



MOUNTAIN EMBER TEAM
YEAR-IN-REVIEW REPORT
Annual Membership Meeting February 29, 2020

Dear MET members,

What a first year for the MET!

Your current Board of Directors has prepared this brief year-in-review report to recap our amazing progress and inform the membership of ongoing activities to prepare for emergencies and make our community safe from fire.

The MET evolved from a grass roots effort to bring the Painted Cave / San Marcos Pass folks together after the dissolution of the PCVFD. MET filed with the IRS to become a 501(c)3 non profit in April, 2019, and the current Board was elected in September, 2019, just six months ago.

Suddenly on November 25, 2019, we were confronted with the Cave Fire. Wow, maybe that's what they mean when they say a "trial by fire"!

This report summarizes our activities since April 2019. Many thanks to our donors and to our volunteers, who have put in countless hours to establish the MET from scratch and get it working, with dedication, determination and transparency. As we gather for our Annual Meeting, we are excited to build on our progress so far and, as always, we welcome input and involvement from the MET community!

Sincerely,

The MET Board of Directors

Dennis Clegg, President

Nic Proctor, Vice President

Jenny VanSeters, Secretary

David Dellinger, Treasurer

Ina Brittain

Lane Clark

Al Flinck

Linda Murphy



"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." Helen Keller

Jessica Tunney

2019 – 2020 Highlights and Milestones

In April 2019, we filed the first paper work to become a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, which is now approved. We hit the ground running with a motivated group of volunteers. Work began immediately to re-establish a 40-year-old fuel break on the north side of the community – hours were spent clearing, hauling, chipping and burning. The MET established a formal relationship with Santa Barbara County Roads by entering into the Road Enhancement Partnership Project, adopting Painted Cave Rd. You have probably seen the signs on the road. This relationship allowed the understaffed County Roads crew to expedite brush clearance on E. Camino Cielo before fire season got under way. MET crews spent many days weed whipping and cleaning up 30,000 feet of our adopted roadway – and these efforts helped prevent further spread of the Cave Fire in November.

Between clearing, hauling, weed whipping, burning, training, hose testing, equipment maintenance, trash removal, and culvert clearing, our MET members donated nearly 400 volunteer hours. This does not include the volunteers who spent countless hours developing the by-laws, policies, and researching and filing the necessary paperwork for the organization. We drafted articles of incorporation, which were approved in May 2019, and bylaws were drafted and approved by an interim Board in August 2019.



(Much Thanks to Phil Seymour for legal guidance!) The current Board was elected in September 2019, and we have held monthly public meetings since then, with minutes posted on the MET website.

Speaking of the web, a big thanks to Jenny VanSeters, who created and launched the MET website, www.mountainemberteam.com. The MET website is a platform for community conversation, engagement, organization, and information. Hope you have all checked it out! In addition, we are now able to provide community alert notifications for emergencies via the phone app **Intelligent**. This proved to be invaluable during the Cave Fire. A huge thank you to Al Flinck for finding this resource and reaching out to

Intelligent, who generously donated this service for free. Download the app on your phone if you haven't already.

Finances

A big priority for the MET has been to raise funds and donations to better equip our volunteers for fuel mitigation and fire suppression. Thanks to the generosity of donors, we have been able to acquire or purchase weed whippers, chainsaws, hedge trimmers, and equip two patrol trucks (see below). Fire hose and other equipment have been donated by SB County Fire, and collaborations have been established with the Wildland Residents Association (WRA) and Laurel Springs Ranch. We welcome partnerships with our mountain and foothill neighbors (even flatlanders are welcome!). MET is extremely grateful to all donors for their support.

The MET did very well financially in 2019. We received over \$19,000 in donations and got a grant from the WRA for a little over \$3,000. We sold almost \$600 worth of T-shirts and received \$200 in 2020 membership dues during the last week of 2019. Our total 2019 income from all these sources was \$22,904.75.

We spent close to \$11,000 acquiring several important pieces of equipment: We bought a Type 7 Patrol Truck (MET PT 1) with a skid unit in place for \$4,500 from the Mountain Drive Community Association, who had acquired it from the Montecito Fire Department. We spent a little over \$5,000 on a new Waterax Skid unit for the MET Patrol Truck 2, the blue truck on loan from Laurel Springs Ranch, and we purchased two Stihl articulated hedge trimmers for about \$1,100. In addition to acquiring those assets, we had about \$2,300 in general expenses -- about \$900 for equipment repair, maintenance, and fuel; \$588 for the T-shirts; \$324 in governmental filing fees for setting us up as a non-profit; \$263 for setting up the website, etc. Total spending came to \$13,040.18 -- \$10,762.81 for big-ticket assets and \$2,277.37 for other expenses.

The balance in our checking account at the end of 2019 was \$9,864.57. About \$5,500 of that consists of funds donated for a restricted purpose, and the remaining \$4,370 consists of unrestricted funds.

The Cave Fire

The too-close-for-comfort Cave Fire on November 25 was an absolute crash course for the MET. Eighteen of the 21 MET members that stayed behind (despite mandatory evacuation orders) were part of the MET Community Defense Team (CDT). Within an hour, the team had assembled and quickly mobilized to check on neighbors and help evacuate those wishing or needing to do so. The team deployed over 3,000 feet of hose and set up pumps



throughout the community. Watch stations were established to monitor the progress of the fire and be on the lookout for embers and spot fires throughout the night. As the sun rose on Tuesday, we were happy to see the extensive air and ground attack by fire fighting professionals, and Mother Nature came to the rescue early Wednesday morning with rain ... and then hail and snow. It was a true Thanksgiving.

While we were (are) still in the process of equipping and organizing, the MET CDT rose to the occasion with what was available and we learned an enormous amount from this experience. The CDT continues to meet and prepare. The MET held an After Action Review meeting at Laurel Springs where 64 community members shared valuable information. Local news media (KEYT and the Independent) featured the efforts of the MET in a very positive light. The concept of a Mountain Ember Team, with dedicated community involvement, is a cutting edge development for fire safety and protection.

In 2020, 16 MET members participated in a WRA/FEMA sponsored Community Emergency Response Team course (CERT). The participants benefited from expert instructors and learned how to assist in case of an emergency, including fire. CPR training was also included. Most recently, a 5,000 gallon water tank was moved from W. Camino Cielo and placed on an existing pad in Lookout Park to supply an ember station or to fill incoming fire trucks.

But we are just getting started! Going forward into 2020, the MET has established goals and prioritized action items:

1. Connect the Community: Set up a Community Directory, establish localized groups and appoint block captains, increase communication, increase MET membership and involvement.

2. Train the Team: More training exercise for the MET Community Defense Team, including pump operation, hose deployment, practice fire suppression on burn piles during the rainy season, planning for water sources, pumps and hose, safety zones.

3. Fewer Fuels: Fuel breaks, weed whipping along roadsides, work with community to thin canopy, advise and encourage hardening of homes. Fire defense begins at home.

4. Equipment and Evacuation: Needs for protective personal equipment (PPE), communications equipment (radios), fuel mitigation equipment (chipper), and mobile defense teams. Planning for evacuation, evacuation routes, and situational awareness for all possible future scenarios.

5. Gifts and Giving. Finally, we need funding to expand the capabilities and functions of the Mountain Ember Team.



We need your membership and involvement.

PLEASE SEE WWW.MOUNTAINEMBERTEAM.COM

FOR MORE DETAILS!