Understanding San Diego
Community Impact

SAN DIEGO AFTER-THE-FIRE REPORT

responding, recovering, rebuilding

a progress report

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In the wake of 9-11 and regional challenges such as the Alpine Fire, The San Diego Foundation began to prepare for community-wide disasters by establishing the San Diego Regional Disaster Fund (SDRDF) as a new supporting organization. This forethought by the Board of Governors of The San Diego Foundation and the work of the newly established SDRDF Board, enabled The Foundation to respond quickly and effectively to the October 2003 fires. By doing so, disaster philanthropy became one of The Foundation's core competencies.

The San Diego Foundation undertook the After-the-Fire effort as part of its evolving role as the region's leader in charitable giving and ongoing service to the community.

The San Diego community responded generously. Gratitude is owed to each of the donors, the list of which is topped by the Alex Spanos Family, the San Diego Chargers and the NFL Charities. With a gift of over $1 million, Mr. Spanos established the San Diego Fire Relief Fund at The San Diego Foundation, inspiring many others to give. The compassion of hundreds of individuals and companies is reflected by the donor list found in the final pages of this report.

This publication is the result of UNDERSTANDING SAN DIEGO, a continuing initiative of The San Diego Foundation based on a simple premise: *We must understand. Then we can act.* The Foundation strives to acquire and then share deep and clear understanding of the region's largest issues, then engage the community in collaborative planning and execution that produce measurable solutions.

Special thanks are due to the members of the SDRDF board and community volunteers who labored tirelessly in the months following the fires. With the support of The San Diego Foundation Board of Governors, The Foundation's staff and volunteers also worked long hours to assist the SDRDF in identifying the needs in the fires-affected communities, attract contributions to the fire funds, and to quickly and effectively distribute the grants to those nonprofit organizations capable of bringing relief to those most in need. All of this was made possible by the generosity of the fire fund donors, to whom we dedicate this report.

Ted Chan

Colette Carson Royston

Bob Kelly

Cover Photo: Alpine Fire Department
Photo on Left: Gael Courtney

Photo: Lafonzo Rachal Carter / San Bernardino Sun

An Extraordinary Firestorm, An Exemplary Response

In late October 2003, dry, Santa Ana winds scooped up sparks and embers from several sources around San Diego County, depositing them in tinder-dry brush and forestland, igniting the most devastating wildfires seen in more than 70 years.

No ordinary firestorm, the flames from these and other brush fires rose well above the treetops, moving at unfathomable speeds, taking 22 lives and destroying more than 3,500 structures across more than a half million acres in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties. The fire crisis in San Diego County was the largest in California since 1932, consuming more than 390,000 acres.

Compounding the misery, television and technology brought horrifying pictures into millions of living rooms in a manner that could only be more alarming if you were actually at the flames. While smoldering, smoke-filled images lasted for weeks, the ongoing damage continues yet, as families and communities struggle to rebuild and reorder their lives.

A massive outpouring of care and concern consumed government agencies and organizations, including The San Diego Foundation. A community in crisis called out. A community of caring individuals and institutions answered.

1. Responding to a Community in Need

The After-the-Fire Fund

Recovering and rebuilding after a disaster of such enormity presents an overwhelming task involving complex issues ranging from insurance settlements to construction permits, from allocation of donated resources to provision of mental health services. In San Diego alone, more than 100 organizations immediately engaged in disaster assistance. These organizations include citizen-led community recovery groups, faith-based and social service agencies, and local, state, and federal government agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Office of Emergency Services and various state, county and city of San Diego departments.

The San Diego Foundation activated the San Diego Regional Disaster Fund on Sunday, October 26, the first day of the disaster. The After-the-Fire Fund was opened within 48 hours to receive donations for making emergency grants to nonprofit service organizations engaged in disaster relief and restoration. The After-the-Fire Fund is an initiative of the San Diego Regional Disaster Fund, an affiliate of The San Diego Foundation, which was fortuitously established in 2003 to prepare for regional crises. The fund was established to provide grants to nonprofits serving the region's individuals, families and other nonprofits during and after a regional disaster, providing food, shelter, housing and health care.

The After-the-Fire Fund received $1.6 million in donations. The San Diego Foundation donors contributed over $200,000. The remainder came from businesses and the public. The Alex Spanos Family and the San Diego Chargers opened a donor advised fund named the San Diego Fire Relief Fund, with contributions totaling $1.5 million. Foundation staff advised on the distribution of grants made from this fund. Other foundations from Southern California granted $1 million for fire relief efforts. The San Diego Foundation staff served as advisors to outside foundations.

The Foundation also established the Fire Victims Scholarship Fund to address the educational needs of high school students whose plans for post-secondary education were disrupted by the fires. The fund's $190,000 will be awarded by a scholarship selection committee including renewable scholarships for 2004 recipients, with funds reserved for other students impacted by the fires.

The total of these contributions brought more than $3.2 million to San Diego fire recovery efforts under the philanthropic umbrella of The Foundation, and, as of June 30, 2004, over $3.2 million has been allocated or earmarked for distribution to the fire affected communities. Notably, and in keeping with The San Diego Foundation's operating mission, funds were granted not directly to individuals or families, but to the nonprofit organizations that serve individuals and families.

Assessing the Greatest Needs

As the air cleared, it became apparent that effective grantmaking would require a swift and sure organizational effort. "Field teams" composed of staff and volunteers from The San Diego Regional Disaster Fund Board of Directors fanned out in four geographic sectors, spending several days observing conditions and activities and conducting interviews. They gathered the raw materials for a grantmaking needs assessment that would aim funds at fire-ravaged targets quickly and effectively.

Photo: Joe Sterling

This Community Assessment found, for the most part, that the immediate crisis needs of emergency food, shelter, clothing, energy, and safety were met by the first responders such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army. The Foundation challenge was to focus efforts beyond the immediate, with an emphasis in these three distinct areas: Health and Human Services, Environment and Rebuilding Communities.

During the assessments, it became apparent there were important differences between the smaller communities in each of the areas assessed. These communities were prioritized by the degree of damage suffered in the fires and their capacity to recover from the losses.

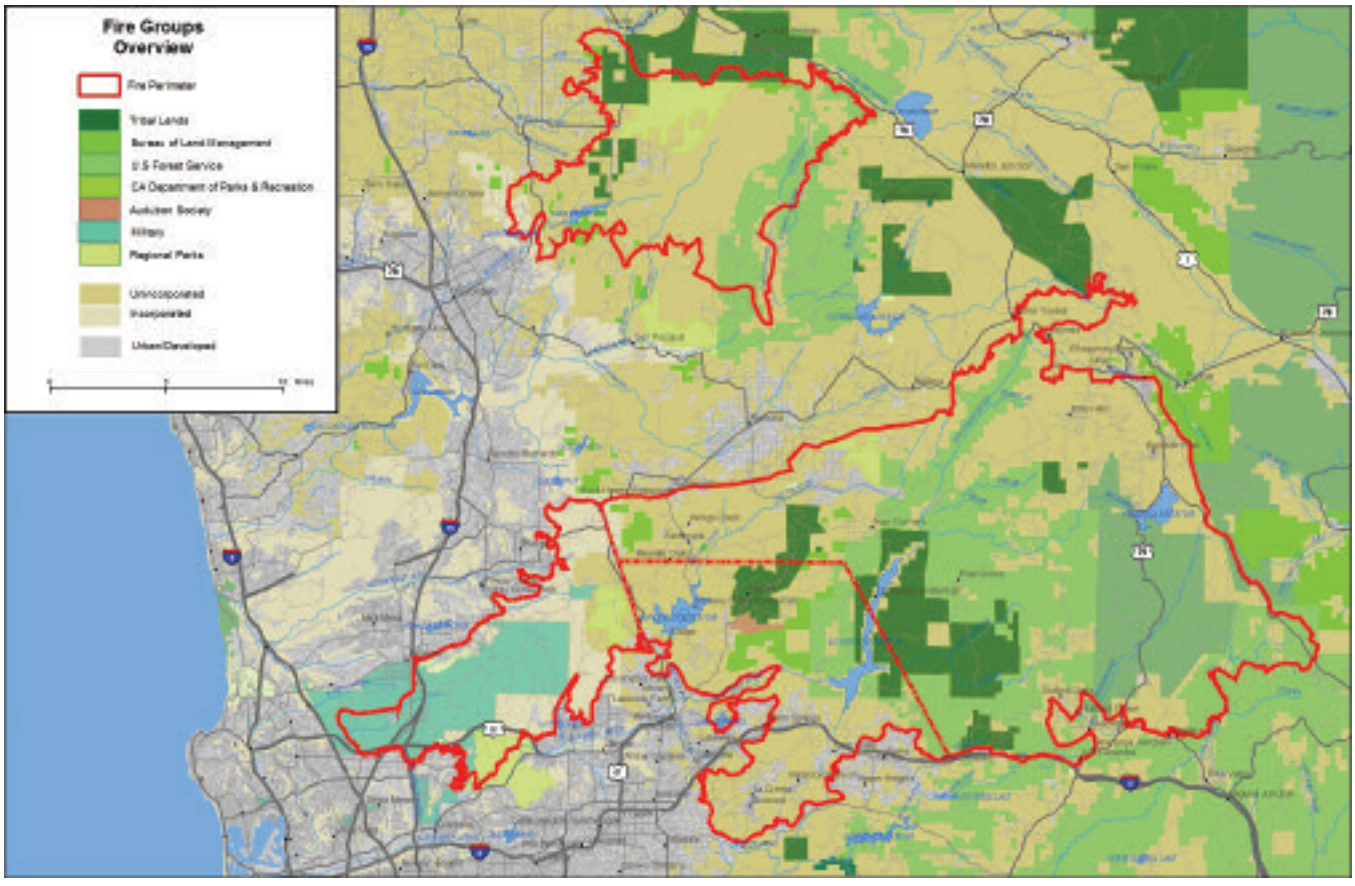
Group I: Harbison Canyon and the Julian area suffered extensive losses, facing considerable challenges to full recovery based on income, percent uninsured, leadership, social capital, and organizational capacity.

