



A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON

## President's Message

by Jon Kaufman

YOUR CONSERVANCY BOARD has been busy at work. While the pandemic has prevented us from holding our monthly trail maintenance stewardship activity, indoor activities have accelerated. Perhaps you have noticed, as we have, that virtual meetings over Zoom and other video communications can make life easier, no face-to-face contact but no time wasted commuting either!

Speaking of meetings, our annual meeting is coming up soon, Sunday, November 15—by Zoom, of course, from 4-6 PM. See the back page of this newsletter on how to join. Members, friends and the public are all invited. This year our keynote speakers include astrophysicist Carl Pennypacker who will introduce us to fire-spotting cameras and Oakland Deputy Fire Chief Nick Luby who will present his work on evacuation readiness in Oakland and surrounding communities.

Wildfires have been on everyone's mind as we see what's happening—again—to our friends in Sonoma County and, it seems, everywhere else in California. The Conservancy has been working on multiple fronts to mitigate the risks of wildfires here in Claremont Canyon.

We are following the progress of UC in its efforts to develop its Vegetative Management Plan and Environmental Impact Report (see next page) relating to wildfire safety in its Hill Campus, including Strawberry and Claremont canyons. In a set of comments submitted to UC in October, our board and legal consultants urge UC to do more to remove fire hazardous eucalyptus plantations and to follow the science of wildfire prevention. We continue to recommend that UC follow the advice they received from UC Forestry Professor Emeritus Joe McBride.

On another front, as we reported in our spring issue, the Conservancy is working with other organizations in the East Bay Hills, calling on our elected officials to use the Joint Powers Agency provisions

of state law to work together to coordinate vegetation management and related programs. Wildfires do not stop at city or county lines. Along with the Oakland Firesafe Council and other groups, we are making progress, but existing government agencies are understandably reluctant to give up their independence and work together with others. As you read this, we are building our list of endorsers and raising funds to retain staff support for establishing the JPA and implementing its programs. You can see our concept paper in the blog section of our website, dated October 7, 2020, along with the latest list of officials and community organizations that have joined the effort so far.

On a sad note, as many of you know, three of our former board members passed away in a short period of time, Joe Engbeck in 2019 and Bill McClung and Dick White in 2020. We have tributes to them on our website which include their valuable contributions to the Conservancy and the community at large. I want to take this moment to remember them and to thank them, and indeed all our board members, past and present, for their efforts in support of Claremont Canyon and the Conservancy.

Please join us at our annual meeting from your very own computer screen and make your annual contribution either through our website or with the envelope you received with this newsletter. Thanks for your on-going involvement and support.



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*Social distancing on the Stonewall-Panoramic Ridge Trail.*



The Santa Clara Unit Lightning Complex Fire hits Park District land.

**Fire season affects the Park District**

*From General Manager Robert E. Doyle*

THIS YEAR’S FIRE SEASON has been one of the most devastating on record with five of the 20 most destructive wildfires in California history taking place this year. Locally, we have had five major fires in our parks—Round Valley, Morgan Territory, Mission Peak, Sunol Wilderness, and Ohlone Wilderness—all caused by severe weather and lightning on August 15, 2020.

The five fires in East Bay Regional Parks were all part of the SCU Lightning Complex Fire which burned 396,624 acres and lasted 44 days.

Fortunately, only around 6,000 acres of our parklands burned in the SCU Lightning Complex Fire thanks to proper trail maintenance, including fire roads, and the District’s grazing program. Most of the total acres burnt were south of Sunol Wilderness and Ohlone Wilderness. To read more, go to <https://www.ebparcs.org/subscribe/>. (Excerpted and reprinted with permission from the EBRPD.)



Staging of fire trucks on UC’s Upper Jordan Trail during the August 2, 2017 Grizzly Peak fire set by an arsonist.

**Vegetation Management on UC’s Hill Campus** by Jon Kaufman

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY has been awarded a \$3.6 million grant from Cal Fire for managing vegetation on its Hill Campus, the undeveloped land it owns in Claremont and Strawberry canyons. In order to move forward, UC has developed a draft Plan and draft Environmental Impact Report describing what they would do with the money. The Plan and EIR were posted in August and available for public comment through October 5.

