



**MOUNTAIN EMBER TEAM  
YEAR-IN-REVIEW REPORT  
Annual Membership Meeting February 27, 2021**

**Dear MET members,**

What a truly strange year it has been!

Your current Board of Directors and the MET Community Defense Team have prepared this brief year-in-review report to recap our progress and inform the membership of ongoing and future activities to prepare for emergencies and safeguard our community from fire. As we gather via Zoom for our Annual Meeting, we are excited to continue to build on our progress so far.

Many thanks to our members and donors for both cash and in-kind donations. We also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to our member volunteers who have put in numerous hours chipping, whacking, clearing, hauling, trimming, testing hose, burning piles, and equipping vehicles in preparation for any challenge that may come our way.

The MET Board holds monthly public meetings via Zoom, with minutes posted on the web. As always, we welcome input and involvement from the MET community!

*Sincerely,*

**The MET Board of Directors**

Dennis Clegg, President

Nic Proctor, Vice President, CDT Co-Chair

Jenny VanSeters, Secretary

David Dellinger, Treasurer

Carla D'Antonio, Director

Ina Brittain, Director

Lane Clark, Director

Al Flinck, Director

Linda Murphy, Director

Phil Seymour, CDT Co-Chair

## **2020 Highlights and Milestones**

2020 was the worst year for wildfires ever recorded in California history, with 9,639 fires that burned 4,177,856 acres<sup>1</sup>. Although Santa Barbara mountain communities were spared, 10,488 buildings were destroyed and 31 lives were lost throughout the state. The increasing incidence of wildfires has highlighted the importance of local volunteer firefighters who are often the first on the scene. For example, volunteers saved many houses during the CZU lightning complex fires in the Santa Cruz Mountains<sup>2</sup>. At the wildland urban interface, reduction of fire risk, and disaster preparation are essential<sup>3</sup>. This is the ultimate goal of the Mountain Ember Team and its 91 members.



Over the past year, in the midst of the ongoing pandemic, dedicated MET member volunteers met (safely) to organize, plan and prepare for emergencies, and to mitigate fuel density via weed whacking, brush chipping, and tree trimming. We prepared an extensive Painted Cave preparation and evacuation plan that was distributed to the community (let us know if you did not receive a copy). We worked with local fire agencies and the Los Padres National Forest to acquaint them with the Painted Cave community. We also participated in a larger mountain community forum on a proposed "Safe Public Access Ordinance" to better ensure fire safety amongst campers and visitors to our area.

The MET Community Defense Team (CDT), responsible for vegetation management, fire prevention efforts and active firefighting, has made significant progress over the past year. The CDT is managed by a six member CDT Committee and reports regularly to the MET Board of Directors. Participation in the CDT is open to all members of the Mountain Ember Team in good health, subject to training requirements for firefighting members. Below, we summarize the CDT's 2020 activities and plans for 2021.

### **1. Vegetation Management.**

The CDT's strategy for defending the MET membership area depends heavily on removing accumulations of flammable brush around the central Painted Cave community, reducing the chances of fire starts along roadways, and assisting homeowners in keeping their own property clear of unnecessary vegetation that could feed a fire.





Literally hundreds of hours were spent by CDT volunteers on the following vegetation management activities in 2020:

*Community Defensible Space.* The CDT is committed to completing and maintaining community defensible space (aka community fuel breaks) around the Painted Cave community in accordance with the County-approved San Marcos Pass/Eastern Goleta Valley Mountainous Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan (“CWPP”). In 2020 work continued restoring the north side community defensible space that protects the central Painted Cave community from Sundowners or other fires coming from the direction of East Camino Cielo road. These projects resulted in maintenance and expansion of approximately 5 acres of the community defensible space system. Work on the fuel breaks is continuing in 2021.

*Roadside Fire Hazard Reduction.* The CDT has also, under an agreement with the Santa Barbara County roads department, assumed responsibility for hazard reduction work along Painted Cave Road. Hazard reduction includes annual removal of dry grass and other growth along the roadside that could easily be ignited by sparks, cigarettes or careless visitors. CDT volunteers cleared roadside grass and weeds along the entire length of Painted Cave Road below the Painted Cave community during the spring and early summer of 2020. Work will begin again once new growth dries out this year.