Group II: Alpine, Crest, Lakeside, the Ramona area and Valley Center also endured significant losses. However, they appeared somewhat better poised to affect recovery.

Group III: Poway, Scripps Ranch, Tierrasanta, Barona Reservation, and Descanso/Guatay either endured less loss or were judged to have excellent organizational capacity for responding to these losses.

In each community, a volunteer group of civilians formed to address fire victims' needs. Leadership capacity and social capital were varied, but all groups needed operational and fiscal support. Other important needs include:

- Opening lines of communication and working relationships with those who were affected by the fire and all whose task it is to assist in rebuilding
- Providing information collection and dissemination points
- Rebuilding civic centers, landmarks, and parks
- Organizing events that publicly celebrate and mark progress in a community's rebuilding.



Grantmaking Progress

The Community Assessment provided the baseline data needed to develop a strategic plan for effective grantmaking. It was clear that communities had very different needs and resources and there could be no "cookie-cutter" approach to supporting recovery and rebuilding.

The first stage of the After-the-Fire effort supported immediate response and recovery activities, primarily the provision of food, shelter, housing, and healthcare needs. The second stage provided grants to help rebuild the lives of fire victims as well as restore the communities affected by the fires. It was clear that priority would be given to human needs (i.e., Health and Human Services) and communities with lower capacity to recover. In addition, The Foundation was committed to rapid disbursal of funds, with all funds allocated within six to eight months of the fires.

As of this report, grantmaking goals were achieved with 39 percent of grants supporting Health and Human Services, 34 percent Community Rebuilding, and 10 percent for Environment.

In addition, the San Diego Fire Victims Scholarship Fund has granted $40,000 in scholarships to 17 graduating high school seniors throughout San Diego County who lost their homes. The balance of this fund is committed for renewable scholarships for 2004 recipients as well as other students impacted by the fires. These awards will assist students as they advance their education at a trade and vocational school, two year college, or four year university.

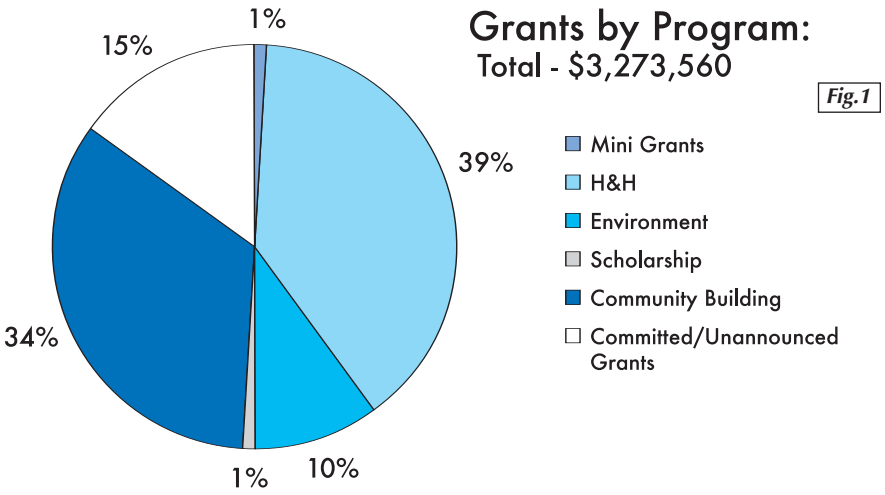


Fig. 1
The San Diego Foundation After-the-Fire Grantmaking by Priority Area
Includes all funds advised by Foundation staff: After-the-Fire Fund, San Diego Fire Relief Fund, the San Diego Fire Victims Scholarship Fund (June 30, 2004)

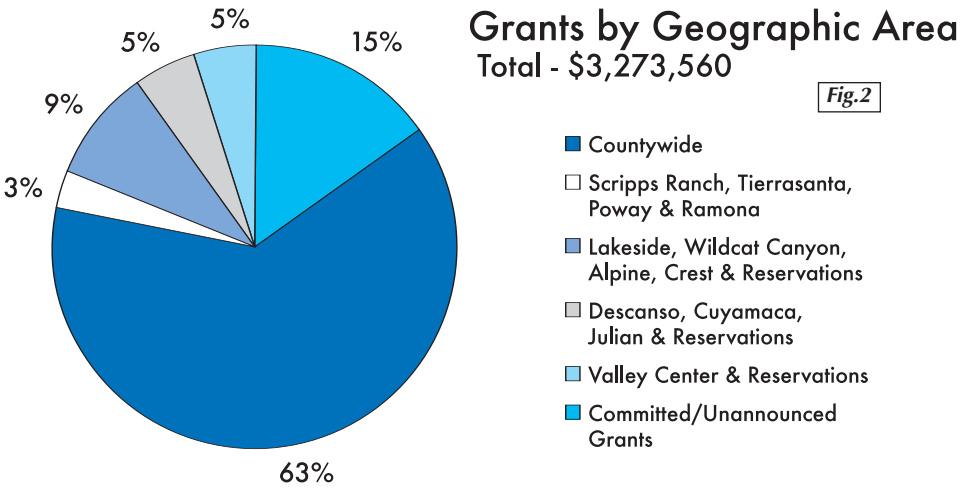


Fig. 2
The San Diego Foundation After-the-Fire Grantmaking by Geographic Area
Includes all funds advised by Foundation staff: After-the-Fire Fund, San Diego Fire Relief Fund, the San Diego Fire Victims Scholarship Fund (June 30, 2004)

Fund Dollars at Work

To date, following the criteria set for fund distribution, nearly 50 grants have been made to a wide variety of organizations directly assisting in disaster relief. The breadth and depth of the work of these organizations reflects the true value of the philanthropy of the hundreds of individuals and companies who have contributed funds.

Grants from the After-the-Fire Fund:

Salvation Army of San Diego - $20,000
For the East County Corps - to provide response services to affected communities in East County San Diego.

San Diego Food Bank - $20,000
To provide food to 275 participating organizations in the County responding to victims of the fire.

San Diego Regional Fire & Emergency Services Foundation - $25,000
For Volunteer Fire Departments in San Diego to replace lost or damaged equipment as a result of the fires.

Interfaith Community Services - $10,000
To support the fire response program developed in coordination with multiple faith centers, the County of San Diego, and City of Escondido to address the immediate needs of underserved populations who were victims of the fire

Alpine Community Center, Inc. - $1,500
To replace carpet and equipment that was damaged during assisting evacuating families.

Calvary Chapel Rancho Santa Margarita - $2,000
To assist fire ravaged communities in San Diego County.

