

# NEWS CLIPS

Published July 7, 2017



**Resource Conservation and Public  
Outreach**

**Organized by date**

## Teams on high alert following recent brush with wildfires

Dry season makes conditions worse

By Sylvie Belmond



**ON THE MOVE—**At top and far left, Los Angeles County firefighters put a halt to the 40-acre Stokes Fire in Calabasas. Left, a Ventura County firefighter attacks a hot spot in the 55-acre Grade Fire that began north of the 101 Freeway near Camarillo Springs Road. **JOEL COUNCIL/Acorn Newspapers**

The heat is on, and in one week three brush fires broke out in the local mountains. Two fires started within 10 minutes of each other June 29 in Calabasas and Malibu, but were stopped in their tracks. A third fire scorched the Camarillo Grade on July 4 and spread plumes of smoke across the Conejo Valley just hours before the big fireworks shows began in Westlake and Thousand Oaks. None of the fires caused serious injury or property damage, and the shows went on.

The Calabasas fire charred more than 40 acres of dry vegetation in Stokes Canyon, just east of Las Virgenes Road and north of Mulholland Highway. Minutes later, another 50 acres of open space were scorched near Topanga Canyon Road and Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. The cause of the fires remains under investigation.



**Courtesy of Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority**

### **Arson Watch**

Due to dry brush fueled by the wet winter and months of abundant growth, the Santa Monica Mountains are at their most vulnerable.

A local Arson Watch team has made it their mission to prevent fires from starting—at least those that are due to carelessness or those that are begun on purpose.

Founded in 1982 by late actor Buddy Ebsen and his daughter, Cathy, after their ranch in Liberty Canyon was threatened by a brush fire that was started by arson, the volunteer group comprises 80 individuals who patrol fire-prone areas when the days turn hot, windy and dry. They look for signs of smoke and people who might be using fireworks or lighting cigarettes where the tinder is dry.



**MICHAEL COONS/Acorn Newspapers**

Volunteers work under the supervision of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to patrol local open spaces during periods of extreme fire weather conditions.

During the July 4 weekend, Arson Watch team members were stationed at critical areas throughout the local mountains to make sure people were acting responsibly.

"We are the eyes and ears of the sheriff's and fire departments. It's a visual deterrent," said Andrew Fleming, a carpenter who joined the Arson Watch program 12 years ago.

Early warning and deterrence are the most effective ways to deal with the constant threat of fire danger.

“ To have eyes on something early is huge for us,” L.A. County Fire Inspector Richard Licon said. “Just with the fact that they’re out there, we would hope that individuals would be less likely to do something that could cause a fire,” Licon said recalling a recent fire in Malibu that was started by a man who flicked a cigarette out of his car.



**PREVENTION—An important first step in fire prevention minimizing the dry foliage that fuels the flames. To accomplish this, the fire department requires safe, clean perimeters around property. In the Morrison Ranch neighborhood of Agoura Hills, goats are brought in each year to munch on and eliminate the dry tinder that grows next to homes.**

Firefighters quickly extinguished the blaze because a property owner called authorities to report what he saw.

That kind of vigilance is what the Arson Watch program is all about.

By patrolling, talking with people and serving as witnesses, the volunteers help law enforcement and fire authorities in the prevention of destructive fires.

Today, the Arson Watch program comprises two teams that patrol the Topanga, Calabasas, Agoura, Cornell, Seminole Hot Springs and Malibu communities. The teams have a vested interest as the members include people whose homes were destroyed or threatened by wildfire, said Todd Prince, a Coral Canyon resident who joined the group in 2009 and heads the group that patrols the areas south of Agoura Hills and west of Calabasas.



JOHN LOESING/Acorn Newspapers

“A lot of people don’t recognize how dangerous it is to smoke in the canyons. By being the educator, we can get good results,” Prince said.

Participants on the team must commit to at least 30 hours to patrol the Santa Monica Mountains during the peak of fire season, looking for signs of fire and report any sighting and vital information to authorities, Prince said. Many team members carry fire extinguishers, or they have blankets and shovels to extinguish small blazes.



**BLAZE ALERT—Above, Andrew Fleming donates his time to Arson Watch, a volunteer team that serves as the eyes and ears of the community. Fires can start in different ways and not all of them can be blamed on arson. Below, a truck crashed into a telephone poll and started the June 2016 Old Fire in Calabasas. SYLVIE BELMOND/Acorn Newspapers**

Deputy Mike Woodard oversees the Arson Watch program for the Lost Hills station. He said the team can always use more volunteers.

“They’re very helpful. They are trained on what to look for,” Woodard said.

