

BORDER AGENCY FIRE COUNCIL BAFC



“CEDAR FIRE” 10-25-03 – 12-05-03

Year End Report 2003

What is BAFC? – The concerned citizens of the United States and Mexico formed the Border Agency Fire Council. It is a consortium of government and private entities, emergency responders, environmental specialists, law enforcement, fire protection, and elected officials. It began under emergency conditions and has proven to be an extremely successful collaboration. People are alive today because of BAFC. Threatened habitat is protected and even improved because of this program. An unprecedented bi-national mutual assistance agreement is in place and working because of this program. The members of BAFC have worked without judgment or malice toward their fellow human being. From the beginning, their motivation has been primarily to save lives, but also to protect the sensitive habitat of the border area.

Thirty-two organizations make up BAFC; a list of members is at the end of this report. The members meet quarterly during the winter and every six to eight weeks during fire season. They meet at the San Diego headquarters of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) in El Cajon, California. Through collaborative effort, they have altered the environment to allow better access into the wildland for emergency responders while respecting the natural values of the area. They have enhanced communication among emergency responders on both sides of the U.S. - Mexico border. And they have reached out to people in both countries with safety messages in Spanish and English. This report provides a brief description of the many projects the Council and agencies have accomplished this year.

History - For decades, people have entered the United States illegally by crossing from Mexico into San Diego County. They often entered on foot from the Tijuana area. In 1995, "Operation Gatekeeper" tightened security near Tijuana and the immigration pattern shifted to the east. A trip that formerly took a few hours turned into several days and involved a strenuous hike through rugged wilderness. In summer, the heat is sweltering; in winter, the temperature drops below freezing at the higher elevations. Many of these people simply didn't understand the difficult conditions they would face. That lack of knowledge proved to be life threatening.

The Border Agency Fire Council was formed during the 1996 fire season due to a dramatic increase in wildfire activity in southern San Diego County. Investigators determined that improperly extinguished campfires left by undocumented immigrants were causing these fires as they traveled into the United States through the San Ysidro Mountains. They also carried torches to guide their way at night. These two activities were responsible for a huge increase in the number of wildfires. This meant hundreds of people were on foot every day in steep, rugged terrain with wildfires around them.

Fire officials believed the threat to human safety was of crisis proportion. Emergency response vehicles could not travel safely on the narrow dirt paths. There were no safe places for a rescue helicopter to land. People continued to accidentally set fires, apparently not understanding that they were endangering their own lives. Consequently, the Border Agency Fire Council was formed with the goal of saving lives and property.

Much of the land in the border area of San Diego County is protected wilderness area. Special permission had to be obtained from the Secretary of Interior to make any changes in the landscape. Roads were widened and helipads were installed. Additionally, an organized warning/information system was put into place. Today the number of wildfires is down significantly. Lives and property have been saved through the communication and response efforts of this council.

Highlights and Issues of 2003

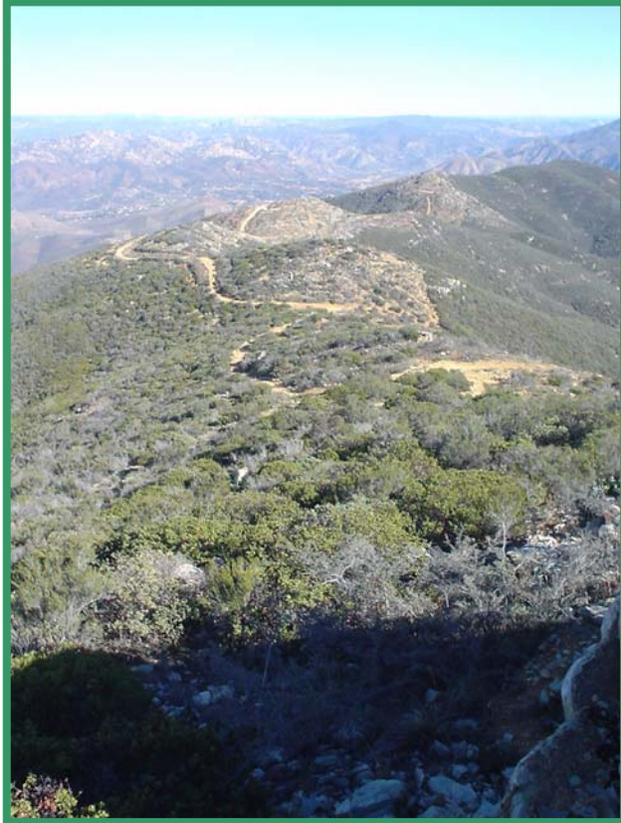
Fire Season 2003 – Fire season in May this year in San Diego County due to drought conditions. Many fire agencies, including CDF, hired extra personnel and added equipment to meet anticipated staffing needs for a potentially very busy fire season in Southern California. The largest fire that occurred in San Diego County and within the BAFC boundaries was the Cedar Fire that began on October 26, 2003 under Santa Ana wind conditions. The fire began in a remote area west of Pine Hills road near Julian and burned to Miramar Marine Corps Station. This fire was the largest fire to have ever occurred in the State of California and San Diego County. The fire consumed 280,278 acres of vegetation. A total of 2,382 dwelling units were destroyed along with 2,777 accessory buildings. A total of 188 dwelling units were damaged countywide. The preliminary estimated property damage was \$553,834,970. An estimated 34,970 dwelling units were saved for an estimated replacement value of \$13,113,750,000. An Incident Command Team was assigned to manage the fire and augment the local resources. The drought affected pine trees infested with bark beetles and dead brush created increased fuel loading for the fire and made control difficult after the winds subsided. It was estimated that 35% to 40% of the wildland fuel (trees and brush) were dead prior to the fires occurrence. This fire was not a border named fire, as it was not related to persons crossing the border.