College Avenue Baptist Church - $3,000
To sustain the recovery and rebuilding efforts of Harbison Canyon Management Team.

Community United Methodist Church of Julian - $3,000
To address the immediate needs and provide advocacy, housing, and financial resources to fire victims in Julian.

East County Property Owners Assoc., Inc. - $2,000
To support ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts in East County.

Friends of Crest - $1,500
To support the infrastructure for the comprehensive, intensive and virtually volunteer effort to assist the community of Crest.

St. Mary's-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church - $1,500
To secure funding for a modular unit to help provide assistance for fire victims.

Valley Center Fire Relief Fund - $1,500
To provide financial assistance & support to community members who lost their homes.

Valley Center-Pauma Unified School Dist - $2,000
To provide support to the 200 school children whose families were affected by the Paradise Fire.

Community United Methodist Church of Julian - $1,500
To purchase heaters for fire affected citizens of Julian.

Anza Borrego Foundation - $75,000
To work with California State Parks to rehabilitate Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. This grant will be matched by additional fund and in-kind donations from California State Parks and Recreation.

Harbison Canyon Management Team - $15,000
To build homes in partnership with local families in Harbison Canyon.

San Diego County Parks Society - $45,000
To rehabilitate the Hellhole Canyon, Boulder Oaks and Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon Open Space Preserves.

San Diego Natural History Museum - $25,000
To launch science-based post-fire assessment and monitoring programs for natural and, ultimately, cultural resources affected by the fires.

Salvation Army of San Diego - $15,000
To support the Community Recovery Team by providing a Community Ombudsman to help coordinate rural recovery efforts.

The San Diego River Park Foundation - $25,000
To recruit, train and coordinate volunteers to assist in fire recovery efforts.

Endangered Habitats League - $25,000
To work in partnership with SERG and local high school students to rehabilitate the portions of Crestridge Ecological Reserve destroyed by the recent wildfires.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc. - $15,000
To support the reparation and rehabilitation of the portions of Mission Trails Regional Park damaged by the October wildfires.

San Diego County Parks Society - $30,000
To rehabilitate the Hellhole Canyon, Boulder Oaks, Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon Open Space Preserves, and other County parks affected by the fires, as needed.

San Diego Natural History Museum - $25,000
To launch science-based post-fire assessment and monitoring programs for natural and ultimately cultural resources affected by the fires.

The San Diego River Park Foundation - $25,000
San Diego Fire Recovery Network - to recruit, train and coordinate volunteers to assist in fire recovery efforts.

Valley Center Firefighters Association - $49,500
To purchase fire protection equipment including; breathing apparatus, utility truck, thermal imaging units, auxiliary pump system, DB1/SA1 Tripod Winch, Confined Space Rescue Kit and fire blankets.

Alpine Union School District - $50,000
For transportation and expanded after-school programs.

INFO LINE San Diego - $37,500
To develop a specialized, web-based searchable disaster resource database.

Julian Union School District - $20,000
To provide transportation for after-school programs.

Ramona Unified School District - $20,000
To provide transportation for after-school programs and counseling.

Urban Corps of San Diego - $30,000
To perform erosion control, debris clean-up and re-vegetation activities related to fire recovery, which will support restoration work for community rebuilding.

Volunteer San Diego - $40,000
To increase the capacity of VOAD and DRC agencies to effectively utilize volunteers to meet their disaster related needs through consultation, training, networking, on-going support and community outreach/volunteer recruitment.

San Diego Fire Department - $275,000
To purchase a Wildland Ultra XT Fire Truck for the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department of the City of San Diego.

Community Research Foundation - $20,000
To provide mental health services to 750 wildfire victims.

Friends of Crest - $35,000
To provide operating support to the Crest Coordinating Council.

Mount Laguna Volunteer Fire Department - $20,000
To repave the damaged driveway and water tender parking area.

Salvation Army of San Diego - $35,000
To provide operating support for the Ramona Disaster Outreach Team

Salvation Army of San Diego - $100,000
To support the Community Recovery Team with a full-time coordinator position and operating expenses.

Salvation Army of San Diego - $102,500
To support the Community Recovery Team in establishing a construction budget line that will be used to purchase building materials, contract labor or pay for part of the cost of modular homes.

Salvation Army of San Diego - $20,000
To support the Community Recovery Team in implementing plans and strategies that are based upon best practices and learning's from other disasters.

San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program - $25,000
To continue to provide services to fire victims and affected communities through at least June 30, 2005

San Diego Youth & Community Services - $50,000
Harbison Canyon Youth and Community Center - To provide access to safe, supervised recreational activities, youth development and leadership and academic support for up to 50 youths ages 13 to 18.

Grants from the San Diego Fire Relief Fund at The San Diego Foundation:

The San Diego Foundation's San Diego Fire Victims Scholarship Fund - $40,000
To support students who have been affected by the fires.

American Lung Association of San Diego - $5,000
To continue to provide accurate up-to-date air quality and health information to the public primarily through the web site, press advisories and telephone consultation, and to distribute respirators and HEPA air filter units to those with lung disease and a limited income that were impacted by smoke exposure.

Emergency Animal Rescue - $5,000
To replace rescue equipment (halters, lead ropes, medical supplies, two VHF radios lost in the fires) and replenish funds depleted to cover costs of feeding rescue crew members and animals rescued, as well as veterinarian expenses for injured animals rescued from the fire.

Neighborhood Healthcare - $5,000
To provide clothing and blankets to agricultural workers who lost all their belongings in the fires.

Project Wildlife - $5,000
To distribute hay and grain near the perimeter of the burned areas, and provide medical assistance and food to injured and starving animals.

Urban Corps of San Diego - $15,000
To construct erosion control barriers and replant vegetation in fire affected areas.

Interfaith Community Services - $200,000
To provide 30 units of temporary housing (six to nine months) to families in the Valley Center, Pauma/Pala and Rincon areas who were displaced by the fires and may not qualify for FEMA assistance.

Mountain Health & Community Services - $75,000
To help mitigate the financial impact of services provided to residents throughout the Mountain Empire during the Cedar Fire.

San Diego Food Bank - $40,000
To allow the Food Bank to support nutritional needs associated with recovery and rebuilding efforts throughout the County over the next nine months.

San Diego Regional Fire & Emergency Services Foundation - $47,000
To ensure that more than 30 volunteer firefighting departments serving San Diego County have the necessary replacement parts, materials and equipment for future disasters.

San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program - $20,000
To provide free legal counsel to victims seeking information about FEMA, insurance claims, negotiations with mortgage companies, landlord/tenant issues and relocating issues.

Scripps Ranch Civic Association - $50,000
To establish an initial brush management clean-up, thereby returning the community to a fire-defensible position in collaboration with City of San Diego Fire Department and potential nonprofit partners including Alpha Project and Second Chance/STRIVE.

Crest Community Association - $30,000
To provide a community center facility that will allow the coordination of citizen-driven recovery and rebuilding efforts.

East County Fire Relief Center - $20,000
To provide operational support to this local recovery center and emergency food vouchers, clean-up equipment and storage.

Friends of Crest - $10,000
To allow this local council sustain their high level of service to their community and implement projects such as the Reconstruction Fair and "Adopt-A-Family".

Harbison Canyon Management Team - $35,000
To build homes in partnership with local families in Harbison Canyon.

North County Lifeline, Inc. - $40,000
To provide case management and counseling to fire victims.

Ramona Chamber of Commerce - $20,000
To provide operating support to the local recovery center so that fire victims can be assisted with issues relating to debris clean-up, insurance and County permits.

San Diego Blood Bank Foundation - $50,000
To replace expenses and supplies used for fire response.

San Diego Habitat for Humanity, Inc. - $85,000
To partner with a family in need and affected by the Cedar Fires by purchasing and building a home.

San Diego Mennonite Church - $70,000
To provide transportation, food and lodging for a skilled volunteer workforce to construct 5 homes for elderly, disabled, low-income uninsured/underinsured individuals in partnership with Disaster Recovery Coalition.

Salvation Army of San Diego - $35,000
To support the Community Recovery Team by providing a Community Ombudsman to help coordinate rural recovery efforts.

Southern Indian Health Council - $40,000
To provide ongoing mental health, social services, senior services and transportation to fire victims in East county.

Valley Center Fire Relief Fund - $20,000
To provide operational support to this local recovery center and emergency food vouchers, clean-up equipment and storage.

