Salmon River Fire Safe Council Community Liaison Program
Trial By Fire

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“They listened and did what they said they would do,” a formula for success in any relationship; building trust with communication and follow-up action.
--- Cohesive Strategy Success Story on the SR FSC CLP
Community Liaison Program (CLP)

History and Inception

• Salmon River Fire History – very active

• SR is one of the highest risk fire areas in the Klamath and has the greatest concentration of fires in Siskiyou County

• Community familiar and knowledgeable with fire and terrain - often more so than fire teams from different regions

• Not always a good working relationship between USFS, Incident Command Teams, and community

• SR Fire Safe Council - extensive community planning and fuels reduction – CWPP

• 2008 fire season debacle – poor communications

• After Action Review

• CLP Initiated in 2009 after the hectic fire season of 2008
Purpose and Need

“The purpose of the Community Liaison Program is to facilitate communication between United States Forest Service Fire Suppression Incident Management Teams, local Forest Service (Districts and Forests), the Salmon River Fire Safe Council (FSC), and local community members during a large wildfire event.”

• Establish modes of communication between the USFS, Incident Management Team (IMT), Fire Safe Council, and the Community

• Platform for sharing of local knowledge and information

• Re-establish trust and mutual respect

• Keep community up to date with reliable, current information

• Reduce the number of people interacting with IMT

• Increase local qualifications
CLP – Nuts and Bolts

CLP Binder Contents

• Clear Program Description
• Coordination Flow Chart and Chain of Command
• Liaison Contact Information
• Liaison Duties and Responsibilities

Photo: Will Harling
Salmon River Community Liaison Team - Coordination Flow Chart

Incident Management Team
Local US Forest Service

Tier I Community Liaison
Primary Contact *
Secondary Contacts *
Alternates *

Tier II Liaison
Somes Bar
Primary *
Secondary

Tier II Liaison
Forks of Salmon
Primary *
Secondary

Tier II Liaison
Cecilville
Primary *
Secondary

Tier II Liaison
Sawyers Bar
Primary *
Secondary

Tier II Liaison
Bear Country
Primary *
Alternates

Tier III
Somes Bar
Neighborhoods

Tier III
Forks
Neighborhoods

Tier III
Cecilville
Neighborhoods

Tier III
Sawyers
Neighborhoods

Tier III
Bear Country
Neighborhoods

* Denotes Liaisons Basic 32 and Fire Refresher
CLP – Nuts and Bolts

CLP Binder Contents

• Clear Program Description
• Coordination Flow Chart and Chain of Command
• Liaison Duties and Responsibilities
• Liaison Contact Information
• Local GIS Data Layers
  • Private Land and Structures
  • Emergency Ingress Egress Routes
• Recent Fuels Reduction Treatment Areas
• WUI Areas
• Tanker Fill Sites & Hydrants – site conditions & needs
• Helispots & Coordinates – plus site conditions
• Existing/Historic Firelines & Fuelbreaks
• Fire History
• Trails & Trailheads
• Fire Camps, Staging Areas
• Local Infrastructure
• Managed Stands Layers
• Invasive Species
CLP – Nuts and Bolts

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Photo: Scott Harding

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Other Important Elements
- Program ownership & Autonomy – Community Control
- Privacy & Sensitive Information
  - Sensitive information not shared in the general Binder, but supplied as necessary throughout the fire
- Pre-Incident Coordination with USFS & Community
  - General Information passed on to incoming IMT and included in initial briefings, letters,

Photo: Will Harling
CLP – Trial By Fire – Success

• Communication Greatly Improved
  • Open honest communication throughout

• Excellent USFS KNF Leadership
  • Patty Grantham’s daily letters were Frank & Informative
  • Introduced CLP to new teams
  • Managers learned from 2008 – improved strategies

• CLP involved in Incident from the beginning
  • Immediate call from District Ranger
  • Liaisons involved in planning – local knowledge

• Frequent Community Meetings – CLP does not replace public meetings but assists in facilitating them

• Structure Protection & Infrastructure

• Evacuation Plan Example – Salmon vs. Butler complex

• Restraint in fire fighting techniques for the most part
  • Much fewer backburns & burnouts

• First FaceBook Fire – immediate information dissemination

• Prior Investments Paid Off! – existing CLP
  • Community Awareness & Fuels Reduction
Community Liaison Program Successes
Community Liaison Program Successes
CLP – Improvement Needed

• Single Point of Contact – doesn’t really work
  • Liaison TEAM needed
  • Diverse skills required
  • Too much for any one person
  • One person cannot do everything and be everywhere

• Burnout!
  • Liaisons need R&R as well
  • Improve internal check-ins to assess Liaison needs
  • Our communities = more emotion

• Too little communication between Liaison Team members
  • Need to describe inter-communication procedures

• Compensation
  • A lot to ask of volunteers
  • Need to find way to compensate Liaisons without jeopardizing autonomy/authority

• Lack of Official Identity - ID placards?

• Need Designated Communications Liaison as part of Team

• Too Many Data Sources
  • Combine Structure Assessment Data
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“Communication used to be adversarial, but has improved much in last 10 years (i.e. the last couple fires). This fire was night and day compared to 2008, we did not feel talked down to, and felt informed... Patty’s humanness of being able to communicate with the community was astounding and appreciated.” Creek Hanauer

“Folks living in the Salmon River have seen as much firefighting in their lives as seasonal Incident Commanders. Residents know the winds and microclimates, and have done a lot to fire safe their homes and property. They are true partners when it comes to community protection from fire.” KNF Supervisor, Patty Grantham

“There was a feeling of true mutual respect. We felt informed and listened to!... Division supervisors assigned near our property on the Butler Fire would meet with homeowners informally every night, which was much appreciated.” Sue Terence

“They listened and did what they said they would do.” Duffy

“This was the best communication during fire ever, from public meetings to Barry Snyder at the lookout, Patty’s emails, liaisons and public information officers out and about...” Lori Connelly  Photo: Scott Harding