Border Fire #12 (Incident #MVU8151) known as the Otay Fire occurred on October 26th and burned 45,971 acres. This fire only damaged one camper shell, as this fire destroyed no residential dwellings. This fire like the other Border Fires was caused by campfires. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) reported a total of 16 “border related” wildfires in 2003 for a total of 46,138 acres burned within the BAFC boundaries and CDF State Responsibility Areas (SRA). The cost to suppress those fires was not estimated or available at the time of printing to be \$516,880 The number of wildfires in the border area remains much less than before BAFC was founded in 1996. However, fire statistics regarding the acreage burned is not within reasonable expectations for a typical fire season in San Diego’s border area. The Otay Fire has altered the statistics from a declining mode to an increasing mode of fire activity, specifically acres burned. Absent the Otay Fire, as in previous years, many believe the number of fires has decreased because of an aggressive outreach effort on the part of the Council.

Visits - The BAFC had many invited visitors to meetings during 2003. Senatorial staff members for Senators Morrow, Hollingsworth and Moreno-Ducheny, the Campo Band of Mission Indians, representatives from CONAFOR (SEMARNAT or State Forestry) in Baja, California, Comician Nasional Forestal, B.C., Mexico, Tecate Fire (Bomberos), in Mexico, Director De Proteccion Civil Del Estado, B.C., Mexico, Estatal de Forestal y Fauna Ensenada (SEFOA-Ensenada, B.C., Mexico, the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego and the Firesafe Council San Diego all attended meetings. Many of these guests became members of the BAFC.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – The council concluded a review of the original goals and objectives of the organization. Three new main goals were identified and retained as follows: Establish and maintain relationships with Mexican government agencies, strengthen awareness and cooperation on biodiversity, and continue effective fire prevention, emergency response and suppression efforts. These will be blended into the existing approved charter for BAFC. It was also identified that the BAFC will continue to support Firesafe Councils and Homeland Security issues.

International Fuel Break - Otay Mountain, a section of an international fuel break located at the border between the United States and Mexico in San Diego County California, was completed last year. The BLM Palm Springs fuels crew and crews contracted from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protections' Mc Cain Valley Camp restored the Otay Mountain section of the international fuel break after years of little or no maintenance. This on-going project has several goals that include protection of life and property in adjacent communities, improved endangered species habitat, reducing the risk of large scale fire in the protected Tecate Cypress groves on Otay Mountain, and enhanced national security due to open areas that deter illegal immigration across the border.



This section of the fuel break contained some of the most rugged terrain found anywhere along the 30 mile project. As a result, the width of the fuel break was widened to almost 600 feet in spots in order to remain effective, if fire approaches from the steep slopes of the area. In addition, special considerations were required due to the rare and endangered species found in the area, including the critical habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly and the protected Tecate Cypress stands.

Recent fire activity, as described by fire personnel, indicated that the International Fuel Break was useful in controlling several "Border Related" fires to some degree as planned, including the large Otay Fire of October 2003. The on-going work on the International Fuel Break is an excellent example of fire mitigation on an interagency basis that provides multiple benefits to the local communities in both the United States and Mexico.

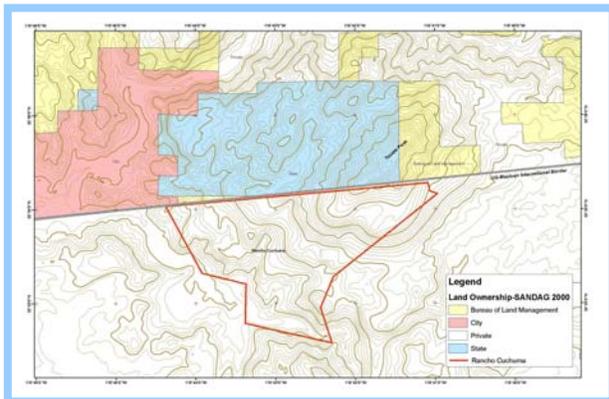
Rescues – The Border Patrol continued to provide rescue service to undocumented immigrants. They conducted 141 total rescues to victims of all types, undocumented immigrants and agents included. This was a decrease of 24% when compared to the 188 rescues performed in the prior federal fiscal year.

Cold and Warm Weather Rescue Kits - Fire is not the only threat to human life in this area. Extreme temperatures in summer and winter have taken lives since the migration pattern has shifted through the rugged mountainous area of San Diego County. During the winter, temperatures drop to well below freezing in the higher elevations. During the summer, temperatures rise to around 100 degrees with no water to be found. Smugglers lead unprepared people into this area and when they fall behind, the smugglers leave them to die. In 2001, the Border Patrol placed emergency rescue kits in specially marked underground sites within the area. Responders can now use a special tracking device to locate the kits and assist stranded or injured people. The kits contain blankets, basic medical supplies, food and water. (See Agency Reports – Border Patrol section for photographs and further details on these kits.)

Fatalities – The US Border Patrol reported that unfortunately there were nine (9) migrant deaths within the San Diego Sector, for 2003. The rugged terrain and variable harsh weather are contributing factors to these sad losses.

Partnership with Mexico – Mexico continues to be a valued partner in the work of the Border Agency Fire Council. In keeping with the Mutual Assistance Agreement, U.S. and Mexican firefighters remain available to assist each other automatically for wildland emergencies. Radio and television continue to run public service announcements regarding the dangers faced by those who attempt to enter the U.S. through the remote and rugged terrain of San Diego County. The U.S. and Mexican consulates play key roles in the education information process. In addition, Mexican firefighters continue to receive wildland fire training from CDF and the US Forest Service. Mexico has been a valued cooperater from the beginning of BAFC.

