



Volunteer NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 5

May 2012

24537 Angeles Crest Hwy, Wrightwood, CA 92397 (760) 249-3504

"100 years of Caring for the Land and Serving People"

Come out and see us...

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Special points of interest:

- Volunteers will be undergoing Safety Engagement training on May 19th between 9:00 am and noon at the Big Pines station. All VANF and Big Pines Volunteers should make plans to attend.
- Blue Ridge Road will not be opened to public vehicles until Memorial Day Weekend. All other roads are now open.
- Hikers along Blue Ridge need to use caution as there is a lot of activity on the part of a Fuel Reduction Project.



"Angeles National Forest – Big Pines" Booth 2011

Wrightwood, CA – For the past five years the "Big Pines Volunteers" have had a booth and been involved with Wrightwood's Wildfire & Disaster Awareness Day. This year the event will take place on Saturday, May 12th from 10 am – 3 pm in front of Mountain Hardware on Hwy 2 in Wrightwood.

Both paid and volunteer USFS personnel from the Big Pines area of the Angeles National Forest will be on hand to answer the public's questions about our area of the forest and help educate them as to the importance of preventing "wildfires".

USFS Firefighters out of station 38, (Big

Pines) will be there to show off the equipment they use in fighting wildfires. On display will be vehicles used in the field as well as posters of what is going on in the forest and what role the volunteers play.

Smokey Bear is always a big hit with the kids. Children will be given Smokey Bear hats and other giveaways for answering questions about the forest and wildfire prevention.

Come on by and meet some of the men and women that help to keep this part of the Forest safe from wildfires. Also, why not find out if you have what it takes to be a USFS volunteer.

Big Pines History... “Playground for Angelinos”

Weather Extremes Big Pines Station

April 2012

Low: 14th 21°
High: 21st 78°
Wind: 13th 47
Precipitation: 2.02 in



Be sure to visit the Grassy Hollow Visitor Center if you haven't done so. The knowledgeable staff of volunteers can answer any questions you have about the rich history of the area.

Hours:
Weekends and Holidays
10 am – 4 pm



Davidson Arch at Big Pines c. 1926
Postcard: Courtesy of the Wrightwood Historical Society

Big Pines, CA – The San Gabriel Mountains suffered a lot of damage due to carelessness in the nineteenth century. Thus the California Board of Forestry was established in 1885. Several organizations of environmentalists, including John Muir, banded together to save the mountains and they were successful. The San Gabriels Timberland Reserve was created on December 20th, 1892. This was the first timberland reserve in California and second in the nation, Yellowstone being the first.

Benjamin Franklin Allen was appointed the first supervisor of the San Gabriel Timberland Reserve in 1897. Several disastrous fires occurred during this period and the mountain's resources were wasted and exploited. Allen had only voluntary civilian help until 1908. Upon request he received permission to select twenty Rangers at a salary of fifty dollars a month. These were the very first Forest Rangers in the nation. Ranger Frank Allen patrolled the eastern end of the Reserve and paid all his expenses including maintenance of his horse out of his fifty dollar salary.

On March 4th, 1907 the Reserve's name was changed to the San Gabriel National Forest. On July 1st, 1908 the San Bernardino and San Gabriel National Forests were combined under a single administration and called the Angeles National Forest.

At the turn of the 20th century Jackson Lake was nothing more than a small “swampy lake” or “sag pond” created by the San Andreas Fault. It was a natural collecting pool for rain and snow melt and was also fed by underground springs. Many feel that in 1919 this marshy body was dammed up by the Llano Del Rio Colony to be used as a water source but documented references and interviews reveal that their water source came from the lower

drainage of Big Rock Creek. Apparently it was the creation of a road that would later become Big Pines Hwy that actually increased the size of the lake.

In the early 1920's R. F. McClellan, chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors dreamed that the children of Los Angeles should have a place to enjoy the outdoors. He encouraged the board to purchase land in the Swarthout Valley for the purpose of building a County Park.

In 1923 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors purchased from Harry Heath and several others, seven hundred and sixty acres at Big Pines for a reported sixty thousand dollars. In the same year the Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation began construction of major improvements.

The Davidson Arch, a pedestrian overpass crossing the highway at Big Pines Divide, was designed and erected by William Davidson and presented by him and his associates to Los Angeles County. The arch remained until Highway 2 was completed and half of it was removed to allow the larger trucks to traverse the Big Pines Divide and in anticipation of a widening of the road which never happened. While it is rumored that the Arch housed a jail cell in the north tower to incarcerate law breakers as evidenced by steel bars still visible today, the facts are those bars were installed after the dismantling of the South tower and bridge to keep people from falling through the opening. It did have a “holding room”.

Big Pines Park became so popular, to the extent that it was necessary to expand the facilities. The county wished to purchase an additional thirty five hundred acres extending westward from Big Pines through Mescal Canyon and to the western end of Jackson Lake. The United States Forest Service felt it would set a dangerous precedent to grant title of national forest lands to individual governments, opting rather to issue a special use permit and recommending that they use five hundred acres for free public campgrounds. A special use permit for thirty five hundred acres adjacent to Big Pines including Prairie Fork was signed on December 29th, 1925.

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Big Pines History... "Playground for Angelinos"



Los Angeles County Big Pines Recreational Camp 1930
Postcard: Courtesy of the Wrightwood Historical Society

Continued – Dorothy Hiltabrand Swift became the first lady Ranger in 1926. She related in 1978; "Having been brought up with horses and being a Physical Education Major at UCLA were my qualifications for the Ranger job". During this period Buford Wright was the Chief Ranger at Big Pines. Men from the Honor Camp did all the park maintenance. Mr. Wadsworth was the Superintendent with Mr. Baker as his Assistant and Jo Plummer their Secretary.