After participants pass a background check, they undergo basic training. Then they receive a badge, a two-way radio, a safety vest and magnetic signs, which they place on their own cars when they go out on patrol.

While some participants choose to interact with the public to educate them about fire safety, others do not. It's up to them. "(But) we don't encourage them to make any contact with people that could create a conflict," Woodard said.



**ACORN FILE PHOTO**

For information about the program visit [arsonwatch.com](http://arsonwatch.com).

## Toilet to tap? Say it ain't so

It concerns me a great deal that you would purposely use recycled effluents as a source of drinking water when the current system is not even safe enough to discharge into Malibu Creek.

Even a new commercial treatment system cannot remove enough man-made chemicals from this effluent to allow release to the creek, but you would supply it to the public to drink.

Our own government standards show at least 85 compounds that the new system will not remove. This comes from a study by the U.S. Geological Survey.

I, for one, do not want to drink someone's waste that contains medications, hormones and other compounds that the studies found to cause cancer and birth defects.

Now the water district will surely tell us that we can purchase a filtering system that can remove most of the compounds of concern, but the cost will be high and the system will need yearly maintenance. We pay plenty for our water now, so imagine the future cost.

**K.C. Bauer**  
**Agoura Hills**

# When is the **best time** to water?

## Water **early** for the best results.

Watering in the early morning (between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m.) saves money and water, while keeping your grass, plants and trees healthier.

Watering early when the sun is low and winds are calm:

- Helps reduce water loss from evaporation due to heat and wind.
- Improves soil absorption so water and nutrients get to plant roots, where it's needed most.

Remember, no watering between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. in the LVMWD service area. Visit [www.smartirrigationmonth.org](http://www.smartirrigationmonth.org) for more smart ideas to save water and dollars.

[www.smartirrigationmonth.org](http://www.smartirrigationmonth.org)



[www.LVMWD.com/Irrigation-Efficiency](http://www.LVMWD.com/Irrigation-Efficiency)



27A33T



## EDITORIALS

# Clean water standards in peril

LA Times 7/06/2017

A nother bid by President Trump to “repeal and replace” a major Obama administration achievement recently got a boost when the Environmental Protection Agency moved to repeal a 2015 clean water rule. That’s a shame.

The Waters of the United States rule was meant to protect the drinking water supply for more than 100 million Americans by clarifying which waterways are covered by the Clean Water Act of 1972, which limits the pollutants that can be discharged into “navigable” U.S. waters. The interpretation of previous rules was muddied by a pair of U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and the 2015 rule brought a good measure of clarity.

When Trump in February signaled his intention to scrap the rule, which is widely known as WOTUS, he complained that it covers puddles and ditches and gets in the way of farmers trying to feed a hungry nation and builders trying to boost the economy.

That’s pure Trump — remolding the facts to suit his purposes. The clean water rule might indeed apply to a small pond, but only if it connects with larger waterways and therefore allows pollutants dumped in it to spread to the nation’s drinking water supply. As for ill-defined “puddles,” the rule expressly excludes them. It does apply to irrigation ditches that function as tributaries of downstream waters, but that’s merely a reiteration of preexisting rules. It expressly excludes ditches that fill up only after it rains.

EPA Admnistrator Scott Pruitt appears to be quite at home with the president’s contempt for fact and science. A strong proponent of Trump’s ill-considered decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement, Pruitt on Friday announced an initiative to “critique” climate science by recruiting people to debate each side of an issue on which the vast majority of the scientific community long ago reached consensus.

That hostility might explain why both of them dislike the Waters of the United States rule so much. It relies on science to determine whether bodies of water are interconnected and thus protected, although it acknowledges that science cannot always provide a “bright line” boundary. Trump and Pruitt apparently would make that determination based on the convenience of polluters.

The WOTUS rule has never been fully implemented. It has been blocked in court because of lawsuits by more than a dozen states, including Oklahoma — where the suit

against the Environmental Protection Agency was filed by then-state attorney general and now-EPA administrator Pruitt.

Repealing the rule is one thing — although that won't necessarily be simple. And then what? A new rule-making process can be long and cumbersome, and there will no doubt be further lawsuits. The administration will likely continue to reject science (and clean water) in the name of decreasing regulations on polluters. Lawyers, at least, will be happy. As long as they don't drink the water.

## Fireworks put fire crews on alert

End of drought, heat leave brush thick, dry

JEREMY CHILDS

Ventura County Star 7/04/2017

The Ventura County Fire Department is increasing its personnel through the July Fourth holiday because of an abundance of brush and out of concern for illegal fireworks use.

“All grasses are much thicker and denser than previous summers due to the rain,” said Capt. Stan Ziegler, a spokesman for the agency.

