

# The PINE POST

A TAHITIAN VILLAGE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION ❖ JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

## MOVING FORWARD

BY LARRY GFELLER

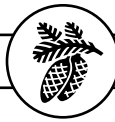
Why do people live where they live? The reasons are more extensive than I could ever know. For our family, the answer is simple: loblolly pines. We secured a beautiful virgin five-acre stand just off Highway 21. It was grand, it was splendid. Tall and straight and stretching for the hot Texas sun, these magnificent affirmations of Great Nature lured us here more than any other consideration. Their value is not merely external beauty, for their DNA contains the wisdom of the ages. Instead of consulting some guru or scholar, I often walked among the loblolly, standing like temples. These were the shrines I visited, both summer and winter—and then came the fire. There is always a time when life stops giving you things and starts taking them away.

Emptiness and despair must take their measure, and for all of us who lost whatever we cherished the most, there is that inevitable moment of doubt. . . do we persevere and move forward or do we move away? This is more than a philosophical question; it is a highly circumstantial and practical one. There are different levels of loss. Some lost everything. Our house was saved, but our forest was decimated. For each of us there is a personal right answer and, for awhile, there is angst in finding it—complicated by similar struggles for family members. Our home, to be sure,

is our center—but the forest was everything; our universe. We have decided to stay. Not for what was here, but for what can be. The recovery of the forest will take decades. “Decades!” . . . I thought to myself. . . “Do you know how old you will be in decades if you do this?” Mmmm. . . “How old will I be in decades if I don’t do this?” It wasn’t so easy for my wife; for her I believe it was more about “for richer or poorer” . . . life means more the older we get.

Having resolved this most fundamental question, other mental roadblocks immediately cropped up. Thoughts naturally turn to the task ahead. This is where panic can suck out all your gumption. Looked at in its totality, the scope of the tragedy can be overwhelming. Where do we start? After water and power was restored and a professional house cleaning, we began pursuing inconsequential activities for the sake of doing something “positive.” Then we began some property triage. Obvious debris removal occupied the early weeks, followed by some weak attempts to identify the extent of tree damage. Then I learned about the FEMA debris removal program in the Bastrop Advertiser. As virtually the first citizen to sign up, I was shocked that the place was not inundated by anxious property owners. While the focus of this plan may be

*continued on next page*



*continued from page 1*

obvious for a complete loss, I was there for the tree removal aspect—despite having homeowner's insurance protection. Tree removal is an expensive proposition. To this day, I still run into property owners who believe that because they have insurance, FEMA cannot help them. This is a potentially expensive misconception.

Residents must register for help at 201 Hunters Crossing Blvd. (512-661-8073). This obscure little office in a strip mall east of Home Depot is occupied by members of the Science Appraisal International Corporation (SAIC), a multi-faceted conglomerate. Their function—as it relates to tree removal—is to facilitate and oversee a third party contractor whose job is to remove dangerous trees from the perimeter of homes (or homesites) and roadways into private property. They do this work for FEMA. Residents must come with copies of their homeowner's insurance policy (if they have one), proof of property ownership (printed out from the County Appraisal District website) and driver's license(s). If property is owned jointly, both partners must appear to sign the Right of Entry form supplied at this office. The process is smooth and quick, provided you show up with all the correct documentation. They copied select pages of our property insurance policy. I was told the purpose of this step was to ensure property owners first spent whatever insurance reimbursement they may have received specifically for debris/tree removal—that's because the service provided through FEMA is totally free to property owners! We promptly engaged a local contractor to remove sufficient trees to satisfy the FEMA requirement. Don't forget to get a receipt.