*Community Chipping Program.* CDT volunteers conducted multiple community chipping days in 2020 utilizing a powerful brush/wood chipper on loan from the Wildland Residents Association. (Thank you WRA!) Chipping is intended to help individual homeowners dispose of dead vegetation cleared from the property, as well as to help dispose of cut brush on accessible portions of the community defensible space system or along roadways. Chipping service is available to area homeowners upon request; donations for chipping are appreciated. Dead vegetation must be stacked in a readily accessible location. Monthly chipping



days are currently scheduled for the 3rd Saturday of each month in 2021, subject to weather and demand.

## **2. Fire Defense Team.**

The CDT's fire defense team consists of residents who plan to stay to provide fire protection in the community when we are threatened with a wildfire. Training is provided by members with prior professional or volunteer fire department experience, and use of standard professional firefighter training materials. Firefighting equipment is provided by the MET, supplemented by pumps, hose, protective clothing and other gear owned by members. In 2020 the CDT had 15 active fire team members. Several new members are expected to begin training in March, 2021.

## **3. Ground Defense Plan.**

The CDT ground defense plan is intended to provide protection to homes concentrated in the central Painted Cave community. The central community ground defense plan calls for extending a network of fire hoses throughout the community to combat ember-caused spot fires and any fire that crosses our community fuel breaks. Water will be supplied from tanks, pools and the community hydrant system, pumped from "ember stations" staffed by CDT fire team members, usually based at member's homes where pumps and equipment can be safely stored and quickly put into action. In 2020 the CDT acquired sufficient hose and other equipment to equip block teams on Alta, Ogram, east Glenn and east Lookout roads. In 2021 we hope to expand the system to include Rim Road and west Lookout, assuming that new fire team members join from those areas. We also hope to build up sufficient reserves of hose and equipment to have backup supplies and the ability to further extend the defense system if a situation requires it.



## **4. Mobile Defense.**

In 2020 the CDT operated one patrol truck (Patrol 1) equipped with a pump, water tank and equipment to provide a quick response to small fires or to act as a mobile pumping station in the central Painted Cave community or outlying areas during a major fire. Patrol 1 was also used for patrolling during some high fire danger days, both to provide for quick reaction to any fire starts, and to deter illegal camping fires or other fires started by visitors or transients along Painted Cave Road and East Camino Cielo.

In January, 2021 the CDT received an additional donated truck (Patrol 2), thanks to Nic Proctor, which is now also equipped with a truck-portable pump, water tank and firefighting equipment. This second patrol truck doubles the CDT's ability to provide for quick responses and to provide structure protection during major fires either in the central Painted Cave community or outlying residences. The CDT's 2021 plans also call for

creating hose reserves for the vehicles to increase their defense capabilities in the event of a major fire.

## 5. Financial Summary.

The MET did well financially in 2020. We received \$12,687 in donations and received \$3,740 in membership dues, including \$1,180 in early payments for 2021 dues. We sold \$260 worth of T-shirts. Our total 2020 income from all these sources was \$16,687.

Total expenses for 2020 came to \$16,408, which was slightly less than the income. Most of our spending (\$14,111) was on items directly related to our mission: \$6,596 for vehicle-related expenses, \$5,625 for equipment and supplies for the Ground Defense Team, \$1,372 for Vegetation Management, and \$518 for radios and related equipment. Administrative, outreach, insurance, and other general expenses came to \$1,644, including \$408 for Tee-shirts, most of which will be recovered over time as the shirts are sold.



The balance in our checking account at the end of 2019 was \$9,864.57. At the end of 2020 it was \$10,143.50. Almost all (\$9,644) of that total is in an unrestricted internal account, which means that it is not from donations that were earmarked for a particular purpose. We received \$265 in 2020 that was earmarked for reimbursing the WRA for the use of their chipper, and still have \$235 donated in 2019 that is earmarked for liability and other types of insurance. A summary is appended at the end of this report.



A big priority for the MET has been to raise additional funds via grants, and both cash and in-kind donations. Our membership drive is underway and we encourage you all to reach out to friends and neighbors to increase our membership. A fundraising committee has been established and work is ongoing. Recently, we received our first grant of \$2,750 from Santa Barbara County for replacement of gas-powered equipment. Other grant applications are pending. Over the past year, we were fortunate to receive in-kind donations of hose, nozzles, fittings, PPE and other supplies from the local community, the Hollister Ranch Fire Department, The Wildland Residents Association, the Calaveras County Fire Department, the Santa Barbara County Fire Department, and the Montecito Fire Department. These in-kind donations were valued at approximately \$49,662.