Mutual Assistance Agreement with Mexico and the U.S. – This unprecedented mutual assistance agreement has continued since 1998. The agreement between Mexico and the U.S. allows emergency responders to cross the border to protect lives and property. Mexican Consulate, Mexican officials and the U.S. fire officials review the document annually. This agreement continues to save valuable time in crossing boundary lines without delays and red tape. Emergency responders call immediately to the U.S. and Mexican authorities through their communications network. The response personnel may proceed directly to the scene for any necessary action without waiting for any approval process. At the time of printing this report, the annual review was in process with the fire agencies in Mexico, CDF fire officials and the US and Mexican Consulates. This agreement allowed CDF resources to cross the border near the Tecate Port-of-Entry in 2003 to suppress a fire on the Mexican portion of the border. International fire agencies extinguished the fire prior to its entering the United States.



Binational Prescribed (Controlled) Burn With Mexico – A planned prescribed burn was conducted by fire agencies on both sides of the border in the vicinity of Tecate Peak known as the Coochama State Forest. The project burned 135 total acres with 65 acres in the US and 75 acres within Mexico. This was the first partnership of this type to enhance the habitat and to protect citizens of both countries.

CDF Training With Tecate Firefighters (Bomberos) - CDF once again crossed the border to participate in joint training with the firefighters in Tecate, Mexico. The Incident Command (ICS) System class known as ICS 200 or introduction to ICS, was translated into Spanish and presented to Mexican fire personnel. Personnel from CDF that spoke Spanish provided this training, along with other basic wildland fire training. This annual training opportunity is allowed through the Mutual Assistance Agreement between the US and Mexico.

Sister Forest Agreement - Cooperative Training with Mexico - The Cleveland National Forest continues to meet with partners in Mexico to increase cooperation between the two countries wherever possible. An example of the training available is a 32-hour Basic Fire Fighter train-the-trainer module. This class was offered last year in El Hango, Mexico. Training materials in Spanish are given to participants for them to conduct the Basic Firefighter training at their home units. This type of training is conducted under the Sister Forest Agreement that the Cleveland signed with Mexico in 2001.



Bug Kill, Drought And The Forest Area Safety Task Force

– The council was aware of the drought conditions for the last four years that has led up to the Bug Kill problem in many areas of San Diego County. BAFC supported the pursuit of grants to address the problem. Governor Davis issued a Proclamation in the early spring of 2003 to advise the public of the drought and associated Bug Kill problem in three Southern California counties and to muster resources where possible to coordinate an appropriate response. BAFC remains supportive of any

efforts to address this issue. Logging is in progress in the Vulcan range near Julian.

Coordinating with Other Emergency Groups – Members of BAFC are encouraged to speak out on issues pertaining to the work of the council whenever the opportunity presents itself. BAFC representatives serve on boards and commissions and attend meetings of other organizations, which have similar public safety and environmental missions.

Media Coverage - U.S. and Mexican media have been very helpful in distributing our message on both sides of the border. Media outlets accepted and broadcast public service announcements with safety messages in Spanish and English. The consulates of both countries and members of the Public Outreach Committee coordinate this distribution of messages.

Environmental Cleanup - Again this year the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management employed crews to pick up garbage left behind by undocumented immigrants. More than 3,000 pounds of trash and food was removed from Wilderness Areas.

Operations Plan for 2003 – The Operations Plan was reviewed again this year and an errata sheet was to be issued to all members. The plan is reviewed on an annual basis. Personnel from both sides of the border met several times to complete this process. A test of the Operations Plan has been proposed for 2004.

Roads Continue to Serve - The Border Patrol continues to have the responsibility to maintain the Otay Truck Trail and associated smaller roads improved through the efforts of the BAFC and all members. These roads have made a huge difference in getting fire engines and other emergency response vehicles into this remote area. The Border Patrol will be improving the roads in 2004 back to the condition they were in, when the BAFC first coordinated the road improvements for all agency use in a safe manner.

Guidebook - The Resource Protection Committee (a sub-committee of BAFC) met several times during 2003 to update the Natural Resources Guidebook. The new guidebook will not be available for distribution until 2004/2005. Six new areas are being added to the BAFC document. The Guidebook will be a three-ring binder with 500 copies being printed at a cost of \$14,000. Grants were pursued to assist in cost reduction, but none were available for the project. Funding of the printing remains a stumbling block for the completion of the Guidebook. CD's of the Guidebook will also be available to member agencies. The guidebook is a valuable tool to response agencies that work in sensitive habitat within the BAFC boundaries. The goal of the Guidebook is to empower responders to perform their duties and protect the environment at the same time.

Safety Messages - From the beginning, BAFC recognized the importance of telling people how dangerous it is to travel on foot through this border area. Again this year, staff from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Border Patrol and the Bomberos (Mexican firefighters) distributed flyers on both sides of the border with the BAFC safety message.

Detention Centers – After they are picked-up by Border Patrol, undocumented immigrants are held in detention centers before being returned to Mexico. While in custody, they watch a Spanish language video produced by BAFC and the Border Patrol, which clearly explains the dangers of being on foot in this rugged terrain. The viewers are warned of extremes in temperature during summer and winter periods, dangerous trails with steep slopes, poisonous snakes, lack of drinking water, and the threat of wildfire. Featured in the video are the loved ones of those who have died while traveling in this wilderness.

Border Patrol Safety Training - The Border Patrol continues to train officers on fire safety and travel conditions in the border area. Officers carry fire shelters, for emergency use only, during the fire season. Similarly, agents receive cold weather training and emergency response training for agents and others they may need to assist.