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy has watched this process carefully. We are pleased to see that UC is moving forward but are concerned about the Plan’s shortcomings. To see our submitted comments and read more about

UC's proposed Plan and EIR, go to [ClaremontCanyon.org/uc-plan-and-eir](http://ClaremontCanyon.org/uc-plan-and-eir).

The draft Plan recognizes the need for safe evacuation routes and calls for vegetation clearing in 100-foot wide strips along key roads. However, the Conservancy stated that with climate change and the new reality of wildfire danger that now exists, UC's plan does not go far enough to protect its campus and the residents who live nearby.

More vegetation management is necessary based on higher wind speeds, lightning-caused fires, and increased capacity of flying embers. These threats are not sufficiently recognized in the UC plan or EIR. The plan acknowledges wildfire wind speeds of 40 miles per hour but winds in the 1991 firestorm were clocked at 55 mph. Lightning, which caused multiple fires elsewhere in Northern California in August, was not discussed at all.

The Conservancy is looking forward to working with UC to correct these deficiencies and to ensure that the final Plan and EIR adequately address the new reality to protect both the University itself and the people who live in the area.

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### **Bill McClung, local hero of our canyons**

*by Marilyn Goldhaber*

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, Bill McClung passed away last July. He is missed. Bill was a visionary. Along with co-founder Tim Wallace, Bill dreamed of an organization of regular citizens who would pay close attention to the wildland canyons near homes in the Oakland-Berkeley Hills. Of course, that organization became the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, founded as a nonprofit in 2001 a decade after the devastating 1991 Oakland Tunnel Fire. Bill and Tim, at the time already silver-haired gentlemen of accomplishment, arrived with sparkling energy and enthusiasm to become the public face to the public landowners. Bill and Tim encouraged the landowners to strive for safe and ecologically sound management of wildland parks so close to urban settings and sought to understand for themselves what it meant to live in a WUI (wildland-urban interface).

Bill's main career was in book publishing, working variously in areas of social science, humanities, and art. He was employed for many years by University of California Press and was a longtime general partner of the beloved, privately

run University Press Books/Berkeley and the Musical Offering & Cafe, both of which closed this year.

Bill retired from the University of California Press in 1992 to rebuild the McClung home after it burned to the ground in the 1991 fire. He soon became interested in vegetation management as a member of the Berkeley Fire Commission in 1994-1996. As a precursor to this newsletter, he published, from time to time, "News from the Buffer Zone: An Occasional Publication Dedicated to Creating a Beautiful, Biologically Rich, and Wildfire-safe East Bay Hills," before co-founding the Claremont Canyon Conservancy with Tim.

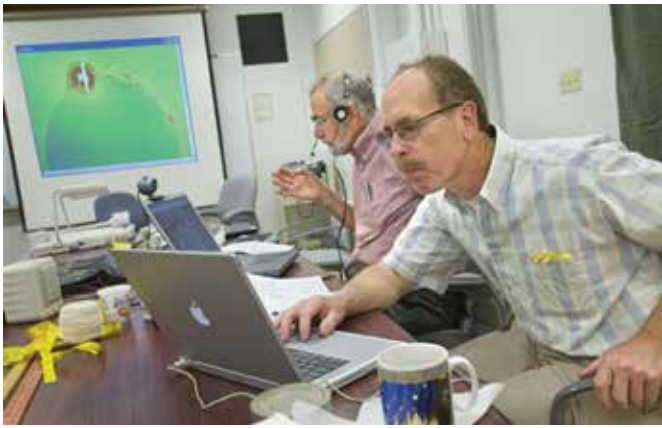
Bill was the instigator of many early Conservancy projects, including organizing public meetings, nature walks, and stewardship events and obtaining grants for boots-on-the-ground work in the canyon. He did so with gladness and purpose and was able to inspire a great number of his neighbors to participate. He also enlisted professionals in the fields of botany, ornithology, entomology, and park management to offer their expertise.

