, Horton pointed out that County Fire will use entrance roads to the mountains to warn visitors that fireworks of any kind are illegal in unincorporated areas of San Bernardino County.

"The mountain communities are pretty good about self-policing but County Fire will have a presence [in the mountains], looking for illegal use of fireworks."

During the holiday, authorities can't chase every firework shooting into the air, he added, but "We will pursue reports.

We always reach out to the community for their support," he continued. "Residents play an important role in our fireworks investigations. If you see something, say something. Call the authorities or WeTip Hotline at 1-800-47-ARSON to anonymously report illegal fireworks."

[\(Print Edition Only\)](#)

Changes Coming To Outlying Local Fire Stations

Z107.7 News

Posted June 15, 2017

Change is in the air for **San Bernardo County fire** stations in the Morongo Basin's outlying areas. Reporter David Haldane explains...

If you're a part time firefighter paid to answer calls in Landers, Pioneertown or Rimrock, you'll soon be out of a job. That's the word from the county fire department just one day after the board of supervisors voted to keep the Wonder Valley station open for another year.

Battalion Chief Mike Snow said Wednesday that the so-called "paid call" system—under which firefighters with other jobs earn money responding to calls—will be phased out by June 30.

Instead, those stations will be served only by full-time firefighters from Yucca Valley bolstered by Fire Corps volunteers providing support and communications in emergencies and disasters.

In related news, Snow reported that the Johnson Valley fire station was taken over earlier this month by a homeowners group to be used for other purposes. And stations on Sierra Avenue in Joshua Tree and Lear Avenue in Twentynine Palms have been used only for storage for years.

<http://z1077fm.com/changes-coming-to-outlying-local-fire-stations/>

Wildfires pollute much more than previously thought

Phys.org

Posted: June 14, 2017



Wildfires burn much more biomass per area than professional prescribed burns, and pollute at a much higher rate. Credit: Kari Greer/USFS Gila National Forest via NASA



A NASA plane stocked with an orchestra of instrumentation flew a team of researchers through the turbulent plumes of wildfires, including the Rim Fire, the third-largest wildfire in California's history. Credit: NASA Jeff Schmalz LANCE/EOSDIS MODIS Rapid Response Team, GSFC



An orchestra of atmospheric instruments protrude from a NASA DC-8 plane that flew researchers through wildfire plumes. The SEAC4RS mission also took data from a tropical storm. Credit: NASA SEAC4RS Mission

Summer wildfires boost air pollution considerably more than previously believed.

Naturally burning timber and brush launch what are called fine particles into the air at a rate three times as high as levels noted in emissions inventories at the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency, according to a new study. The microscopic specks that form aerosols are a hazard to human health, particularly to the lungs and heart.

"Burning biomass produces lots of pollution. These are really bad aerosols to breathe from a health point of view," said researcher Greg Huey from the Georgia Institute of Technology, which led the study. The research also describes other chemicals in wildfire smoke, some never before measured, and it raises the estimated annual emission of particulate matter in the western United States significantly.

The previous EPA data had been based on plume samples taken in controlled burns ignited by forestry professionals. Measuring plumes so thoroughly, from the sky, directly in the thick of a wildfire had not been possible before this study.

Plunging into plume

Unique research missions deployed planes to plow through the plumes of three major wildfires, including the 2013 Rim Fire, the third-largest wildfire in California history. An ensemble of instruments bristling from the flanks of NASA and U.S. Department of Energy aircraft allowed teams of researchers on board to measure chemicals and particles in real time and cull masses of data, upon which the new study is based.

"We actually went to measure, right above the fire, what was coming out," said Huey, a professor in Georgia Tech's School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, which he also chairs.

Bob Yokelson, a professor of atmospheric chemistry at the University of Montana has taken a leadership role in many aspects of the research and was in a group of about 20 scientists who selected the instruments to be installed on the large NASA plane. "We really didn't have to go without anything we wanted really badly," he said. Yokelson also helped design the flight paths.

Georgia Tech had instruments and scientists on the NASA DC-8 plane. Researchers associated with a total of more than a dozen universities and organizations participated in data collection or analysis. The scientists published their peer-reviewed results on June 14 in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres*.

"This paper is expected to serve as a basis for the next NASA fire chemical monitoring mission," Huey said.

Refinery in flames

Methanol, benzene, ozone precursors and other noxious emissions collected from wildfire plumes may make it sound like an oil refinery went up in flames. That's not so far-fetched, as oil and other fossil fuels derive from ancient biomass.

"You can see the smoke, and it's dark for a reason," Huey said. "When you go measuring wildfires, you get everything there is to measure. You start to wonder sometimes what all is in there."

The study found many organic chemicals in the wildfire plumes, and technological advancements allowed them to detect certain nitrates in the smoke for the first time. But burning biomass does not appear to be a dominant source of these chemical pollutants, and the major findings of the study involved the fine particles.

Particulate matter, some of which contains oxidants that cause genetic damage, are in the resulting aerosols. They can drift over long distances into populated areas.

People are exposed to harmful aerosols from industrial sources, too, but fires produce more aerosol per amount of fuel burned. "Cars and power plants with pollution controls burn things much more cleanly," Huey said.

Various aerosols also rise up in the atmosphere, but their net effect on global warming or cooling is still uncertain, as some aerosols reflect sunlight away from Earth, and others, in contrast, trap warmth in the atmosphere.

Prescribed burnings

As global warming expands wildfires in size and number, the ensuing pollution stands to grow along with them. Stepping up professional human-initiated burnings may help cut these emissions, the study suggested.

So-called prescribed burnings prevent or reduce wildfires, and they appear to produce far less pollution per unit area than wildfires, the study said.

"A prescribed fire might burn five tons of biomass fuel per acre, whereas a wildfire might burn 30," said Yokelson, who has dedicated decades of research to biomass fires. "This study shows that wildfires also emit three times more aerosol per ton of fuel burned than prescribed fires."

While still more needs to be known about professional prescribed burnings' emissions, this new research makes clear that wildfires burn much more and pollute much more. The data will also help improve overall estimates of wildfire emissions.

Fire prevention professionals follow stringent rules to carry out prescribed burns to avoid calamity and sending pollution downwind into populated areas. The researchers do not recommend that inexperienced people burn biomass, as this contributes to air pollution and can trigger tragic blazes, including wildfires.

Daunting flights

Experiments like these in real natural disasters are uncommon not only because of the rarity of assembling such great instruments and taking them airborne. The flights can also be dangerous. Plumes are not only filled with toxins, but their turbulence tosses planes around, shaking up technology and researchers.

"The smoke leaks into the cabin and makes you nauseous," said Yokelson, who started flying plume missions many years ago. "You're trying to take notes, run your instrument, look at the fire, talk on the headset, and get pictures. And at the same time, it's crazy bumpy. Normally, if you're in a smaller plane, your stomach is not too happy."

Also, wildfires pop up unannounced, so flight schedules must be hammered out on short notice around strict regulations that normally prohibit flights near wildfires.

Research aircraft also have to coordinate with regional authorities to avoid crossing paths with fire-fighting planes.

The rare data the flights from NASA's SEAC4RS mission and the Department of Energy's BBOP mission have provided stand to greatly increase understanding of the pollutants naturally burning biomass flings into the air.

<https://phys.org/news/2017-06-wildfires-pollute-previously-thought.html>