Vista Hill Foundation - $40,000
To provide counseling to 25 students and families for two years.

City of San Diego - Police Dept. - $128,763
To provide a communication tool for police response to critical or major incidents/events.

San Diego Fire Department - $279,792
To purchase Wildland Web Gear.

FAST FIRE FACTS*

Lives lost	22
Homes destroyed	2,454
Structures lost	3,500+
Southern California acres burned	500,000
San Diego acres burned	390,000
Percentage of County land area burned	15%
Individuals registering for assistance	7,772
Number of families underinsured	1,800
School-aged children displaced	1,500
Senior citizens who lost their homes	1,700

*Estimates based on best available information as of June 30, 2004.

2. Addressing Priorities

Health and Human Services:

The Cornerstone of After-the-Fire Recovery

The San Diego Foundation, which had auspiciously established a fund for the expressed purpose of disaster relief, was able to respond as a major resource for the community in the days following the disaster. Much of this effort focused on Health and Human Services, the cornerstone of after-the-life recovery activities.

Addressing Temporary Needs

The Foundation's Community Assessment found, for the most part, that the immediate crisis needs of emergency food, shelter, clothing, energy and safety were met by the first responders (e.g., American Red Cross and Salvation Army). The Foundation focused on short-term needs that were both dynamic and constantly unfolding.

The single most important need in each community proved to be temporary housing and rebuilding. Fire victims generally want to remain in their communities, keep their children in their schools, and oversee the rebuilding of their homes. Other important issues to be addressed across communities were and continue to be:

- Financial assistance, planning, insurance, and uninsured assistance
- Mental health counseling
- Assistance to special populations: elderly, disabled, underserved populations
- Employment assistance
- Disaster preparedness and safety issues
- Temporary housing and care of animals of individuals displaced by fires
- Fire clean up and debris removal.

Seniors are a subpopulation that has especially suffered. ElderHelp reported that there are more than 1,700 fire victims over the age of 65. Many of these seniors had paid off their homes and did not have insurance. In some areas, such as Alpine and Wildcat Canyon, they were unable to obtain insurance.

The special needs and issues of children and youth also surfaced after the initial phase of recovery passed. In all communities, large numbers of this population have faced the challenge of living in less than desirable conditions, either with relatives, in trailers, or in small apartments. Those who live in trailers on fire damaged property have had the added burden of not being able to play safely in their front yards nor having a place to study. School districts are facing increased demands on their after school programs with the added challenge of providing transportation in rural areas such as Julian.

Role of The Foundation

The After-the-Fire Fund provided grants to a number of local or regional health centers and clinics as well as to recovery centers which are helping coordinate access to services. These organizations emerged following community assessment, as places where fire victims were already going. Most had been providing services before the fires.

Grants were made to Mountain Health and Community Services, Southern Indian Health Council, Vista Hill Community Clinic, North County Lifeline and Heartland Foundation. A grant was made by Allstate Foundation (through partnership between The San Diego Foundation and the California Community Foundation) to fund ElderHelp. Grants were given to Valley Center School District and Julian School District. Ramona and Alpine school districts have received similar grants. The Foundation also made grants to support a youth and community center in Harbison Canyon – an area with great devastation and very limited community assets.

Lessons Learned

The needs in this area are enormous and could be considered overwhelming. Many non-profit agencies applied for funding either to replace lost revenues or to provide activities that were beyond the capacity of the After-the-Fire Fund. The approach has been to focus support where available and make strategic grants to entities providing the same or similar services, such as health centers and school districts. Grants were also made to agencies that offered services targeting a specific population or to meet a unique local need. This appeared to be the best way to ensure equity among the impacted communities.

Photo: Matt Hanna

Community Building: Making Houses Home Again

San Diego County in October 2003 faced the need to restore the homes of nearly 2,500 families. The San Diego Foundation, intently focused on disaster grantmaking that would truly respond to community needs, worked with dozens of organizations to respond to this housing crisis.

Replacing their homes was and is the number one priority for the fire victims in all communities or, in the case of renters, finding affordable housing for them to rent. Data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) indicates 345 homes lost that were completely uninsured. The number of underinsured homes could be in the thousands.

Debris removal has been an issue, primarily the availability of dumpsters, issues of toxic waste and waiting lists for county and volunteer work crews. Unclear property lines present another challenge, especially in rural areas. Many home owners have yet to obtained permits.

Progress

Yet considerable housing progress had been made by the six-month mark of recovery activities. Two of the major accomplishments:

1. The establishment of long term recovery efforts in each of the major areas impacted by the fires: Alpine, Crest, Harbison Canyon, Julian/Cuyamaca, Lakeside, Ramona and Valley Center.

2. The support of a region-wide Community Recovery Team

Photo: Joe Sterling

With the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the County closing down their operations in early January, it fell to local groups to maintain support to the fire victims. These groups have transitioned from providing immediate relief (food, clothing, shelter, and assisting with FEMA applications) to addressing interim and long-term recovery and rebuilding issues such as debris removal, erosion control, insurance issues, obtaining planning and other permits, and a host of social and mental health needs.

These groups included The Salvation Army, San Diego County Mental Health (through a FEMA grant) and other members of the San Diego Wildfires Disaster Recovery Coalition. In early January, representatives from each local recovery group met and formed connections, shared stories and resources, and agreed they would meet once a month as a group. They also determined that they would work with elected officials, government agencies, and other stakeholders as an alliance for the communities.

Scripps Ranch, Crest and Harbison Canyon have held Contractor Fairs. Several communities have begun working with the San Diego Firestorm Community Recovery Team (San Diego CRT), faith-based partners, and local building companies to initiate solutions to the housing dilemma.

Local Response

In Crest a group of underinsured home owners is hoping to pool its resources to work with Kohl Construction, which is donating contractors, building plans and supplying union labor, and the Mennonites who are providing skilled volunteer work crews to build as many as 30 homes. The San Diego CRT is working with a team from the La Jolla Presbyterian Church on a project that involves purchasing foreclosed modular homes, transporting them to San Diego, and selling them to fire victims at costs between $25,000 and $45,000. The rural nature of most of the impacted communities means that large scale housing development projects, such as those initiated in Scripps Ranch, simply will not work. What is needed are multiple small scale projects that are tailored to meet the constraints and needs of individual homeowners. Each of the fire-impacted communities has established a local recovery group that has taken on the challenge of helping its community recover and rebuild. Each of the local recovery groups

Photo: Rock and Barbara Armstrong

are represented within the San Diego CRT. The nature of these communities are unincorporated, meaning they do not have a local infrastructure for government or law enforcement, and they are predominantly rural which makes the process of recovery and rebuilding even more challenging.

The Reconstruction Working Group of the San Diego CRT is charged with providing information and support to homeowners and developing and overseeing home rebuilding and replacement projects to underinsured, uninsured, and vulnerable populations. Following are examples of reconstruction Working Group Activities:

Communitywide Activities and System Change:

- Coordination of Construction Fairs, in collaboration with local recovery groups, connects homeowners to pre-screened contractors and architects and provides access to workshops as well as information on topics including building requirements, green building technologies and erosion control.
- Work with County Department of Planning and Land use to streamline the permit process. Create a database of building plans that have been pre-scrutinized and can be expedited through the permit process.

Strategies for Survivors with a Recovery Plan and Most Resources to Rebuild:

- Provide access to donated materials such as faucets, sinks, locks, and sprinkler systems, through partnership with businesses such as Kohler, Kwikset, Black & Decker and Lowes.
- Provide skilled volunteer labor to match whatever resources the family may have, including FEMA grant funds.

Strategies for the Most Vulnerable Survivors, Including the Non-insured:

- Develop creative financing programs such as “silent second” for a down payment for families who can afford a mortgage payment but do not have funds for a down payment.
- Provide modular homes at low or no cost, depending upon ability to pay.

Role of the Foundation

After-the-Fire Fund operational grants ranging from $10,000 to $100,000 were made to a number of community groups focusing on housing. Some funds were used to purchase items needed by fire victims, such as storage containers and sheds. Grants were tailored to meet the unique needs of the communities and developed in partnership with community members. The Fund has provided 30 temporary trailers in Valley Center, through a grant made to Interfaith Housing Services. It also provided funding to Habitat for Humanity to build three homes, and to the Mennonites to provide the labor for seven homes.