Bill was a part owner of Shelterbelt Builders, an open land management and restoration company where he served as Wildfire Specialist and Project Manager and, along with his son John, managed a small private park near his home through the Vicente Canyon Hillside Foundation. Bill stepped down from the Claremont Canyon Conservancy board in 2009 to attend to his other projects. He said at the time, "The Conservancy is an important institution and I think we can all be proud of what we have accomplished. I always envisioned the Conservancy as something to last a century or longer, and I have every intention of continuing to participate in its mission and activities as long as I can."



© 2005 Martin Holden

*Bill (left) next to his wife Karen and other hikers on a cross-canyon walk in 2005.*



Carl Pennypacker at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, University of California Berkeley, where he heads the FUEGO Project. FUEGO uses detectors to gather images, spatial data, results from simulations, and local weather “and turns them into intelligence that’s actionable.”

**Annual Meeting November 15, 4-6 PM**  
by Marilyn Goldhaber and Elizabeth K. Stage

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CLAREMONT CANYON Conservancy will be held this year via Zoom. Members, friends and all who are interested are welcome to attend free of charge. Go to [claremontcanyon.org/annual-meeting](http://claremontcanyon.org/annual-meeting) to log in. After brief updates from the Conservancy board we will hear from our invited speakers who will be presenting various pieces of the puzzle needed to create a safer environment in the East Bay Hills.

We are pleased to welcome Carl Pennypacker of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, head of the FUEGO (*Fire Urgency Estimator in Geosynchronous Orbit*) Project. He will introduce new technologies he and others are developing for locating nascent wildfires. We will also hear from Nicholas Luby, Deputy Chief of the Fire Operations Bureau who will share state of the art ways the Oakland Fire Department is preparing for

evacuation in the threat of wildfire. The presentations will be followed by an open forum where you will be able to ask questions of the Conservancy board and invited speakers.

**Carl Pennypacker:** Dr. Pennypacker has spent his career as a research astrophysicist and educator, receiving his PhD from Harvard in 1978. His principal work has focused on studying supernovae and building techniques for their automated discovery. He shared the 2007 Gruber Prize in Cosmology and the 2015 Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics for his group’s finding that the expansion of the universe is accelerating. Pennypacker’s expertise involves robust detection of small signals among a cluttered background. After honing his skills on “astrophysically interesting” objects, he is now applying them to the more immediate well-being of society by helping to reduce the danger from wildland fires faced by a warming world.

Carl says, “Technologies like drones and satellites can help pinpoint wildfires in their early stages, provide comprehensive overviews of ones currently raging, and track where containment is and isn’t working.”



The FUEGO system uses ground-based cameras through networks such as ALERTWildfire. The map above (left) shows locations of cameras in the East Bay. The Vollmer Peak camera (yellow arrow) sees the view above when facing east.



**Nick Luby**

@ChiefLuby

**Chief Luby:** Nick Luby started his career as a seasonal Firefighter with Cal Fire and soon after joined the Oakland Fire Department in 1999. He worked his way up the ranks from Firefighter, Engineer, Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief, then, two years ago, to Deputy Chief in the Fire Operations Bureau. He’s responsible, as he says, “for all of the red trucks and the people in them.” He continues to

serve on local, regional, state, and federal incident management teams and represents Oakland on boards at several levels. The rank-and-file consider him “a firefighter’s firefighter” for having survived an automobile accident at a fire scene in 2009 that put him in the hospital for broken hip and legs and for facing a “wall of fire” in the 2017 Wine Country fires.

He’s been working diligently to build the infrastructure for evacuations, ranging from old-fashioned “No Parking Any Time” signs in neighborhoods in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in the Oakland Hills to working with Alameda County and with Zonehaven, a San Francisco start-up developing an app that will provide residents with wildfire preparedness technology, including real-time traffic information. Community members in the North Hills have appreciated Nick’s participation in several Zoom meetings this summer and fall, one from his truck while patrolling Grizzly Peak in early July when people were concerned about fireworks igniting brush fires. He has a down-to-earth, practical way of explaining what’s happening that is reassuring.

Nick, a proud Oakland resident for 21 years, will talk at our November 15 meeting about the ways in which his department is working with other Oakland departments and neighbors on the challenges of evacuation during the threat of wildfire. For tips on how to prepare, go to the Oakland Community Preparedness and Response Program website at [oaklandcpandr.org](http://oaklandcpandr.org).