Safety Video for Law Enforcement Officers - Safety videos were once again distributed to the California Highway Patrol and the San Diego County Sheriff's Office for officer training and awareness of the dangers of wildfire and their required public safety duties. The BAFC members prepared the videos through the Border Patrol with an emphasis on personal safety in a fire situation, including the use of emergency fire shelters. . The videos were distributed in 2002 for use in 2003 and beyond. Law Enforcement personnel have recognized the need for basic fire safety clothing and personnel protection and continue to work with the various fire agencies.

Archaeological Training Relative To Fire Suppression Activities – CDF initiated an aggressive Archaeological Training Program for planning and response to emergencies. CDF San Diego conducted six (6) Archaeological classes in 2003 to train all company officers on potential impacts. A total of eighteen (18) CDF personnel attended an additional special field level training course and are now listed as certified surveyors (for archaeological concerns). This partnership also included providing training to six (6) Native Americans to assist with this endeavor through a certified curriculum.

New Members of BAFC - In 2003, the council had the pleasure to welcome nine (9) new members as organizations or individuals to the organizational structure. Senators Bill Morrow, Dennis Hollingsworth and Denise Moreno Ducheny were welcomed as members and participants to the BAFC. Additionally, fire agencies in Mexico became active members of the BAFC for the first time. They are listed as follows: Comician Nasional Forestal, B.C. Mexico (National Forestry), CONAFOR (SEMARNAT – State Forestry Mexico), Director De Proteccion Civil Del Estado B.C., Mexico (OES Mexico), Estatal de Forestal y Fauna Ensenada, and the Tecate Fire and Public Safety Department (Tecate Bomberos). It is also a pleasure to announce that the Firesafe Council San Diego became a member of the BAFC. It is anticipated that additional elected officials will be invited to attend and become members of this important organization.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT – BAFC continues to explore development of a website to share information about the BAFC and fire activity. The cost of developing and maintaining a website is still keeping the council from achieving its goal. The USFS has taken the lead on this activity.

ANNUAL REPORT 2002 – The Annual Report for 2002 was completed and distributed at a regular meeting of the BAFC in June 2002.



“BORDER #12” 10-26-03 – 10-31-03

BAFC Participant Reports



USDA Forest Service Cleveland National Forest

The Cleveland National Forest is the southernmost of the national forests in California and is located approximately five miles north of the Mexican border. Its 460,000 acres are located in Orange, Riverside and San Diego Counties at elevations ranging from 460 to 6,271 feet. The forest has unique and irreplaceable habitats, provides recreation opportunities, and watershed protection to adjacent communities. There are 22 threatened and endangered plants and animal species within the forest.

Clean-Up Crews - Unauthorized travel and camping in the forest have taken their toll on this protected area. Forest officials report that undocumented immigrants continue to trample sensitive plants, abandon campfires and leave trash in the forest as they travel through the area. During 2003, crews removed more than 2,122 pounds of food and drink containers, and other refuse. Since trash pick up started in 1997, more than 102,000 pounds of garbage has been removed. Forest Service crews also removed trash from Bureau of Land Management areas of Otay Mountain.