Lessons Learned

The very nature of the housing issue is in itself a challenge. The need is great and the issue complicated. In some cases, efforts have been hampered by the absence of nonprofit organizations in fire-stricken communities as well as a lack of capacity in nonprofits that do exist. The learning seems to be “one home at a time” and allows space for innovative solutions and non-traditional partnerships to emerge as long-term solutions.

Photo: Rock and Barbara Armstrong

The Environment: Helping Nature Recovery

The October 2003 fires were unprecedented in their magnitude. In addition to the tragic loss of lives, homes and livelihoods, innumerable plants and animals and habitats were destroyed. While San Diego County represents a small fraction of the total land area of California, it supports one-third of the state's flora. Its rich array of flora has distinguished the county as the most bio-diverse of any in the continental United States. Given this reality, The San Diego Foundation's After-the-Fire efforts include grants aimed at helping nature recover.

With the recent wildfires, scientists fear that many of the region's already endangered and threatened species may have been lost forever. Others are concerned about deteriorating environmental health, especially in watersheds that were heavily impacted by the fire.

Photo: Matt Hanna

Although recovery efforts are already well underway in the county, there are a number of critical issues that have not been adequately addressed.

Erosion Control

The primary post-fire concern and immediate focus of the Federal Burn Area Emergency Response teams were to address threats to public safety from erosion and flooding. Although the major concern with erosion control is the protection of lives and structures from rain-induced mudslides, sediment-filled runoff also threatens community infrastructure such as roads and reservoirs. Federal, state, and local agencies have already undertaken a variety of measures to reduce the risk of erosion.

Many in the scientific and environmental community are of the general opinion that it is best to leave recently burned areas alone, unless rain-induced mudslides pose a high threat to neighboring structures and infrastructure.

Considering the scale and expense of erosion control to protect structures and infrastructure, much of the cost will need to be absorbed through public funding from state and federal disaster monies. Private donations are best directed to support the work of volunteers. Organizations such as the Urban Corps and California Conservation Corps, assist public agency efforts to control erosion and remove fire-related debris.

Rehabilitation and Management of Parks and other Open Space Preserves

Parks and open space preserves throughout the burned areas of both the Cedar and Paradise Fires suffered extensive damage. Some sites, such as Hellhole Canyon, Boulder Oaks, and Goodan Ranch/Sycamore Canyon Open Space Preserves, lost 100% of their buildings, interpretive signage, fencing, and other structures. In state park lands alone, the total estimated damage costs to both cultural and natural resources are more than $50 million.

With municipal, county, and state park budgets already tight, additional private funding is needed for removal of hazardous materials from damaged park structures, archaeological excavation and recovery of artifacts, Native American consultation, establishment of native plant nurseries for forest and rare plant recovery, and installation of perimeter and interior fencing and signage.

Environmental Monitoring

Areas that burned in the wildfires include plant assemblages that support some of the highest numbers of plant and animal species for any county in the United States. The fires will have short- and long-term as well as direct and indirect adverse effects on many of them. Researchers have been studying the biological resources of the County for decades. Documentation of the pre-existing biological condition in the burned areas is already available in recently compiled bird, mammal, and plant atlases, for comparison with post-fire conditions.

Areas impacted by the wildfires were also denuded of critical land cover, making many local watersheds more vulnerable to sedimentation and polluted urban runoff from adjacent burned areas. Tribal reservations may be especially vulnerable to deteriorating water quality after the fires because they rely on local groundwater for their drinking water supplies.

Private funding is needed to identify plants and animals affected by the fires and to monitor their recovery. Funding also should be directed toward monitoring the overall health of our water, air, and land resources.

Community Educational Outreach and Fire Planning

While approximately 15 percent of the county was burned in the recent fires, there are many other portions of the county that continue to pose a high fire risk due to prolonged drought and abundant fuels, such as dead and dying trees and massive undergrowth. A growing body of scientific research also indicates that large wildfires have occurred on a regular basis in Southern California (every 20-30 years) for the last 500 to 1,000 years.

Public outreach and education is needed to provide better information about ways to rebuild and accommodate future urban growth in a manner that minimizes, rather than exacerbates the risk of large-scale fires. Fire authorities, community leaders, scientists, and naturalists all agree on the need for better fire planning in the future to reduce fire risk. These plans would provide better preparation for evacuation and the basis for appropriate fuel management whether through prescribed burns or vegetative clearance.

Role of The Foundation

Debris removal, erosion control, and animal rescue were deemed as immediate environmental priorities for the Disaster Relief Board. Environmental rehabilitation, monitoring, and outreach were identified as key areas for funding over the mid- to long-term. To this end, initial environmental grants from The Foundation went to local nonprofits to initiate debris removal and erosion control, in partnership with public agencies and local communities.

Photo: Michael Campbell

Photo: Matt Hanna

More recently, The Foundation has awarded grants to stimulate rehabilitation efforts of the city, county, and state parks (e.g., Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, Crestridge Ecological Reserve, Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve, and Mission Trails Regional Park) and leverage additional resources for such efforts from local, state, and federal sources. Other funding has been directed to the San Diego River Park Foundation for the San Diego Fire Recovery Network to recruit, train, and coordinate volunteers to assist in fire recovery efforts and educational outreach as well as to the San Diego Natural History Museum to create science-based natural and cultural resource assessment and monitoring programs.

Lessons Learned

Many argue that the region is currently between fires and that we cannot fully prevent the natural phenomena of large wildland fires in this region. Thus, the efforts would be best directed at reducing future fire risk in the urban-wildland interface where fires pose the greatest risk to human health and safety. Leading fire scientists and disaster specialists recommend that future development in the region be guided by the following key principles:

1. Avoid new construction in fire-prone areas, such as those covered by chaparral and on steep slopes subject to Santa Ana winds.

2. Allow for defensible space to buffer structures from fire-prone wildland areas (e.g., residential areas buffered by recreational fields and storm water treatment basins).

3. Employ scientifically proven fuel reduction methods in areas that pose the greatest fire risk to health and human safety.

4. Design and construct new residential and commercial areas that are fire-resistant, particularly in the urban-wildland interface.

5. Let nature takes its own course in post-fire recovery. Seeding of non-natives in fire-denuded areas may exacerbate, rather than ameliorate problems of soil erosion.

Photo above: Joe Sterling

Photo on right: Alpine Fire Department
Courtesy of Bob Clelland

3. The Stricken Communities

Photo: John Rick

The many damaged communities fell naturally into four geographic areas with many common problems but also a number of unique challenges. These communities have made varying levels of progress. All of them face long recovery periods that will require extensive support from community and government.

Lakeside, Alpine, Crest, Harbison Canyon and Barona Reservation

With the exception of the Barona Reservation, the East County communities impacted by the October 2003 fires share some common characteristics. All are unincorporated communities with predominantly white populations earning low to moderate incomes. Population size is nearly 40,000.

Alpine suffered the loss of one life as well as 185 homes and two mobile homes. In Barona, two people died near the reservation and 35 of its 160 homes, its school and Head Start Center were destroyed. (Source: *The San Diego Union-Tribune*). Crest lost 301 of its 964 homes as well as the Crest Community Association building. Much of the Crestridge Ecological Reserve was burned. Harbison Canyon lost more than 300 homes (including mobile homes), the canyon's only church, the volunteer fire station, the community's only restaurant/tavern, the Shallows Resort, and the historic Butterfield stagecoach station. In Lakeside, Wildcat Canyon, the community's link to the Barona Reservation, had the greatest toll in lives. Twelve people are known to have died there. Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, the Audubon Society's wildlife preserve, was burned along with three residences that were homes to resident assistants.

Lakeside, including Wildcat Canyon, Old Barona and Muth Valley lost approximately 296 homes. More than 500 families went through the relief center.

The Community Response

Recovery and rebuilding efforts in the East region initially focused on clearing the land, getting rid of fire-related debris and identifying resources to support the rebuilding of lost structures or providing temporary accommodations. The degree to which each of these communities has progressed with recovery is impacted by many factors including the level of destruction; extent of coordination between and capacity of the local agencies; and access to resources, including support from relief agencies.

Residents received some cash assistance ($1,000 checks) from Sycuan with funds distributed through the local Kiwanis clubs. The National Office for Victims Assistance (NOVA) worked, and will continue to work, in the communities to provide training to volunteers who will offer counseling and support to fire victims.