Within a week or so, a team showed up at our home to identify and mark trees for removal. In our case, they identified 77 trees. Several days later, at ~ 3:00 pm on a Saturday afternoon, the work group made a dramatic entrance with multiple pickups, workers, chain saws, a bobcat and a bucket truck. They started work immediately and worked until dark. They returned at 7:00 am on Sunday and worked till sundown. The tree cutters were followed by large trucks equipped with rear mounted cranes, called "knuckle loaders," which picked up cut tree sections/limbs stacked neatly by the bobcat along our roadway. As the cutters moved on to another property, the knuckle loaders continued to carry away debris for another two days until every scrap had been removed.

I have never before seen such a professional operation! Polite, responsive, thorough, hard-working and caring, these teams were composed of the contract employees, SAIC, FEMA, State and County representatives, with occasional visits from supervisors at all levels. There were "watchers" watching the watchers who watched the cutters and removers cut and remove trees for every day they were on site. Each tree was marked with a number and photographed before being felled. After cutting, each stump was similarly marked and

photographed. . . very precise. We estimate it saved us tens of thousands of dollars in tree removal charges. Our cost—a couple tins of pumpkin muffins my wife happily provided for the work crew! They did take a break to devour these home-baked delicacies. . . most workers were young men far from home.

For those of us who love the forest, the aftermath of the tree removal was another trauma. Where before stood the incinerated remains of a full forest, it is now a distinctly violated and desolate wasteland. Ghastly broken snags, great expanses of disturbed sand and a few remaining downed logs left by the electric company. Nearly devoid of woody vegetation, we feel totally exposed to streets, highways and neighbors—completely naked for everyone to see! But there's a saving grace: the ugliness of the daytime gives way to the beauty of the night. The night is damp and bracing. Overhead, the Milky Way—yes we can see it clearly now—spreads its filmy, barely-there swath. What about the months ahead? The way I see it, everything will be "up" from here. The appearance of our property will only improve from this point forward. All we have to do is push through the dreary winter months and be ready for the spring.

Being ready includes minor construction projects, landscape planning, erosion control and removal of yaupon/selected trees in the forest at large. This will be a busy winter. Our objective is to let Mother Nature take the lead. Our contribution will be to keep the invasive plants/fire ants at bay, stabilize the soil and entice the wildlife back with food, water and shelter. Already, friendly little fountains of greenery have pushed through the ash. American Beautyberry, Wafer Ash, Bull Nettles, Virginia Creeper and baby Post Oaks are popping up like whack-a-moles. With a little luck, enough loblollies will survive to serve as seed stock. We plan to add a few native trees, shrubs and grasses when the time is right. All these new plants will be within striking distance of a garden hose, for the draught is expected to persist. For us, springtime is D-day.

As Tahitian Village residents, if you are re-building, it only makes sense that re-establishing your home is priority one over the ecological concerns that occupy my thoughts. But sooner or later, these issues will be yours to address as well. If your house was saved but your land was burned, your problems will be similar to mine, if only on a smaller scale. Regardless, there is a rich and abundant source of information available through the Bastrop County website ([www.co.bastrop.tx.us](http://www.co.bastrop.tx.us)). Here you can find tips on what trees to plant, erosion control measures and managing wildlife after the fire, recommended plant seeds, etc., up to and including what native trees grow best in your soil. The content is updated frequently and is constantly expanding, based on lessons learned as the recovery matures. Moreover, there are experts available on almost any subject you might imagine, for the county's relationships reach



well beyond the county line and Bastrop is in the hearts of all Texans. People stand ready to help. All you gotta do is ask. And it's clear that everyone understands this is a long-term project.

At times like these it's hard to know what to do. This land is unique—there's none like it anywhere in the state. It takes 600 + years of wind and rain and erosion to make an inch of our sandy soil. While it is true that much of the surface of our private space has been scarred, know that there are many feet of sand beneath your property. We should respect that. What looks on the surface to be a disaster of epic proportions is merely business-as-usual for nature's natural rhythm. There is all this life buried in the sand just waiting to burst forth and replenish the land. Prepare to be astonished by the explosion of growth, come the springtime. And if your particular patch of land has been so badly burned that this natural process remains stunted for a year or so...plant your own "pocket prairie" and give nature a helping hand. My loblollies will never reclaim their former grandeur in my lifetime, but overseeing the re-

birth and re-building of this forest will present new challenges as well as delectable amusements and discoveries. The universe is wider than our views of it. Happy Holidays! 🌲

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Deadline to reserve space in the March/April issue is Friday, February 10.