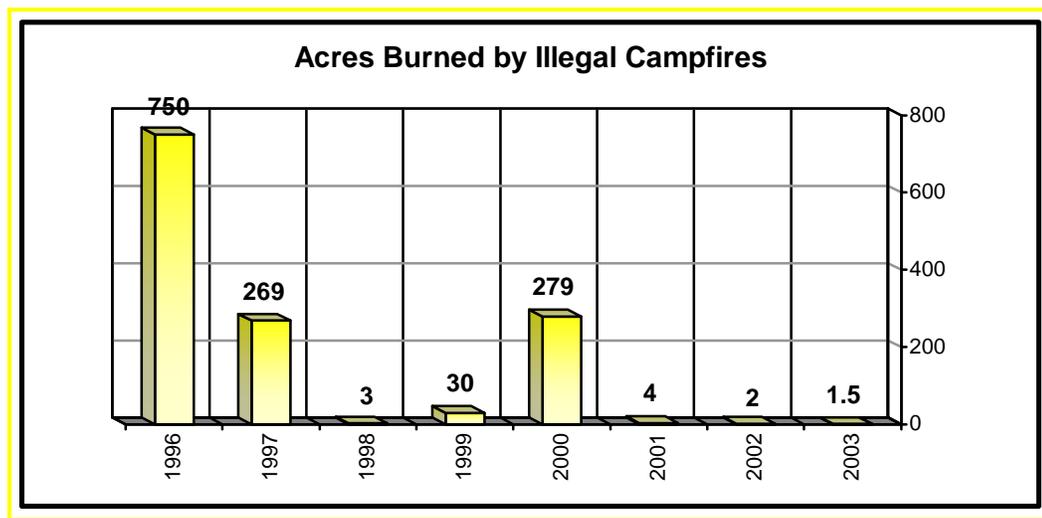
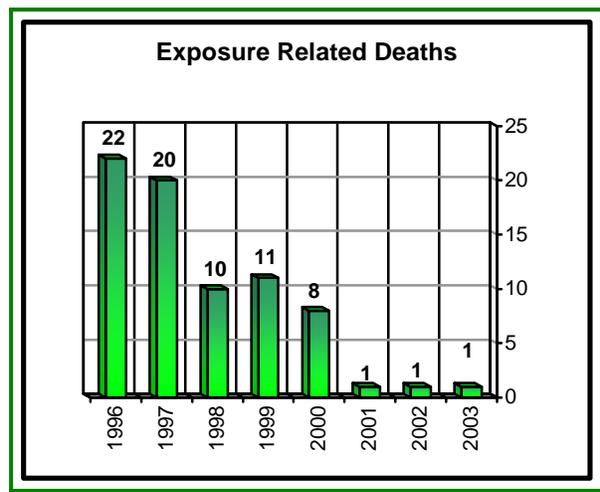
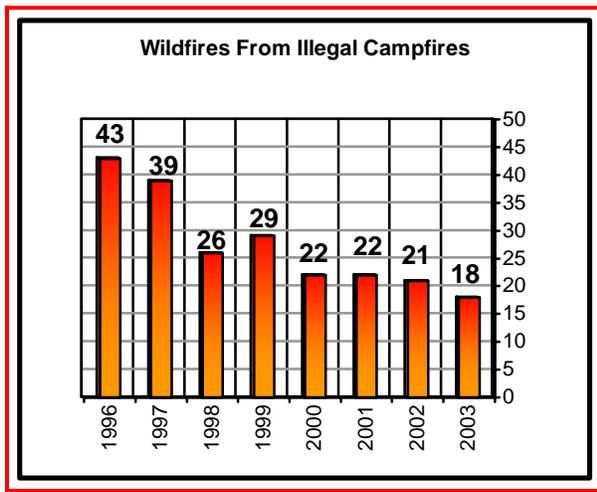
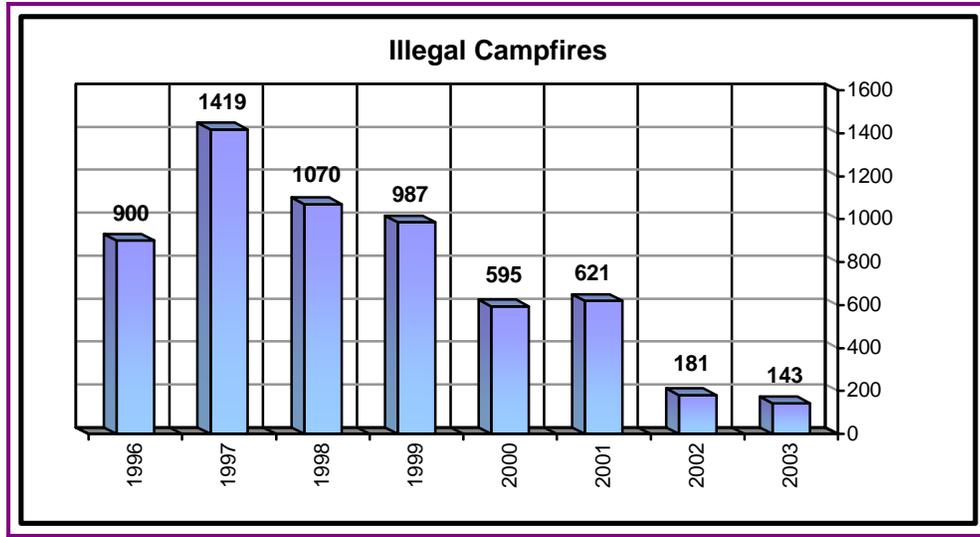
Campfires Causing Wildfires - When BAFC was established, abandoned campfires were causing dozens of wildfires in the forest. Although 143 illegal campfires were discovered in 2003, they only caused 18 wildfires or escaped fires. There has been a steady decline in these fires since BAFC began to distribute warnings about the dangers of leaving a campfire unattended. In 2003, only one and one-half (1.5) acres in the Cleveland National Forest were burned in this manner compared to almost 800 acres the year that BAFC was formed. (See graph.) This is partly because crews have continued to patrol the forest and extinguish illegal campfires before they become wildfires that cost thousand or millions of dollars to suppress.



Safety Patrols - During stormy conditions, Cleveland National Forest personnel along with the Border Patrol crews check the roads and trails in the forest for people who might have been caught unprepared. The patrols have provided welcome assistance to people who might otherwise have died due to exposure to the elements.

Warning Flyers - Again this year, forest personnel created and distributed handouts in Spanish and English, which clearly explained the dangers of foot travel in this area. These flyers were distributed in Mexico with the help of the Mexican Consulate.

Cleveland National Forest Border Impact Statistics





California Department of Forestry And Fire Protection

For 1.5 million acres of San Diego County, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is the fire department. CDF maintains a joint emergency command center with the U.S. Forest Service and CDF shares the supervision of inmate firefighters with the California Department of Corrections at three conservation camps. CDF maintained an additional conservation camp with the California Conservation Corps (CCC), where persons 18-23 years of age were part of a crew working on natural resource projects and fire suppression assignments with CDF supervision. Unfortunately, the CCC Camp closed in April 2003 due to budget impacts with CCC. There are 25 CDF fire stations providing fire protection and other emergency services within the county. CDF fights fire from the air with helicopters and airtankers stationed at Ramona and Gillespie Field.

Fire Season 2003 – CDF San Diego, along with San Bernardino and Riverside CDF units, received augmentation funding from the Office of the Governor to hire personnel and operate additional fire equipment due to the projected fire season potential. The severe drought and bark beetle infestation caused an increase in mortality rates in the pine-forested areas and some associated brush fields. In many areas, like Julian, it was estimated that 35% to 40% of the conifers were dead. Similar percentages were affecting other types of vegetation. CDF San Diego hired 78 firefighters in May 3, 2003 and engines were staffed with permanent personnel at that time. The augmentation provided for one additional Fire Crew to be staffed, four additional engines to be covered, a reserve engine and a helicopter with flight crew. Staffing on engines was also increased to four persons per engine from the normal three. The increased staffing was extremely useful during the Cedar Fire (*Pictured Right*) in October/November 2003. That fire began October 26, 2003 and was not contained until November 9, 2003. The fire destroyed 2,383 residents, 2,777 accessory buildings, 23 commercial structures and vehicles of all types, while it burned 280,278 acres. CDF San Diego's helicopter served many days on the fire, along with augmented resources and resources obtained the Office of Emergency Services (OES) Mutual Aid System.