Crest: Although Crest lost a high percentage of its housing stock as well as the Community Association building, this community appears to be transitioning into the recovery and rebuilding phase fairly well. Shadow Mountain Church played a significant role in the relief efforts and assisted in clearing lots of the elderly, disabled and underinsured. This organization mobilized many resources, including Samaritan's Purse headed by Franklin Graham.

A group of local leaders formed the Crest Community Association with the purpose of coordinating the long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Harbison Canyon: More than three-fourths of the homes in this small rural enclave were destroyed along with the only church, leaving a degree of devastation unparalleled in East County. It is estimated that more than 40 percent of the residents were uninsured.

While a community-led organization, The Harbison Canyon Management Team, has formed, this group has very limited capacity with respect to disaster management. The community was "adopted" by Skyline Wesleyan Church, which provided temporary staffing for

the local relief center. A second church has worked with the local group to assist in clearing debris from the lots. There are close ties between Harbison Canyon and Crest, and many fire victims are being assisted by Shadow Mountain Church.

Alpine: The Local Assistance Center serving the east communities was located in the Alpine shopping mall. The First Baptist Church provided food and clothing to fire victims and served as an informal broker of information on housing needs and resources. According to the local Chamber of Commerce, there has been very little coordinated planning of recovery efforts.

Lakeside: In the absence of a city government (Lakeside is unincorporated), several organizations shared the leadership challenge to set up a relief effort. Immediately after the fire, the East County Fire Relief Center was established at Alpine Rock and Block Company as a collaborative effort between the Lakeside Chamber of Commerce, and the East County Property Owners Association, with support from the Kiwanis, the Salvation Army and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Barona Reservation: Forty homes belonging to tribe members were reported destroyed on the reservation as well as the school and Head Start Center. The Tribal Council is addressing the needs of its members and plans to rebuild lost homes using its own resources with some FEMA support. Neighboring Viejas was minimally impacted by the fire with some land burned and damage to a government building. No homes were lost.

Response, recovery and rebuilding efforts

There currently are many gaps in recovery and rebuilding as all of these communities have shifted their focus from dealing exclusively with the immediate food, clothing and shelter needs to recovery and long-term

Photo: Debbie MacLeod

Photo: Andy Bushnell

rebuilding. All of the communities are engaged in planning the recovery efforts. Some are further along and more coordinated in their approach than others. Some of the gaps identified or observed are:

Housing, both temporary and permanent

There is universal agreement that providing suitable short-term (18 months or more) accommodations and rebuilding replacement homes is the number one priority in all of the impacted communities. Financial support is sought to bridge the gap between what homeowners have (from insurance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and savings) and what they need to rebuild even a basic home.

Environment

The environmental community in this region, represented by Back Country Land Trust and Endangered Habitats League, had conducted an inventory of losses and is mobilizing resources, and developing plans on how to educate community members about issues related to the environment.

Over the coming months, even those communities that are well organized with strong leadership will have a need for access to best practices as well as accurate data on resources. Similarly, there is agreement across the communities that they need and desire to create disaster preparedness plans. All of the communities have a need for assistance with general operating expenses. Some are already running into financial difficulties. The Harbison Canyon team is getting utility bills and using personal funds to pay. In Crest, the volunteers are using their own money to pay to copy materials.

Lakeside and Alpine both have strong, well established civic groups that worked together to aid fire victims.

These communities see a need to establish and maintain a core organization to work with fire victims as well as support a coordination, communication and planning infrastructure. Harbison Canyon is clearly in need of ongoing support in the area of disaster management.

Descanso, Cuyamaca, Julian, Tribal Reservations: Challenging the Independent Spirit

The independent spirit of residents of these communities, many of whom "escaped" from urban environments to live here, was brutally challenged during the October 2003 wildfires. The population of nearly 30,000 primarily middle-income individuals has a high number of residents who commute to urban areas or who live here only part time.

The Cedar Fire hit the Mussey Grade community of Ramona the hardest. At least 120 homes in this close-knit community were destroyed. In San Diego Country Estates 72 homes were destroyed or damaged. The total number of homes lost in the Ramona area was approximately 215 with an additional 15 homes suffering major damage. Those affected by the fire were primarily single family homeowners and their families and residents of trailers or RV's parked on private property, including some renters. Many victims were uninsured.

There were no homes lost in the Santa Ysabel Valley, although 150 acres were burned on the Santa Ysabel Indian Reservation. The Wynola area lost only a few homes. However, artist James Hubbel's compound was also extensively damaged. It was near the Hubbel compound that firefighter Steve Rucker lost his life. The historic town of Julian was saved, but the nearby residential communities suffered extensive damage, especially Harrison Park, Pine Hills, and Kentwood in the Pines. The

Photo: Debbie MacLeod

Cuyamaca community suffered extensive damage, losing 159 homes to the fire out of a total of 250 in the community. In the zip codes encompassing Santa Ysabel, Wynola, Julian and Cuyamaca more than 660 homes were lost and 1,000 households displaced. Nearly 100 percent of the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park was burned. The fire caused severe damage to historic structures.

The Descanso community lost 52 homes to the fire and approximately 37 other structures. Most of the destroyed homes were in the remote Sherilton Valley area north of the town, up Boulder Creek Road, and in the Stallion Oaks area. The Phoenix House, a residential drug treatment facility for teens, was also damaged.

Environment

The total area of the burn (for all three fires) encompassed approximately 390,000 acres (15 percent) of the county. It included a wide array of wildlife as well as coastal sage shrub, chaparral, oak woodland and oak forests, coniferous forest, montane (high mountain) meadows, rare cypress forest, pinon juniper woodlands, riparian woodlands, and vernal pools as well as freshwater marshes. The area encompassing this assessment is 174,378 acres. Of that acreage, 159,152 were burned to some degree.

The Cuyamaca Mountains, including the State Park, are home to many rare and endangered species, many of which are found nowhere else. Their habitats have been severely altered by the Cedar Fire. Wildlife losses were extensive. The Cuyamaca Rancho State Park and the County Parks System were especially affected.

County Parks throughout the burn area of both the Cedar and Paradise Fires suffered extensive damage. The total of county park acres affected by the Cedar Fire was 26,832.

The Community Response

Recovery and rebuilding efforts in these communities initially focused on restoring power and water; clearing and removing burned structures and debris, including partially burned trees; and identifying resources, especially insurance, to support rebuilding.

As elsewhere, erosion control became of greater concern to these residents who feared the impacts of flooding could be more devastating than the fires. Most residents found temporary accommodations which include staying with friends, renting another structure,

Photo: Greg Minter

or moving a trailer onto their home site. Although most people have found housing, much of it is temporary. Fire victims may need to move more than once before they can find a more permanent temporary home.

Ramona: The Ramona Community Center, the Sun Valley Charter School and the Chamber of Commerce have all been important centers of community exchange during the response to the fire, especially during the first response. The Ramona Food and Clothes Closet dispensed clothing to fire victims, and the Charter School served as a location for distribution of tools. A number of churches in Ramona, including the Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, provided assistance, such as food and clothing to fire victims, including undocumented residents.

The Ramona Soroptimists were deeply involved in helping coordinate deliveries of food and donated goods. Many emergency services were consolidated when the County opened a Local Assistance Center in the Old Ramona Post Office at 9th and D. Nearly 40 representatives from emergency service agencies were located here to serve the needs of the displaced. The American Red Cross was also located at the site.

Julian Area (Santa Ysabel/Wynola/Julian/Cuyamaca): The response in Julian began at the evacuation center at the Julian High School then moved to Borrego Springs. The United Methodist Church, St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church, the American Red Cross, the Julian Fire Safe Council, Salvation Army, Safe Harbor, and the Julian Chamber of Commerce all were active in providing information and resources. Julian was also served by Julian Pathways, a health collaborative which includes the schools, and a Local Resource Center set up by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Descanso/Guatay: The County library, Perkins Store and the Descanso Town Hall were the main areas of information exchange during the fire, where flyers were posted and direct assistance provided, first from the evacuation center and later from the town hall. The American Red Cross set up an evacuation center and the Salvation Army collected and distributed food and clothing. The Salvation Army had worked prior to the fire to set up the Fire Safe Council and had begun training volunteers. That training was put to good use during the fire response. Both organizations received high marks from the community.