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In an effort to provide you quick and easy access to information important to you as a resident of our beautiful Tahitian Village, we would like to add you to the new TVNNN e-mail list.

This list is also vital in distributing information about political and TVPOA, TVACC & BCWCID#2 Board candidates, missing/found pets, garage sales and unfortunately, vandalism and burglaries. Please help us keep you informed by providing the following information (by doing so, you will automatically be added to the TVNNN e-mail list):

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thanks for your support and interest in our neighborhood!*

NOTE: Please do not resubmit your information if you have already turned this in from a previous issue of the Pine Post. Thank you! 🌲



# THE WILDLIFE CAMERA

BY MARIANNA HOBBS

There were so many levels of chaos after the fires that it was hard to do everything at once. I was fortunate enough to be able to move in next door to my burned out house. In the process of evacuating with little time to grab much of anything, I was unable to get my indoor cats in their carrier. The smoke was close enough for the cats to be in a state of complete panic. The toughest decision was to open windows and leave a way for them to get out and then leave them. It was painful then and is even more painful now. They are 6-year-old sisters, spayed, loved, and well cared for. I have no evidence that would indicate they were lost in the fire at my house. Allie is grayish with dark markings and looks somewhat like a Siamese with blue eyes. Callie is a Calico with mostly dark colors and not a lot of orange. She has a white marking under her chin.

I set up a wildlife camera in the yard and have been running it at night with lots of pictures coming back. There are possums, raccoons, a grey fox, and 2 cats that are not mine. In case anyone else is missing a cat, one of the cats is very light in color (possibly white) and the other is a brown tabby with stripes on the tail.

I have reason to believe that, because I am feeding cats I don't recognize, other cats may be eating in other places. I am asking anyone who may be feeding cats and think there is a possibility of it being a lost cat to please contact me at [mwhobbs@aol.com](mailto:mwhobbs@aol.com). I will be more than happy to bring the wildlife cam over to try and reunite some of the lost pets with their owners. 🐾



## BCWCID #2 News

BY VICTOR GONZALEZ

I would like to begin by wishing everyone a blessed Holiday season with hopes of New Year full of promise, good health and renewed joy. As good neighbors do, we have all pitched in these last few months to assist one another whenever and wherever possible. The Board of BCWCID#2 is proud of each and every one of you and hope that we have worked diligently to meet your expectations of us.

After a great deal of research we have finally been able to accurately count the homes destroyed by the Labor Day fire - 282 homes were lost. We are still calculating the cost in terms of lost water income. On the waste water side, we lost 162 homes. The grinder pumps for these homes alone cost the Water District approximately \$1.5 million dollars. Under our agreement with FEMA, they will reimburse the district 75% of those costs. However, as you can imagine, it will be several years before Tahitian Village fully recovers. The Board and residents will be faced a host of new issues in addition to the old ones. For example, how do we make up the lost water and waste water income? Obviously and unfortunately water and waste water rates will have to go up. Everyone on the Board is painfully aware of our current economic situation and will work to make these adjustments as painless as possible. And we hope the residents of Tahitian Village will be patient with us as we attempt to deal with the reality the devastation left by the fire.

In a further effort to help residents recover, we want Tahitian Village to be aware of a program entitled Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR). We will place a link on the District website that will allow Tahitian Village residents to go to the county's website to learn more about this program. Tahitian Village

residents will have to sign up for this program, but when they do, FEMA will help pay for the removal of trees that could fall in to the public right of way, clear out trees that could block a driveway, and remove trees that could constitute a safety hazard within Tahitian Village. Please take advantage of this assistance program.