The number of border related fires was down from the previous year, but the acreage was higher than expected. The total number of "border related" fires in the BAFC was thirteen (16). The total number of acres burned in 2003 in the CDF SRA lands within BAFC boundaries was 46,138. The Otay Fire, or Border Fire #12, burned 45,971 acres and was caused by an illegal campfire.

Binational Prescribed (Controlled) Burn With Mexico – A planned prescribed burn was conducted by fire agencies on both sides of the border in the vicinity of Tecate Peak. The project burned 135 total acres with 65 acres in the US and 75 acres within Mexico. This was the first partnership of this type to enhance the habitat and to protect citizens of both countries. CDF San Diego continues to work with partners in Mexico that control acreage adjacent to the U.S. property. Mexico is embarking on a new era to protect the environment on private lands that matches well with CDF goals. This is another example of BAFC working to protect people and the environment.

Protecting the Environment and Preventing Fires – Determining how to remove fire hazards (weeds, brush, dead trees, etc.) while protecting threatened and endangered plant and animal species continues to be the challenge for BAFC. The Quino Checkerspot Butterfly survives in the Coochama State Forest (west of Tecate area). CDF in cooperation with San Diego County is planning a series of “test plots” in which various methods of fuel reduction will be implemented. These methods may include the burning of small blocks under low intensity fire, hand clearing of selected vegetation, and possible use of goats to reduce fuel load. The intent of the project is to discover which of these methods has the least impact, if any, on the Quino habitat. Another goal of this project is to determine if Quino habitat can be improved or created through any of these methods. Prescribed fire mentioned above will be a key element of a successful program.

Archaeological Training Relative To Fire Suppression Activities – CDF initiated an aggressive Archaeological Training Program for planning and response to emergencies. CDF San Diego conducted six (6) Archaeological classes in 2003 to train all company officers on potential impacts. A total of eighteen (18) CDF personnel attended an additional special field level training course and are now listed as certified surveyors (for archaeological concerns). This partnership also included providing training to six (6) Native Americans to assist with this endeavor through a certified curriculum. This training assists in minimizing or eliminating damage in some cases to archaeological sites. The training was utilized to support suppression operations on the fires in San Diego County in 2003.

Firefighters Use the Border Guidebook – When CDF firefighters respond to a wildfire in this area, they consult the Guidebook created in 1998 by BAFC publication provides information to the firefighters on how to extinguish fires, while minimizing harm to the environment and the endangered species that live there. The Guidebook is expected to have a complete revision in 2003/2004.

International Fuel Break-Otay – CDF continued to work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and completed the necessary work needed on this Truck Trail. Fire crews from McCain Valley Conservation Camp under the direction of an on-site BLM representative accomplished the work. The project also creates habitat within the Otay Wilderness. This fuel break along with several others in the south county area was useful in suppressing or controlling the large Otay Fire that impacted the BAFC boundary.

Fire Response Preparation – CDF once again placed a fixed water tank in the Dulzura area at Barrett Junction for water storage and suppression activity due to the drought situation. CDF continued to work on Vegetation Management through prescribed fire in Bell Valley, Mine Canyon and other areas in the Rural Fire Protection District. These projects will assist with fire control operations in future years.