Valley Center and Tribal Reservations: Rural Destruction

Valley Center is an unincorporated rural community in northern San Diego County with a population of approximately 15,000. The Valley Center region covers approximately 100 square miles. It is an agricultural community which has attracted many Latino immigrant field workers. In addition, there are four Indian reservations in the area: La Jolla, San Pasqual, Rincon, and Pala. The wildfires could be considered the conclusion of a very bad period for the region, which has endured much in the past several years. Its poultry industry was negatively impacted by the Newcastle Disease and later orchard owners' productions were quarantined because of fruit fly infestations.

Photo: Alpine Fire Department

Photo: Friends of Cary Allen

Two lives were lost. A total of 56,700 acres burned and 437 structures (167 residences) were destroyed or damaged in the Paradise Fire. One person was injured. One community leader said, "This fire followed our community's poverty line."

Losses to Natural Resources and Cultural Resources

In Valley Center, the Paradise Fire charred 57,600 acres. Much of this land was open space. The areas affected included 90 percent of San Pasqual Indian Reservation, much of the La Jolla Reservation, and virtually the entire 1,700 acres of the Hellhole Canyon Preserve. Before the fire, Hellhole was a relatively undisturbed canyon with three miles of creek, which provided a critical but threatened habitat and wildlife corridor. Further north, a key source of water for the community, the San Luis Rey River flows through parts of La Jolla Reservation that were burnt.

Community Response

Recovery and rebuilding efforts in Valley Center focused on finding short-term and long-term housing, clearing the land, preventing soil erosion, disposing of fire related debris and identifying resources to support rebuilding of lost structures. Early in the crisis, the American Red Cross was located at the Local Recovery Center and was providing food vouchers and distributing needed items to victims. The Federal Emergency Management Agency reported that most individuals applying for aid received the maximum amount available to them.

Valley Center: Recovery and rebuilding efforts have been taking place in phases that often overlap. These include identifying the victims, collecting resources and information, and serving the needs of the victims.

The Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District played a proactive role in identifying families, especially immigrant families. In addition, the school district, at its monthly learning meetings for the migrant parents explained what services were available and who was eligible. The MAAC Project Headstart worked to identify families whose children were too young for school. Churches and Interfaith Services helped identify individuals with no children, including seniors and young couples.

Collecting Resources

A group of concerned neighbors began the Valley Center Relief Fund, which raised $120,000 and assisted an estimated 40 families. The Fund also coordinated the various efforts which have taken place. The Relief Fund worked closely with the Fallbrook Fire Fund to distribute monies contributed by Supervisor Bill Horn's office and the Taiwan Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. The Valley Center Community Church was responsible for distributing clothing and toiletries, as well as coordinating the location of temporary housing. Saint Stephen's Catholic Church, which manages St. Vincent de Paul's local food pantry, was responsible for distributing food.

In an effort to coordinate the services provided by health and human service agencies, the Paradise Fire Community Collaborative was formed and led by Interfaith Community Services. The first need identified by the community and the collaborative was short-term housing (6 to 18 months). The Collaborative successfully submitted a proposal to The Foundation, which awarded a grant of $200,000 through Interfaith Community Services. As it moves the housing project forward, the Collaborative plans to identify and address other issues including health, financial literacy, and management and counseling.

The Indian Reservations

Each reservation established recovery centers in their tribal halls. During the fires, the members were evacuated to Pechanga. The reservations, All Mission Indian Housing Authority, and Indian Health Council provided short-term basic needs for their tribal members and worked with FEMA, HUD, Indian Bureau Affairs (IBA), Foodlink, and Indian Health Services to fill the long-term needs of the members. In addition, victims from the Rincon Tribe received $6,000 each from the Rincon Tribal Council.

Housing

Since the fire, families and individuals have lived in apartments in Escondido, with families and friends, in tents, and, in some cases, cars or storage units. The Paradise Fire Collaborative worked with the network of civic organizations in Valley Center, moving quickly to identify temporary housing. The Collaborative created a system for work that could be completed in return for a share in ownership of the trailers provided to families. Families will own their trailers after they have completed a financial literacy program and pay for the rental space for nine months. The Collaborative's highest priority was to provide immediate housing for families who are not able to obtain federal assistance

There is continual need to support the fire victims. The local network of nonprofits and civic organizations are willing to continue to play this role. Case management and ongoing advocacy for families and individuals is a need during this rebuilding phase. To date, the immediate health and basic needs of tribal members and their families have been met by the local Tribal Councils and the Indian Health Council. The most pressing needs include short-term housing, identifying new trailers or rebuilding homes, debris removal, and erosion control.

Environment

According to the Friends of Hellhole Canyon, all 1,700 acres of the preserve burned except for some riparian patches of thick trees. Their first concern is to protect the land from further harm and to clear the debris.

Scripps Ranch, Poway and Tierrasanta: Organized Networks Assist Recovery

The fire storm of October 2003 brought tremendous challenges to the Scripps Ranch, Poway and Tierrasanta

Photo: Friends of Cary Allen

Photo: Yashwin Chauhan

communities, as with other neighborhoods that were decimated.

These are suburban communities located north of Highway 52 and east of Interstate 15. They have a combined population of more than 106,000 individuals. The people affected by the fires in this region were predominately middle to high income families with some renters and retired couples. In most cases, these individuals were insured. The most vulnerable within these communities were military families and renters, many of whom are uninsured.

The area lost 330 homes, 85 percent of which were in Scripps Ranch. The Scripps Ranch Civic Association documented 342 homes destroyed – or damaged – in its neighborhood. In Poway, 54 structures were lost, affecting 65 families. The local Rotary was able to assist 60 of the 65 families. Thirty of these families had no insurance; 26 were renters. In Tierrasanta, 12 homes were destroyed and 33 damaged. Most of the families affected were homeowners. All but four belonged to homeowner associations, which are coordinating the rebuilding efforts.

Losses to Natural and Cultural Resources

Mission Trails Regional Park encompasses nearly 5,800 acres of both natural and developed recreational acres. Established in 1974, Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the largest urban parks in the US. Nearly 900 acres of the West Fortuna and parts of the East Fortuna sections of Mission Trails Park were burned. Many of the private canyons in Tierrasanta were charred by the fires.

According to the Burned Area Emergency Response Program (BAER) report, 2,135 acres were burned in the Sycamore Canyon /Goodan Ranch Open Space Preserves.

The Community Response

Prior to the fire, all three neighborhoods had strong, organized networks of local civic organizations and churches that quickly assumed a leadership role in responding to the fires. These networks galvanized the affected neighborhoods, city officials, and the local business community to serve the immediate needs of their neighbors. In Scripps Ranch, a Local Assistance Center was established to serve these three communities by the second day of the fires. More than 40 representatives from local, state, and federal agencies as well as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army were available to assist victims.

As they rebuild, these communities initially focused on finding temporary housing in a market with limited vacancies; removing the debris; identifying crisis counseling needs, particularly for seniors, renters lacking insurance, and underinsured homeowners; and supporting rebuilding efforts. The progress Poway, Scripps Ranch, and Tierrasanta have made towards recovery in such a short period of time is impressive.

Poway: The Poway Rotary and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are playing a critical role in the recovery efforts. The Church had recently received disaster training and had a plan in place. The Rotary became the clearinghouse for information, relief efforts, and collecting donations for the community. Its services were provided in addition to those that were already in existence. By two months after the fire, the Rotary had raised and distributed nearly $90,000, including $10,000 from GEICO Insurance Company.

Scripps Ranch: The Scripps Ranch community bonded together rapidly to deal with the devastation under the leadership of the Scripps Ranch Civic Association. The Association worked closely with public officials to have one of the Local Assistance Centers established in the City of San Diego Recreation Center gymnasium located in Scripps Ranch. This site was directly across the street from Saint Gregory's Catholic Church, which collected a substantial amount of used furniture, clothing, books, toys, and games from local residents. The volume of donations received by all three neighborhoods was ample enough to allow them to assist the other San Diego County Local Assistance Centers.

Tierrasanta: The Tierrasanta Planning Group serves the dual role of both a planning committee and civic association. It accepted the responsibility of identifying the families affected by the fire and ensuring their needs were met. In addition, the Kiwanis Club created a local fund to support the victims.