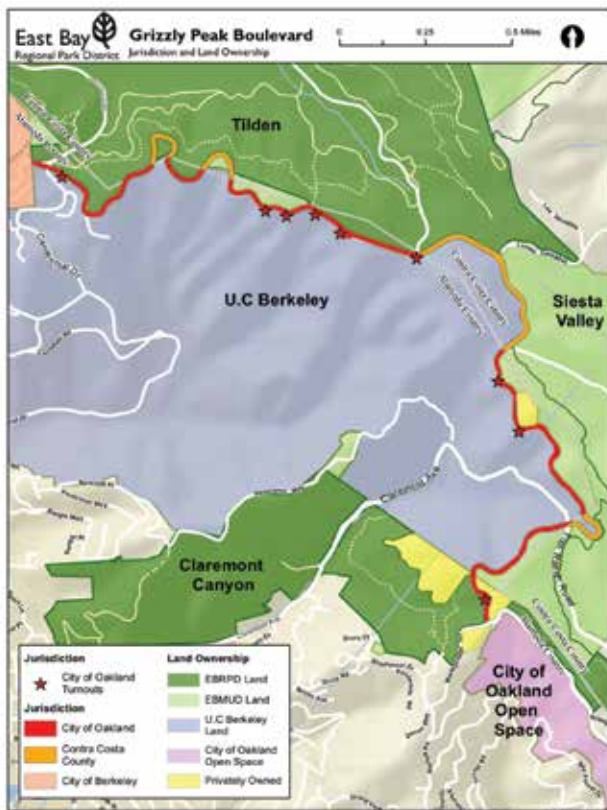
### BEFORE EVACUATION

- Tune your portable AM/FM radio to KCBS 740 AM or KQED 88.5 FM for emergency information
- Secure your pet(s) in their carriers and gather necessary supplies (leashes, water, food, etc.)
- Gather essentials (emergency “Go-Bags”, vital documents, maps, valuables, water, food, etc.) and put them in an accessible location for quick access, such as by the front door
- Check on or call neighbors to alert them and offer to assist any with special needs
- Dress in long pants/long sleeves (cotton/denim or wool), sturdy boots, goggles and sturdy gloves
- Carry car keys, wallet, ID, flashlight/headlamp, fully charged cell phone and spare battery
- If you can leave before an evacuation is ordered, do so.** Communicate where you will go or a meet-up location to family members and your out-of-area emergency contact.

### IF TIME ALLOWS

- Shut all house windows and doors and leave unlocked, turn indoor and outdoor lights on and turn off the HVAC system
- Remove combustible window curtains and move furniture away from windows
- Move combustible outdoor items (furniture, trash cans, etc.) to a garage or 30’ away from house
- Turn off your gas at the meter
- Move any extra vehicles off the street to give responders room
- Park your vehicle facing toward the street, with essential items inside and windows closed

**Remain calm—panic is deadly!**



the North Hills Community Association to the City of Oakland. The residents asked that the City close the lookouts during fire season.

The closure request fortuitously coincided with the City’s formation of an inter-departmental wildfire prevention working group; the group brings together representatives of Emergency Services, Fire, Police, Public Works, and Transportation to identify ways to reduce the likelihood of a major wildfire, including vegetation management, ignitions and spread control, and steps to take to prepare for a fire, including evacuation planning. The group recognized that Grizzly Peak Boulevard, originally designed as a fire break for the Hills, had been a concern of fire chiefs from the several jurisdictions (see map key) along Grizzly Peak Boulevard since at least the 1991 Oakland Tunnel Fire.

The urgency of the impending July 4th holiday required an immediate response. For 24 hours, law enforcement officers from Berkeley, Oakland, East Bay Regional Parks, Moraga-Orinda, and the University of California, Berkeley staffed the intersections and enforced the closure of Grizzly Peak from Centennial to Skyline, closing the road to all traffic except

## Grizzly Peak Lookouts

by Elizabeth K. Stage

FOR DECADES, THE LOOKOUTS ON GRIZZLY PEAK Boulevard have been a favorite place to meet up, watch the sunset, enjoy a few drinks, and smoke; they’ve also caused perennial complaints from neighbors concerned about carelessly tossed still-lit smoking materials landing in the dry brush below.