The department issued a warning ahead of Fourth of July of the fire risks posed by the personal use of fireworks.

“With a year-round fire season, the fire risk to our community is substantial and cannot be ignored. We need all community members in Ventura County to celebrate the July Fourth holiday responsibly and safely,” Chief Mark Lorenzen said in a news release.

Police and fire agencies throughout Ventura County have similarly warned residents about the dangers of fireworks.

Fireworks are illegal

to purchase and use in nearly every Ventura County city, including the unincorporated areas of the county. Fireworks classified as “safe and sane” are sold and permitted only in Fillmore.



**The Ventura County Fire Department issued a warning about illegal or unsafe fireworks.** ROB VARELA/STAR FILE

So firefighters are on alert.

An increase in the amount of dry grass this year has given firefighters extra cause for concern, according to Ziegler. He said these dry grasses are what firefighters call “light,” “flashy” or “fast-burning” fuels.

Ziegler said the Highway 118 corridor near Rocky Peak and the Santa Monica Mountains are particular areas of concern due to the prevalence of this type of fuel. To prepare for the heightened fire risk, county fire has increased staffing during the Fourth of July weekend.

On the plus side, Ziegler said the rain has also caused vegetation to have an average of 30 percent more moisture stored than previous years, making it more difficult to burn. However, this extra moisture does not prevent fuel from burning if ignited by fireworks.

“Fireworks pose a high risk just from using them at all,” Ziegler said.

Those caught with illegal fireworks could face fines up to \$1,000 and up to one year of jail time, according to the Ventura County Fire Department.

As an alternative to using illegal fireworks, the Ventura County Fire Department recommends attending one of the many professional fireworks shows put on throughout the area on the Fourth of July.

## Can California fish catch a break with big tunnels?

ELLEN KNICKMEYER ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Ventura County Star 7/02/2017

SAN FRANCISCO - Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to route much of California's mightiest river into two massive tunnels poses new perils for salmon and other struggling native species, but could give them a couple of breaks as well, experts and project supporters and opponents say in the wake of two newly issued wildlife rulings on the \$16 billion project.

Ultimately, water experts say, whether Brown's two 35-mile tunnels hurt salmon, whales and other imperiled species depends, as always, on the intent and smarts of the officials who manage the Sacramento River's delta with the San Joaquin River, that fought-over, overtapped spigot for the U.S. state with the most people, most crops and the biggest estuary on the West Coast.

"People just don't trust that it will be operated as planned," Peter Moyle, a professor emeritus and fishery

expert at the University of California at Davis, notes of Brown's tunnels project.

The giant tunnels would make it easier to ship water from California's wetter north to cities and farms in the San Francisco Bay and Central and Southern California, even during droughts. They got an initial, crucial OK from federal fish and wildlife officials this week.

Moyle's career has followed decades of decline of native fish in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and their Delta, now re-engineered with dams, pumps, levees and canals to supply at least part of the water supply for two-thirds of the state's people. The complex north-south water delivery system has helped put three-fourths of the state's salmon and trout species on the path to extinction within 100 years, according to a study Moyle and others released earlier this year.

Another Delta native fish, the small and silvery Delta smelt, is so near extinction that scientists talk of freezing samples to preserve its genes. In the 1980s, the smelt were so plentiful that researchers once sampled them by the pickup load, Moyle recounts.

Brown's father, the late Gov. Pat Brown, helped put in the water projects that the younger Brown now wants to modernize. He is pushing to get the tunnels approved before he leaves office next year.

Moyle is on the side of those open to letting Brown's administration and a bloc of influential local water districts put in their tunnels. If nothing else, getting their way will incline supporters to follow through on separate, longstanding pledges to restore a big part of the Delta as fish habitat, he hopes. "Personally, I feel we don't have a choice but to trust them," given the bad state of much of the Delta, Moyle said. Brown and officials from various local water districts — most of them in Central and Southern California, but a few in the San Francisco Bay Area — want to run two, four-story-high tunnels underground to take water from the Sacramento River just above its

delta with the San Joaquin River. Backers say the tunnels would take no more water from the Delta than present, although the tunnels would have the capacity to divert nearly the full flow of the Sacramento during summers or droughts.

The National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared last week that the project would not drive any endangered species to extinction. Other state and federal agencies still have to rule on the project. Water districts also have to decide whether to fund it. California's once bountiful salmon and other species already have a tough time. Dams block most of their upstream spawning ground. Huge pumps at the south end of the delta often make the water, and the fish in it, flow in reverse. Salmon are an anchor species, and their decline makes life harder for everything from forests in the Sierras to whales in the Pacific.