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar: The Marine Corps Air Station in Miramar encompasses 23,000 acres, of which 19,000 were burned. Though no structures were lost, some military families living off the base lost their homes. After containing this fire, emergency personnel assisted nearby communities with their fire containment efforts. During the fires, military families who were evacuated from their homes were invited to stay at the Air Station.

Response, Recovery and Rebuilding Efforts

The strong social capital that existed prior to the fires played a significant role in how the community responded to and is recovering from the fires. All three communities were able to serve quickly the needs of their neighbors because they were able to identify the affected families and individuals, contact them, and then connect them to the needed resources. These communities have all demonstrated a strong desire to help the other communities affected by the fires.

At Mission Trails Regional Park and the Sycamore Canyon Open Space Preserve and Goodan Ranch, the priorities are to secure the land from additional harm, such as recreational enthusiasts who ignore posted signs; erosion control work; removal of safety hazards; and habitat protection. During the months following the fire, staff and volunteers worked long hours to clear the park of dead animals and hazardous debris. In addition, work to install erosion control is also in progress. The good news is that, due to gentle rains, numerous plant species have already begun to regenerate. This growth will help with erosion control and become food for struggling wildlife. Each area has its own Friends group or Ranger that have been coordinating the efforts.

Rebuilding Community and Renewing the Spirit

The communities are to be applauded for being able to garner financial support for their neighbors in need. Yet, there are challenges associated with raising funds and distributing them to individuals.

The Scripps Ranch Civic Association sought The Foundation's guidance with distributing the $50,000 it has raised. The Poway Rotary and the Valley Center Relief Fund have set criteria and a process which worked

well for them and can benefit from similar assistance. As the rebuilding efforts progress, volunteers who played a critical role may need additional support as they turn their attention to their priorities before the fires.

Scripps Ranch Civic Association was the recipient of a $50,000 grant to establish an initial brush management clean-up, thereby returning the community to a fire-defensible position in collaboration with the City of San Diego Fire Department and nonprofit partners including Alpha Project and Second Chance/STRIVE.

Restoring the Land

At Mission Trails Regional Park and the Sycamore Canyon Open Space Preserve and Goodan Ranch, efforts to restore the land are underway but are under-funded.

What Happens Next...

It is clear that rebuilding in the fire-devastated communities will require years of sustained effort and vast resources. In addition to the need to help families suffering from the tragic loss of lives, homes and livelihoods, innumerable plants, animals and habitats were destroyed. Although recovery efforts are well underway in the county, there are a number of critical concerns that have not yet been adequately addressed.

Given the scale and complexity of human and environmental challenges, much of the cost will have to be absorbed through public funding from state and federal disaster monies. Private donations are best directed to support the work of volunteers as well as organizations such as the Urban Corps and California Conservation Corps.

Housing reconstruction will continue for the next three to five years and is particularly challenging for the large number of uninsured and under-insured individuals. Environmental activities will focus on rehabilitation and management of parks and other open space preserves, environmental monitoring, community education and fire planning.

The San Diego Foundation established the San Diego Regional Disaster Fund with the purpose of preparing for regional crises. The Disaster Fund board has worked exclusively on wildfire relief since October 26, 2003, but is now returning to its core mission of preparing for future disasters. It will have expended the remainder of After-the-Fire funds by the end of 2004.

Priority will be given to enhancing the capacity of the San Diego Firestorm Community Recovery Team (San DIego CRT), which is the only agency with the potential to effect comprehensive, long-term rebuilding. Any new After-the-Fire contributions will be directed to The San Diego Foundation working groups – Health and Human Services, Environment, Civil Society and Organizational Success.

The Foundation's Board of Governors has directed all working groups at The San Diego Foundation to give priority to fire-related grants over the next two years. The Foundation considers the welfare of the fire survivors to be an integral part of its mission to improve the quality of life within all of our communities.

Updates on the progress of Foundation After-the-Fire activities will be posted periodically at www.sdfoundation.org. Those community members interested in finding out how they can help with the recovery can call The San Diego Foundation at 619/235-2300.

The Community of Donors

A community of caring individuals, businesses and organizations responded to San Diego's fire crisis with generous donations to The San Diego Foundation After-the-Fire Fund and to the San Diego Fire Relief Fund. They are listed here.*

$1,000,000 and Over

The Alex Spanos Family and the San Diego Chargers

$250,000 - $$999,999

Accredited Home Lenders

$100,000 - $249,999

Arizona Cardinals
Citigroup Business Services
H. G. Fenton Company Fund
of The San Diego Foundation
Intel Foundation
Legler Benbough Foundation
NFL Charities
NOKIA, Inc.

$25,000 - $99,999

Anheuser-Busch Sales of San Diego
Anonymous Fund *of The San Diego Foundation* (1)
Comerica Charitable Foundation
Hitachi Home Electronics (America), Inc.
Marin Community Foundation
Mission Federal Credit Union
R. Stanton Avery Foundation
Sahm Family Foundation

$10,000 - $24,999

Anonymous
Anonymous Funds *of The San Diego Foundation* (2)
Disney Worldwide Services, Inc.
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J. W. Sefton Foundation
Kilroy Realty Corporation
Luce, Forward, Hamilton & Scripps
Reuben H. Fleet Foundation Fund
of The San Diego Foundation
Ruth Lane Charitable Foundation
San Diego Telecom Council
Stanley Steemer Carpet Cleaner

$5,000 - $9,999

Anonymous
Anonymous Fund *of The San Diego Foundation* (1)
Donald and Norma Smith
Farrell Family Foundation
House of Blues Concerts, Inc.
Harold A. and Madeline R. Jacobs Fund
of The San Diego Foundation
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Kassel Family Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
Larson Family Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
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Nicholas Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
Nicholas-Applegate Capital Management Fund
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Steven and Celeste Cowell
The Oaklawn Foundation
Trepte Industrial Park, Ltd.
Yakatan Family Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*

$1,000 - $4,999

Adonai Foundation Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
Albert and Sandra Bertha
Align Technology, Inc.
Allen and Pat Weckerly
American Association of Blood Banks
Anonymous Funds *of The San Diego Foundation* (6)
Arrow Financial Services, LLC
Barry Axelrod
Bert Edelstein
Biggs Harley-Davidson
Bobby and Becky Horowitz

Photo: Joe Sterling

* As of June 30, 2004.

Britta Noack
Carisa Wisniewski
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Chicago Bears Football Club, Inc.
Christa McReynolds Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
Codling Family Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
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Dolores G. James
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Engel Fund *of The San Diego Foundation*
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Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund
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The San Diego Foundation is also grateful for the many generous community members who donated between $1 and $499.

Photo: Dennis and Helen Brewster

Leadership Moving Forward

Photo: Brian Hom

The San Diego Firestorm Community Recovery Team (San Diego CRT)

The San Diego Foundation offers strong support to the San Diego Firestorm Community Recovery Team (San Diego CRT), seen as being the most viable structure to help communities recover.

The San Diego CRT Mission Statement:
The San Diego Firestorm Community Recovery Team will provide and coordinate emotional, physical, financial and spiritual resources to help rebuild the homes and the lives of families without insurance and resources affected by the San Diego Wildfires of October 2003; regardless of race, religion, ethnic origin, age, marital status, disability or gender.

Team members of this new coalition include representatives from the local community groups along with more than 50 partner agencies. The San Diego CRT represents a countywide, multi-disciplined, comprehensive approach to long-term rebuilding and recovery.

The San Diego CRT supports all fire survivors and all communities devastated by the Paradise and Cedar Fires. Much of the work of the San Diego CRT will focus on the more vulnerable populations and lower income communities, mostly found in unincorporated regions.

Each of the fire-impacted communities has established a local recovery group that has taken on the challenge of helping its community recover and rebuild. Each of the local recovery groups is represented within the San Diego CRT.

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Understanding San Diego
Community Impact

This publication is the result of UNDERSTANDING SAN DIEGO, a continuing initiative of The San Diego Foundation based on a simple premise: *We must understand. Then we can act.* The Foundation strives to acquire and then share deep and clear understanding of the region's largest issues, then engage the community in collaborative planning and execution that produce solutions.

THE SAN DIEGO FOUNDATION
THE CENTER FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

Downtown
1420 Kettner Boulevard, Ste. 500, San Diego, CA 92101
Tel (619) 235-2300, Fax (619) 239-1710

North County
Rancho Bernardo
Tel (858) 385-1595, Fax (858) 385-1578

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