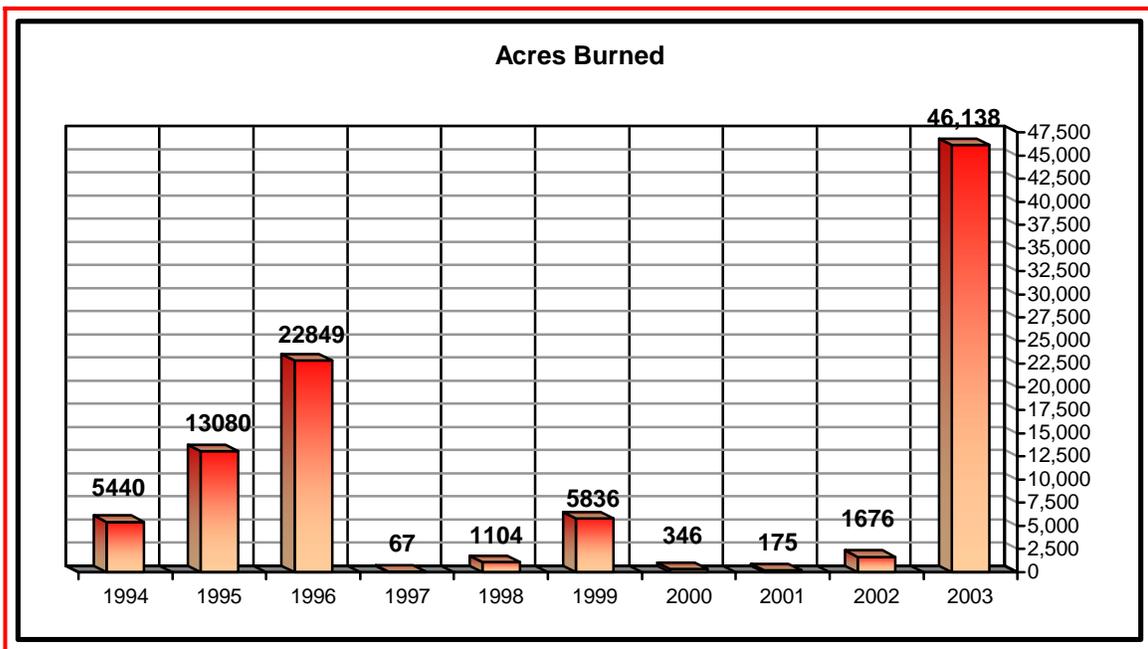
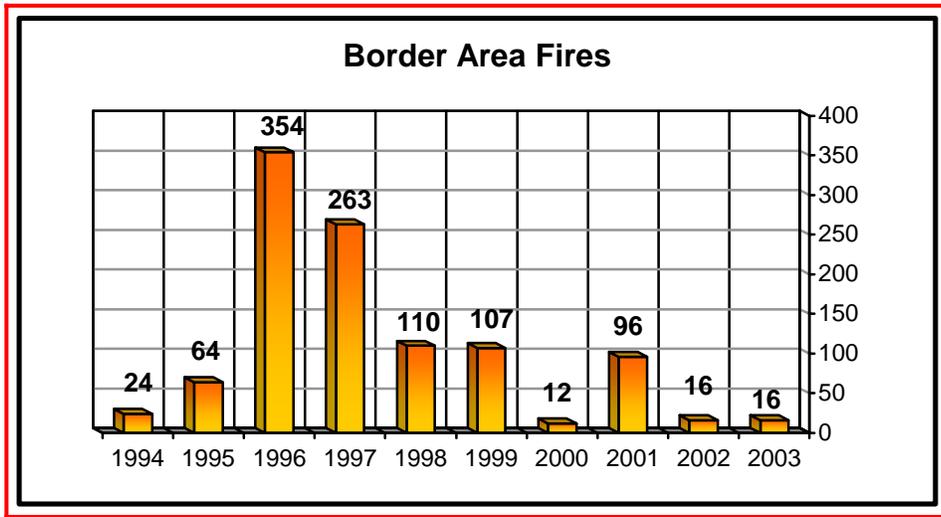
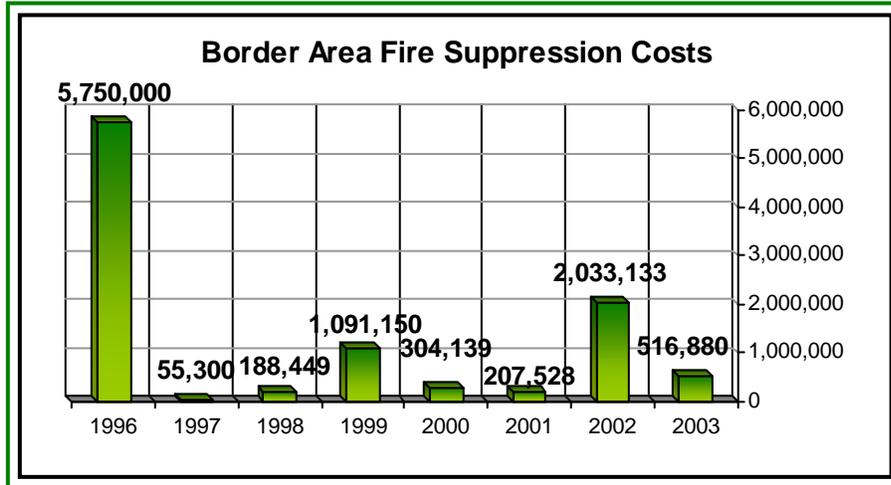
Protecting the Environment and Preventing Fires – Determining how to remove fire hazards (weeds, brush, dead trees, etc.) while protecting threatened and endangered plant and animal species continues to be the challenge for BAFC. The Quino Checkerspot Butterfly survives in the Coochama State Forest (west of Tecate area). CDF in cooperation with San Diego County is planning a series of “test plots” in which various methods of fuel reduction will be implemented. These methods may include the burning of small blocks under low intensity fire, hand clearing of selected vegetation, and possible use of goats to reduce fuel load. The intent of the project is to discover which of these methods has the least impact, if any, on the Quino habitat. Another goal of this project is to determine if Quino habitat can be improved or created through any of these methods. CDF San Diego is also working with partners in Mexico that control acreage adjacent to the U.S. property. Mexico is embarking on a new era to protect the environment on private lands. This is another example of BAFC working to protect people and the environment.

Training Video – CDF provided videos for the CHP and Sheriff on shelter deployment and wildland fire dangers that may affect officers of these departments. In an effort to make the CDF fire safety training more available to all agencies in need, CDF and the Border Patrol produced a video of the training. CDF provided the training and the Border patrol taped, edited and copied the video. The product was then distributed by CDF. Since the beginning of BAFC, CDF has provided fire safety training to law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical technicians who might be exposed to wildfire. This video supports that effort.

Mutual Assistance Agreement - A positive relationship between the fire agencies from both countries continues to grow and improve. An example of this: Bomberos attended the Border Divisions’ Fire Preparedness Exercise in 2002 and 2003. CDF personnel have also crossed the border to train firefighters in Tecate. In 2003, CDF fire personnel translated the Incident Command System (ICS) I-200 course, an introduction to Incident Command, into Spanish. A training session was held in Tecate, Mexico to present the course, associated material and provide additional wildland training. Spanish speaking CDF employees provided the training to the “Bomberos” of Tecate. CDF also held meetings with fire agencies and the US and Mexican Consulates to update and finalize the Mutual Assistance Agreement as part of an annual review process.



CDF Border Impact Statistics





San Diego County Sheriff's Department

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department is proud to be one of the founding members of the Border Agency Fire Council. Working in partnerships with our communities as well as fellow members of BAFC, deputies assigned to the Rural Law Enforcement Division continue to provide quality service to the citizens of the rural areas.

Working with our partners in the fire service we assisted in numerous fires that occurred throughout the backcountry portion of San Diego County, including the massive Cedar Fire that took place in October of 2003. Our goal to provide services at fire scenes resulted in a massive activation of Sheriff's personnel for the Cedar/Paradise/Otay fires during this time period. It was truly a team effort with our fire department colleagues in this historic critical incident.