In 2014 and 2015, drought and pumping left so little water in Northern California that fishery managers used trucks to carry millions of baby salmon downstream to the ocean. Almost all of the state's baby winter-run salmon — among the most threatened of the state's salmon species — died anyway in those years.

Brown and other supporters of the tunnels argue fish will be better off with the tunnels because water managers will use the giant pumps in the south Delta less. The state newly agreed to dedicate another roughly 3 square miles in the Delta to fish habitat, on top of about 50 square miles that it already promised to restore. Officials promise to take care of problems as they arise.



**Jared Davis hauls in a salmon caught off the coast of Stinson Beach in August. Gov. Jerry Brown's plan for massive water tunnels poses new perils and a few breaks for fish. ERIC RISBERG/AP FILE**

# Ancient water bottles hold a dirty secret

Scientists replicate a 5,000-year-old manufacturing process to reveal a toxic past.

By Mira Abed

LA Times 7/05/2017

If the ubiquity of pollutants in modern life has you yearning for the simpler ways of California's early residents, an unusual scientific experiment may prompt you to reconsider.

After constructing water vessels using the methods of prehistoric people who lived on the Channel Islands, researchers found their 5,000-year-old manufacturing process polluted the air with chemicals that the Environmental Protection Agency classifies as dangerous.

The findings, published Friday in the journal *Environmental Health*, demonstrate that human exposure to harmful chemicals is nothing new.

"Throughout human history," the study authors wrote, pollutants "have been an ever-present health hazard."

The ingredient that might have harmed the health of Native Americans is called bitumen. It is a form of raw petroleum that was quite handy in the days before glue and plastic. The sticky substance was adhesive and water-repellent, making it useful in items including bottles and boats.

Humans in California, Mexico, and the Middle East, among other areas, have been using bitumen for up to 70,000 years. But scientists weren't sure whether ancient peoples' use of it would have been hazardous to their health.

There were good reasons to suspect it would. Some of the chemicals we encounter today through exposure to petroleum-based products like plastics and fossil fuels may cause cancer or lead to other health problems.

Sabrina Sholts, an anthropologist from the Smithsonian Institution, and her colleagues had previously analyzed chunks of raw bitumen collected from the La Brea tar pits and the Channel Islands. In that study, they found that the bitumen contained chemicals known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs. According to the EPA, 16 of these are high-priority pollutants.

Would the same have been true all those years ago? To find out, Sholts and her team needed to do some role-playing.

What followed was a foray into experimental archaeology. Team members used historical records to figure out how water bottles were made by the island residents. Then they replicated their methods, weaving rush plants into bottles and coating them with bitumen that was melted down with hot pebbles in an abalone shell.

While melting the bitumen, the team measured chemicals in the air above the mixing dish to see whether the laborers would have inhaled any pollutants.

When the containers were finished, the researchers filled one with water and let it sit for two months, taking samples every so often to see whether toxins were leaching into the water.

They did the same experiment with oil. Though anthropologists don't think the island residents used oil, they did eat oily fish that could have been kept in bitumen-coated vessels or eaten on bitumen-coated plates.

The researchers found that harmful chemicals did leach into the water and the oil. Although higher concentrations were found in the oil, in neither case were the pollutants high enough to present a serious health risk, according to EPA standards.

The air samples, however, revealed that the bitumen-melting process produced unhealthy concentrations of PAHs, such as naphthalene. People who stood over melting bitumen would have breathed in the same concentration of naphthalene that's produced by about 1.5 cigarettes. That exceeds the EPA's safe limit, which means that anyone who used bitumen to make bottles or boats could have been harmed by breathing contaminated smoke.

Although the level of exposure probably wasn't high enough to cause significant health decline in most people, Sholts said, the study results tell only part of the story.

Anthropologists believe that the island residents used bitumen as body paint, casts for injuries and an all-purpose glue. Some of these uses may have resulted in dangerous levels of PAH exposure, Sholts said.

The study shows that chemicals we think of as modern pollutants have actually been around for thousands of years, said Patricia Lambert, a biological anthropologist at Utah State University who was not involved in the work.

"Exposure to toxic levels of PAHs may well have occurred long before the age of automobiles," she said.

Eric Bartelink, a bioarchaeologist and forensic anthropologist at Cal State Chico who studies prehistoric Californians, agreed with the study authors that bitumen probably didn't play a role in the demise of the islanders.



Even so, he said, the work will probably inspire other anthropologists to pay more attention to environmental risks in the populations they study.

## Skid row's toilet deficit called 'crisis'

Bathroom access in the downtown district is worse than in an overseas U.N. refugee camp, a report says.