By 1930 the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department had under construction or completed the major buildings of fourteen camps later used by various organizations. They also completed an ice rink, a lodge for the Big Pines Ski Club, an animal park, several ski jumps and various campgrounds. They improved the beaches and raised the level of Jackson Lake, built a twelve mile road from Big Pines Park Headquarters to Valyermo and had begun various improvements at Prairie Fork.

Other construction included numerous service roads, a complete water system, an electrical power transmission system and distribution plant, a telephone system with switchboard, numerous maintenance buildings, administration buildings, a lodge, swimming pool, numerous resort cabins, tennis courts, six organizational camps and a trash incineration plant. Other improvements were a sewage disposal system at Big Pines, playgrounds, shelter houses, a garage and residences for employees.

McClellan Flat was originally a pen for bison (commonly known as *buffalo*). This flat was used by Los Angeles County Supervisors for

vacation cabins, at Los Angeles County expense. Now it is a special use permit area under the USFS. The cabins are now occupied on weekends or for vacations only. The roof of the garage of cabin #8, formerly occupied by William Davidson, is the form that was used for pouring the concrete on the Davidson Arch.

County officials were later embarrassed because no accurate record of the total capital spent on these improvements was ever kept. Estimates of several million dollars were made in addition to the tens of thousands of dollars annually spent for administration and maintenance.

In 1932 the county ran into financial difficulties at Big Pines Park with the depression-ridden supervisors unable to supply adequate funds to finance the operation of the park. The "Los Angeles Examiner" ran an article stating that the county would save sixty thousand dollars annually by returning control of Big Pines Park to the Forest Service, with the county supplying twenty five thousand dollars annually to defray maintenance costs. The USFS granted permission to the county to close Prairie Fork in 1934, since the road to this area had never been completed. The people of Los Angeles who had enjoyed their mountain playground opposed its return to the Forest Service and negotiations dragged on for years with various legal points being raised. Eventually, by July of 1941 the USFS had taken over full control of Big Pines Park.

On November 8th, 1956 the Angeles Crest Highway (State Highway 2) across the San Gabriel Mountains was opened to the public. This was after nearly one-half century of cooperative effort and expenditures totaling some ten million dollars. To this day it still provides easier access to the playground known as "Big Pines" which was designed for the folks of Los Angeles.

- Research and commentary by
George F. Tillitson ("Wrightwood Roots")
Additional Contributions by Terry Graham



Dorothy Hiltabrand Swift
First Lady Ranger (1926)

(Photo: From the Swift Collection;
Wrightwood History Museum)



Big Pines Park (1930)

(Postcard: From the Jody Lopez
Collection; Wrightwood History Museum)



Big Pines Park (1930)

(Postcard: From the Jody Lopez
Collection; Wrightwood History Museum)



Wrightwood Roots

April 2000

Wildfire and Disaster Awareness Day:



Future
Forest Rangers



USFS Volunteers



Smokey Bear



9th Annual
Wildfire & Disaster Awareness Day
MAY 12, 2012 • 10 am-3 pm • 1390 Hwy 2 • Wrightwood

Exhibits • Speakers
Workshops • Demos



Bring Your Family & Friends



FREE Rock Climbing Wall



Kids Love This Event



Disaster Supplies



\$15 Pet Micro Chipping



Forest Explorer Exhibit



JR Firefighter Challenge



CERT Demos



CALFIRE Sawmill



Community Groups



Property Owners' Association

Presented by:

Supporting Partners:









NOTE: Green Waste Drop Off Starts Jun 2nd

FREE Tri-Community Green Waste Drop Off
Pine Needles & Cones • Weeds • Branches • Tree Trimmings • Grass
Jun 2 - Jun 10 • 9am to 3pm Extended hours Jun 6 & Jun 7 • 9am to 7pm
SB County Yard on Highway 2 across from the Fire Station



WrightwoodFSC.com

For more Information: 760-249-5248 or visit www.WrightwoodFSC.com

Ham Radio Frequency During Events : KW6WW 2m Repeater 147.240 + 91.5



Bob Blount enters the Dunk Tank



Our District Ranger gets dunked



Current Fire Danger



c. 1925



c. 1930

Interested in Volunteering out of the Historic Big Pines Station?

Call: (760) 249-3504 or Email:
Todd Cook: mtcook@fs.fed.us or
Ron Heinig: rheinig@fs.fed.us

Photos: From the Collection of Terry Graham



The Wrightwood Communications Group has a disaster preparedness net each Sunday evening at 6:00 pm.

<http://www.kw6ww.com/>



Wrightwood CERT has weekly FRS Nets on Sundays at 5:30 pm

<http://www.wrightwoodcert.com>



Non-profit 501 (c) (3)

Upcoming meetings (3rd Tues each month)

Tues Jan 17, 2012
Tues Feb 21, 2012
Tues Mar 20, 2012
Tues Apr 17, 2012
Tues May 15, 2012
Tues Jun 19, 2012
Tues Jul 17, 2012
Tues Aug 21, 2012
Tues Sep 18, 2012
Tues Oct 16, 2012
Tues Nov 20, 2012
Dec 2012 - No Meeting

7pm, at the
Wrightwood Museum
6000 Cedar St.
(Old Fire Station)

Meeting Information:
(760) 249-5248



Grassy Hollow
Visitor's Center

www.grassyhollow.net

The Volunteers of the Angeles...

Meetings of the Volunteers are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the United Methoist Church located at 1543 Barbara Street in Wrightwood. All meetings are open to the public.

Volunteers of the Angeles National Forest

Wrightwood, CA

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