On May 15th, after a mild winter and an early spring, Oakland Fire declared the beginning of the 2020 “fire season.” At the same time, the pandemic’s stay-at-home orders kept bars and restaurants closed, and fewer places were available for friends to gather and relax. This made the lookouts (noted as red stars on the above map) more attractive than ever but also more risky for accidentally igniting a fire. By late June, six fires in Oakland were attributed to fireworks starting earlier and with greater frequency and intensity than in previous years. Fortunately, the six fires were put out quickly without injury or destruction.

Concerns of residents in the hills designated by Cal Fire as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone were expressed in a mid-June letter from

**Claremont Canyon** is the largest relatively undeveloped canyon on the western slope of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills. Most of the canyon’s watershed is owned by the East Bay Regional Park District, the University of California, the East Bay Municipal Utility District and the City of Oakland, with about one-fifth in private hands.

**The Claremont Canyon Conservancy** promotes the long-term stewardship of the entire watershed, coordinated among the stakeholders to preserve or restore a healthy native ecosystem, reduce wildfire hazards, and foster education and research.

### Join the Conservancy:

Founding Sponsor: \$1,000 over 10 years.

Family Membership: \$50 per year.

Student or Limited Income: \$25 per year.

### Contact Us:

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Email: [info@ClaremontCanyon.org](mailto:info@ClaremontCanyon.org)

Website: [ClaremontCanyon.org](http://ClaremontCanyon.org)

**The Board of Directors:** Jon Kaufman, President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Vice President; Nancy Mueller, Secretary; Members at Large: Josh Borkowski, Chris Lehman, Jerry Kent, Elizabeth Stage, Bob Strayer, and L. Tim Wallace

**Treasurer:** Kay Loughman

*Newsletter edited by Marilyn Goldhaber and Kay Loughman*



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*A line of logs deter night time visits to the popular lookout near Marlborough Terrace. Log placement is a work in progress as an inter agency working group tries to decide on the best course of action.*

by local residents. Oakland has primary jurisdiction of most of Grizzly Peak Boulevard (15 feet from the center line) no matter whose property is on either side of the road. Subsequently, Oakland beefed up patrols to educate people in the lookouts about the information on newly installed signs, “No Smoking; Closed from 9 PM-6 AM.”

As the warm weather and beautiful, smoke-enhanced sunsets continued to attract people to the lookouts, more Berkeley residents joined the chorus of Oakland residents in complaints to public officials, an interagency working group was formed, and more effective solutions were explored. Law enforcement officers from most of the neighboring jurisdictions coordinated patrols each evening during the early October Red Flag Alerts and cleared the lookouts of parked vehicles. Since that level of effort was unsustainable, the following week UC and Oakland started placing logs across the lookout entrances and following up by chaining them together. As their work continues, Oakland will evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies and study other possible options. The City plans to extend the effort to Skyline Drive, which has its



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*Oakland Police secure the logs by chaining them together.*

share of lookouts attracting reckless behavior. And, the community organizations will persist in our role as “critical friend,” including advocacy with elected officials and willingness to educate ourselves and our neighbors.



© 2020 Courtesy Untrash-it

*While public officials ponder what to do about the safety of the lookouts, a volunteer group called Untrash-it jumped in and cleaned up the litter.*



P.O. Box 5551  
Berkeley CA 94705  
[www.ClaremontCanyon.org](http://www.ClaremontCanyon.org)

## THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

*Dear Friends and Neighbors*

*Please join us on*

**Sunday, November 15, 2020, 4-6 PM**

### ***Annual Meeting***

**Via Zoom**

[claremontcanyon.org/zoom-link](http://claremontcanyon.org/zoom-link)

From the Board	4:00 PM
Keynote Speakers	4:30 PM
Open Forum	5:30 PM

Carl Pennypacker, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory  
“The FUEGO Project: Locating wildfires early before they spread”  
Nicholas Luby, Deputy Chief, Oakland Fire Department  
“Preparing for evacuation”

*RSVP appreciated or for questions: [info@ClaremontCanyon.org](mailto:info@ClaremontCanyon.org) or call 510-843-2226*