Valuable donations also include the use of equipment storage space (from Ted Adams) and the many volunteer hours. The MET is extremely grateful to all of our members and donors for their support.

## **6. Proposed 2021 Goals and Priorities.**

Going forward into 2021, with your support, the MET will continue its mission to promote the safety and well-being of our community through disaster preparation and education. Below is a summary of our goals for the coming year:

### *A. Continuing Efforts*

1. Continue to expand community defensible space.
2. Keep up community roadside hazard reduction.
3. Maintain and improve readiness of community defense system.
4. Continue monthly chipping program.

### *B. Community Defense Expansion and Improvements*

5. Develop written community defense plan; conduct appropriate training.
6. Extend CDT ground defense system to west Lookout.
7. Extend CDT ground defense system to Rim Road.
8. Acquire equipment and develop tactics for mobile community defense (pumps and vehicle based).
9. Prepare 2 ½" refilling station for outside fire department vehicles.
10. Create/improve storage facilities for distributed hose & equipment.

### *C. Preparation and Evacuation*

11. Develop master list of available private homeowner firefighting resources and special evacuation requirements (disabilities, pets, etc.).
12. Conduct preparedness inspections and make recommendations for individual properties on request; provide assistance and resources (if available).
13. Conduct annual community fire preparedness meeting.
14. Develop improved evacuation warning and assistance program.
15. Conduct additional roadside hazard removal to improve evacuation safety and create clearance around temporary sheltering areas.

### *D. Training*

16. Complete new member training (6-8 new CDT members).
17. Complete radio use and communications training for all CDT members.
18. Improve remedial and refresher training program for CDT members.

### *E. Fundraising*

19. Submit grant requests to fund augmentation of community defense system.
20. Continue to expand membership.
21. Solicit donations and hold fundraising events.

Thanks again for your support and involvement with the MET! Stay safe.

PLEASE SEE [WWW.MOUNTAINEMBERTEAM.COM](http://WWW.MOUNTAINEMBERTEAM.COM) FOR MORE DETAILS!

1. <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2020/https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2020/>

2. <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/south-bay/volunteer-firefighters-save-dozens-of-ben-lomond-homes-from-czu-complex/2352525/>

3. <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/wui/>

# Mountain Ember Team 2020 Financial Report

Prepared February 21, 2020

Prepared by David Dellinger, MET Treasurer

## Income

Donations	
Unrestricted	\$8,806.95
Restricted	<u>\$3,925.00</u>
Total donations	\$12,731.95
T-Shirt sales	\$260.00
Membership dues (paid in 2020 for 2020)	\$2,560.00
Membership dues (paid in 2020 for 2021)	<u>\$1,135.00</u>
Total	<b>\$16,686.95</b>

## Expenses

Capital expenses	
Vehicle improvements	\$1,082.39
Ground Defense equipment	\$4,446.22
Vegetation Management (tools)	\$72.51
Radios and radio equipment	<u>\$518.35</u>
Total capital expenditures	\$6,119.47
Program expenses	
Vehicle fuel, repair, & maintenance	\$3,901.38
Ground Defense & Veg. Management (Equipment repair, maintenance, fuel, etc.)	\$2,112.45
Evacuation brochure printing	<u>\$496.33</u>
Total Program expenses	\$6,510.16
Management & general expenses	
Vehicle registration & insurance	\$1,611.76
Travel expenses (to collect donated gear)	\$366.00
Banking / Paypal expenses	\$81.62
Government filing expenses	\$25.00
Directors & Officers Insurance	\$765.00
Office expenses	\$39.82
Website expenses	\$323.88
T-Shirts	\$408.27
Other branding expenses	<u>\$157.04</u>
Total management & general expenses	\$3,778.39
Total expenses	<b>\$16,408.02</b>

<b>Cash Assets</b>	
Checking account balance at close of 2020	<b>\$10,143.50</b>
<b>Restricted Donation Account Balances</b>	
Chipping	\$265.00
Insurance	<u>\$235.00</u>
Total restricted funds	\$500.00
<b>Unrestricted Account Balance</b>	
Unrestricted funds	\$9,643.50
<b>Total internal account balance</b>	<b>\$10,143.50</b>