There is a different program will help clear out trees and will use the lumber harvested from those trees to help rebuild homes for families whose homes were destroyed by the fire. Again, this information will be posted on the District website.

Finally, the Board wants Tahitian Village residents to know that we will be working on road maintenance throughout next year. Recently, the Board approved spending 50% of road fees collected on road maintenance. We want the residents to understand that for those residents who homes were located on the east side of Tahitian Village, that road maintenance may be a little longer in coming. It would be unwise and very inefficient to do major repairs to those roads until we are sure the majority of heavy equipment necessary to remove slabs and other debris from the subdivision are no longer making daily trips on these roads. We will, however, do our best to keep these roads passable for our residents.

Please feel free to contact the Water District office if you witness third party contractors damaging the roads or the drainage ditches. We would also like you to report any unlawful dumping of debris or concrete or other building materials.

Again, be patient and know that we are moving as quickly as possible to restore Tahitian Village. 🐾

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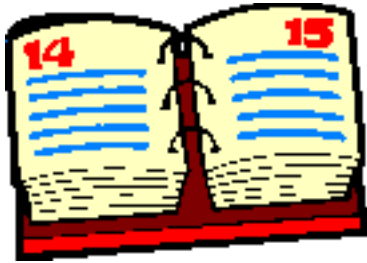
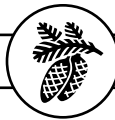
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## Mark Your calendars

ALL MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AT  
BCWCID #2 CONFERENCE ROOM  
UNLESS OTHERWISE  
STATED.

### JANUARY 2012

- ❖ Jan. 2 – BCWCID #2 Offices Closed for New Year's Eve
- ❖ Jan. 17 – BCWCID #2 Offices Closed for MLK Day
- ❖ Jan. 17 – TV Property Owners' Association Meeting at 7pm  
\*\*Notice will be sent on TVNNN if meeting is cancelled due to the holiday\*\*
- ❖ Jan. 16 – TV Architectural Control Committee Meeting at 5pm
- ❖ Jan. 19 – BCWCID #2 Meeting at 6pm
- ❖ Jan. 21 – CLEAN SWEEP 8AM – 2PM

### FEBRUARY 2012

- ❖ Feb. 6 – TV Architectural Control Committee Meeting at 5pm
- ❖ Feb. 16 – BCWCID #2 Meeting at 6pm
- ❖ Feb. 20 – TV Architectural Control Committee at 5pm  
\*\*Notice will be sent on TVNNN if meeting is cancelled due to the holiday\*\*
- ❖ Feb. 20 – President's Day BCWCID #2 OFFICES CLOSED
- ❖ Feb. 21 – TV Property Owners' Association Meeting at 7pm 🌿

## Good Things Come In Small Packages

BY CARRIE KNOX

A holiday gift came early for those needing help with recovering the land from the devastating Labor Day fires. Small balls of clay and compost mixed with seed were created by a large and diverse group of friends from counties around Central Texas. Ryan Flemming, a Capital Area Master Naturalist from Williamson County and Sue Wiseman a fellow Master Naturalist, cooked up the idea of asking area kids to create seed balls to help re-vegetate the burned over land in Bastrop County. The fires were still actively burning when Ryan called Sue. As Sue puts it, "Ryan called me on September 7, the steering committee started being organized on the 8th and the rest is seed balls!"

Bastrop County TPWD biologist Meredith Longoria and Bastrop County HCP administrator Roxanne Hernandez will be in charge of getting the seed balls to the residents who need them. For more information on how to get seed balls, please call Meredith at 512-332-7280 or Roxanne at 512-332-7284. To begin your own seed ball project please call Sue at 512-259-4106. You can also check out [www.healinghandshealinglands.org](http://www.healinghandshealinglands.org). There are a few seed ball kits to distribute to groups wanting to help. 🌿

# ACC UPDATE

BY RANDY M. MCDONALD, PRESIDENT ACC

This year has been quite the challenge for the TVACC. With the loss of more than 250 homes in just our community alone it left the Tahitian Village Boards in a position that was unique and we hope never to be repeated. We are thankful for our volunteers and how they stepped up for the community during it's time of need, it was obvious all placed the whole of Tahitian Village before even family! The hours of effort were not tracked, but I assure you they were beyond what anyone would think. My sincere thank you goes out to them all!