By Gale Holland  
LA Times 7/03/2017

Homeless people on skid row have less access to bathrooms than Syrian refugees living in a United Nations camp overseas, according to a report released last week by a group of homeless service providers, advocates and residents.

The report found only nine public toilets open at night for 1,800 homeless people sleeping on skid row sidewalks and alleys. The conditions violate sanitation standards that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees sets for long-term camps, including a Jordan installation for Syrian refugees, the report said.

During the day, more bathrooms are open, but the facilities still fall short of U.N. minimum standards by 64 toilets, the study found.

The bathroom crunch has persisted despite 2012 findings by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health that human waste, extreme overcrowding and exposed living conditions in the 50-block skid row district posed an increased risk of hepatitis A, meningitis, staph, lice and fungal infections.

The health department recommended that the city add toilets and access to soap, water and hand sinks, but skid row is still waiting, the report said.

"The lack of basic amenities like public toilets has gone on for so long that in skid row, the absurd has become the normal," the report said.

"This is a public health crisis," said Homeless Health Care Los Angeles Administrator Stephany Campos, who participated in the audit.

A spokesman for Mayor Eric Garcetti said he had earmarked \$1.3 million in his 2017-18 budget for mobile showers and bathrooms, and the Department of Recreation and Parks is building two permanent restrooms in San Julian and Gladys parks on skid row.

"Everyone should be able to bathe or use the restroom safely and with dignity, and anyone who walks the streets of skid row knows that we need infrastructure that meets the needs of our unsheltered population," Garcetti press secretary Alex Comisar said in an email.

The report, titled "No Place to Go," calls for the city to provide 107 additional toilets by the end of the year. It was based on an audit in January and February conducted by the

Los Angeles Central Providers Collaborative, the city-county C3 homeless outreach team, the Los Angeles Mission, the Midnight Mission, the Downtown Women's Center, the Inner City Law Center and skid row residents and organizations.

The audit found that 38% of the available bathrooms were broken during operating hours, and most lacked soap, paper towels and menstrual products. Homeless people have to ask guards to use mission facilities, and staff are stingy with toilet paper, the report said.

The bathrooms are also hard to get into, inaccessible to disabled people and provide no privacy, the auditors said.

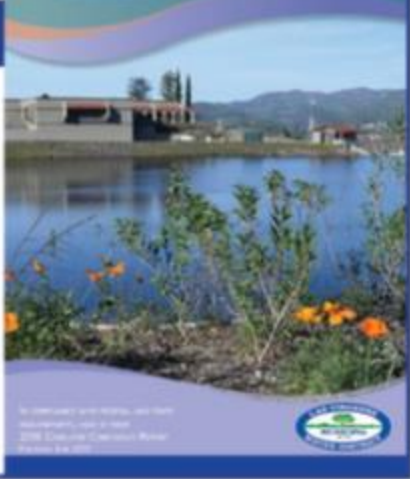

"Users have to step over people sleeping in a crowded courtyard to get to the toilets and once inside, users discover that the stalls have no doors," the report said.

Photographer Alexander Laurent, a former skid row apartment resident, said the sanitation problems affect not just homeless people but those who live in the downtown district's buildings.

"The overwhelming environment, the smell, the unsanitary conditions definitely take a toll on you just as an observer," said Laurent, who helped with the audit. "How are these conditions acceptable?"

The report called on the city to hire and train bathroom attendants selected from the skid row community to provide round-the-clock security and referrals to food, shelter, showers, clothes washers and healthcare. The attendants could be equipped with cellphones to report safety concerns or alert maintenance crews when repairs or supplies are needed, the report said.

"This collaboration must dedicate additional public resources to provide sufficient ... toilets that are functional and architecturally pleasing," the report said. "The community will be better able to thrive when its members feel safe and comfortable and the community is cleaner, safer, more environmentally friendly and attractive."

<p>This year's</p>	<p>WATER QUALITY REPORT</p>
<p><b>Water Quality Report</b></p>	
<p>is on its way to your home or business</p>	
<p>Once again, LVMWD Customers can be assured they receive high quality tap water that meets or surpasses all state and federal water quality standards.</p>	
<p>Be sure to read the mailed report, view it online at <a href="http://www.LVMWD.com/WQR">www.LVMWD.com/WQR</a> or request a copy by calling Customer Service at 818-251-2200 during business hours.</p>	<p><small>© 2017 LVMWD. All rights reserved. LVMWD is an Equal Opportunity Employer. 2017 LVMWD Water Quality Report Page 13 of 13</small></p> 

*Valley News Group, June 29, 2017 Page 13*