With the ACC it was a struggle to meet all the expectations of our residents as well as make sure that the contractors coming to town knew what was expected of them. Therefore we had many meetings in which we had members of both the POA & ACC as well as our residents to consider what was best for the community.

Since September we have approved 128 demolition permits and 17 permits in which fire victims are rebuilding their homes. In all of 2011 we have had 34 new home constructions approved with 15 of those just since September.

While many of our friends, family and loved ones who lost their homes are moving to different areas we have a firm belief that many will choose to stay and build our community back to what it once was. We look forward to helping them with the building process for their new home and their new future. Just this month we saw many newly built homes become occupied!

With many challenges left, we will expect to be just as busy over the next year! We will be involved in trying to insure all our streets and areas are clear of fire debris. Trees will soon begin to fall from stress and fire damage creating issues!

We hope all property owners will evaluate their homes and home sites, call Bluebonnet Electric at 800-842-7709 if you have any trees within the easements that may be a hazard to you or your neighbors!

We ask you to be our eyes and ears! If something does not look right or sound right, please contact our office manager Erika at 512-321-1145, or text her at 512-517-7664! We wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! 🌿



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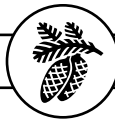
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# FIRE FACTS FOR BASTROP COUNTY COMPLEX FIRE

BY JAN SCHWINDT

All listed by postal address

- 1709 structures lost in Bastrop County
  - 1094 structures lost in Bastrop
  - 64% of total in Bastrop County
  - 282 structures in Tahitian Village
    - 25.8% of total in Bastrop
  - 16.5% of total in Bastrop County
    - 145 structures in Pine Forest
      - 13.3% of total in Bastrop
    - 8.5% of total in Bastrop County
- 26 structures in Cedar Creek/Union Chapel
  - 1.5% of total in Bastrop County
    - 1 structure in McDade
    - 379 structures in Paige
  - 22.2% of total in Bastrop County
    - 209 structures in Smithville
  - 12.2% of total in Bastrop County

# CLEAN SWEEP UPDATE

BY MARIANNA HOBBS



The October Clean Sweep brought a new meaning to networking in the community. It was slow starting out, but the pace quickly picked up and we ended up with more trash and brush than we expected. The situation was very different because we were only six weeks out from the wildfires. Thanks to Jan and Joe Schwindt for starting their donation quest at Clean Sweep. In case you haven't heard, they are collecting good furniture, kitchen items and miscellaneous other items to be given out to burn survivors throughout the county. Please call (512) 985-7153 if you have good items to donate or need some of the items they are collecting. They have worked very hard to make this successful and are doing it out of the goodness of their hearts. Please support their efforts.

The brush that was chipped ended up being more than enough to fill two dumpsters. Volunteers for the day included: Erika McDonald, Jan and Joe Schwindt, John Creamer, David Braley, Marianna Hobbs, Mary Jo Creamer, Lois Hornbuckle, Tim Linz, Bill O'Barr, Peter Krause, Charlie Vick, David Sager, Ruth Jansa and Pete Romero, P.A. We collected 200 yards of trash totaling 17.96 tons of garbage. Several volunteers went out to pick up trash and John Creamer's truck and trailer didn't stop the entire time. We surprised a few sluggish snakes but that did little to slow us. Please continue to report dump sites. There is a tremendous amount of activity in T.V. now with unfamiliar faces and vehicles and fewer residents to report suspicious activities. We all need to do our part in bringing Tahitian Village back to its post-fire quality of life.




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## NEW BALLOT INFORMATION BY TVPOA

At the November 2011 TVPOA meeting the Board addressed continued concerns over the complexity of the election ballot previously used. A sample ballot, as well as, new language to be added to the Bylaws, that the Board will ask the Membership to approve at the Annual Meeting is available on the TVPOA website, [www.tahitianvillage.com](http://www.tahitianvillage.com). The Annual Meeting has been scheduled for March 3, 2011 @ 1pm.



## Whew! It Has Been a Busy Year at the Colorado River Refuge

If you have not visited the Colorado River Refuge in a while, or if you have never visited, now is a great time to check out the Refuge. Thanks to the Friends of the Colorado River Refuge, the Lost Pines Master Naturalists, the Bastrop chapter of the Texas Outdoors Women's Network (TOWN), various scout groups and other caring volunteers, the Refuge is looking great! All the trails along the river are open and easy to walk along – even in sandals or pushing a stroller! An exciting enhancement to the Two Bridges trail is the extension of the concrete handicapped accessible trail to cross a most wonderful bridge called Cottonwood Crossing. Go down from the Two Bridges trailhead and find out why this new bridge is called Cottonwood Crossing. You can check out the storm-water diversion structures funded by LCRA and Bluebonnet Electric Coop while you are there. Future plans for the Two Bridges trail are to further extend the concrete trail to the river's edge and install a concrete pad and picnic table. Someday soon a mobility impaired CRR user will be able to park a wheelchair beside the river and throw in a fishing line or just watch the river flow by.

The hill along side of the handicapped ramp into the Two Bridges trail is getting a make-over thanks to the Friends of the CRR and the TOWN group. All the ragweed and other undesirables are being removed and a garden of plants, understory trees and canopy trees is being planted. We are excited that the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) is partnering with PPLT on this project as well. Stand by to hear more about this project in the spring. Speaking about the BEDC, we are very pleased that they are partnering with PPLT to install new signs pointing the way to the CRR from all directions in Tahitian Village. Just look for the blue and white signs with the heron and moon design. They will get you to the CRR in a flash.

In the west end of the CRR along the Dragonfly and Cliffhanger Trail the "Bridge Maniacs" have been really busy. They have created several new loops off the main Dragonfly Trail, with fun-to-cross bridges and they have brush-popped along the river's edge to make a Cliffhanger Baja (Below) trail. Now you can loop up and down off the Cliffhanger Trail or follow it down- river to the Union Pacific Railroad bridge or you can cross Riverside Dr. to get on the Dragonfly Trail. Many folks are enjoying the west end of the CRR for jogging and mountain biking. A great bonus for the Dragonfly Trail is that it should be a colorful riot of wildflowers in the spring.

With all the new trails at the Refuge, you might be worried about getting lost, but never fear – we are excited to



announce the publishing of our new Colorado River Refuge Trail Guide. Thanks to a generous grant from Entergy Corporation and with much help from the Lost Pines Master Naturalists, Amethyst Dragon Graphic Design and other friends, the CRR Trail Guide is a reality. You can download a copy from the Pines and Prairies Land Trust web site at [www.pplt.org](http://www.pplt.org) or pick one up at the land trust office in the BCWCID#2 building in Tahitian Village.

Everyone who volunteers at the CRR has a good time and they are justly proud of what has been accomplished. You, too, can volunteer and make your park a better place. Please contact Robert Vaughn, president of the Friends of the CRR at 512-237-1148 or [vaughnrobertj@gmail.com](mailto:vaughnrobertj@gmail.com) to get connected to a group or Carrie Knox, Executive Director of Pines and Prairies Land Trust at 512-308-1911 or [carrie.knox@pplt.org](mailto:carrie.knox@pplt.org) for questions, Trail Guides or to donate to PPLT. 🐿️



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