The Sheriff Departments' excellent working arrangement with the various fire and law enforcement agencies in the backcountry areas has proved very useful at both fire and disaster scenes. Deputies assigned to the Rural Law Enforcement Division of the Sheriff's Department carry fire turnout gear, extra water for rescue personnel and victims, as well as the ability to utilize common radio frequencies to talk to other agencies.

Adhering to our mission statement of ***"In partnership with our communities, we provide the highest quality public safety services"***, the Sheriff's Department continues to support the Border Area Fire Council by actively participating in the regular meetings and various projects.





United States Border Patrol

"To enforce the rule of law along the border, enhancing the quality of life of the people we proudly serve."

The San Diego Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol is responsible for 66 linear miles of the U.S./Mexico border, and nearly 7,000 square miles, roughly corresponding to the boundaries of the County of San Diego. San Diego Sector had continued success for fiscal year 2003. Since the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper in 1994, illegal entries in San Diego County have steadily declined to a 29 year low of 100,681 in 2002. However, there was an increase in 2003 to 111,510 arrests.

The success of Operation Gatekeeper has enabled the San Diego Sector to appropriate more resources to the development of search & rescue teams, anti-smuggling investigative units, public outreach programs, and border safety initiatives. The availability of personnel and resources has enabled the sector to become more proactive and the leader in innovative uses of new technology. San Diego Sector has evolved from the most neglected area of the southwest border to the flagship of the U.S. Border Patrol and a model of effective, efficient, and humane border control.

Department of Homeland Security - The President has charged the new Department of Homeland Security with the mission of stopping another terrorist attack on American soil. Securing our borders is a crucial aspect of that mission. Border security can no longer be an immigration issue alone. It can no longer be a Customs issue alone. It can no longer simply be about air or port security. Instead, it must encompass all of these issues. And so, on March 1, 2003 the United States Border Patrol joined the new Department of Homeland Security under the Bureau of Border and Transportation Security.

Border Safety Initiative - The Border Safety Initiative (BSI) began in San Diego in 1998 as an effort to make the international border safer for everyone. BSI addresses related concerns in the following areas: **Prevention** of illegal entries through potentially hazardous areas, **Search and Rescue** capabilities and commitments, and interactive support in situations requiring the **Identification** of deceased persons.



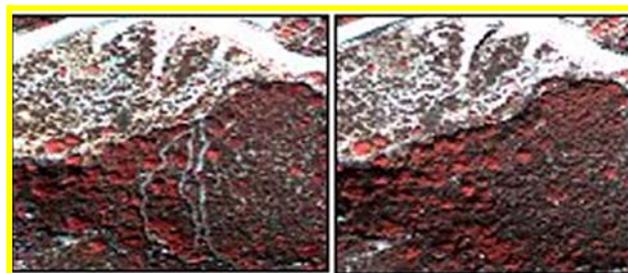
In 2002 the San Diego Sector Public Information Office, with the help of the El Centro and Yuma Border Patrol Sectors, participated in the production of another **Public Service Announcement**. San Diego Sector wrote and directed a new PSA depicting the dangers of the hot and arid deserts of the southwest border and introduced the innovative *rescue beacons* located across the desert. This was used in 2003.

The San Diego Sector began issuing emergency response supplies to agents in 1998 as one facet of the Border Safety Initiative. Backpacks were loaded with a variety of items appropriate for summer or winter emergency aid. Each bag is packed with enough supplies for more than one individual. Easily digestible food, such as special granola “trail mix,” dried “tropical fruit mix” and carbohydrate energy gel replaces earlier food items. “Gatorade” is included along with water and electrolyte tablets. Basic medical response supplies as well as first aid guides are included. Additional instant “cold-packs” were added. The San Diego Sector supplied deputies from the Alpine Sheriff’s Office and Sheriff’s Rural Enforcement division with these same packs in the event they encounter individuals in remote areas suffering from dehydration, heat stroke or malnutrition.

Enforcement Technology Department (ETD) - The San Diego Sector created the U.S. Border Patrol’s first Enforcement Technology Department (ETD) in January of 2000. ETD is charged with researching emerging technology that can enhance the capability, effectiveness, and efficiency of border enforcement and management activities. ETD was envisioned to enhance the sector by strengthening technology capabilities and awareness while serving as a coordinating tool within the agency.

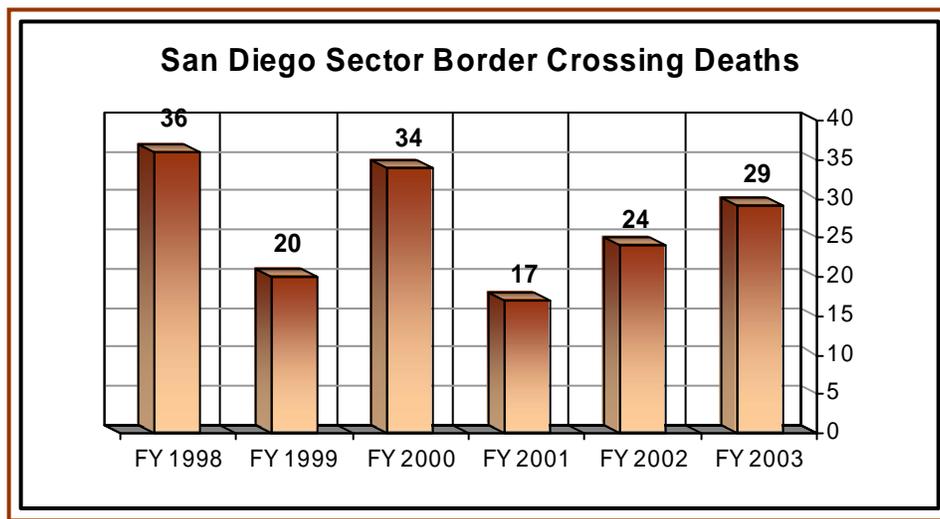
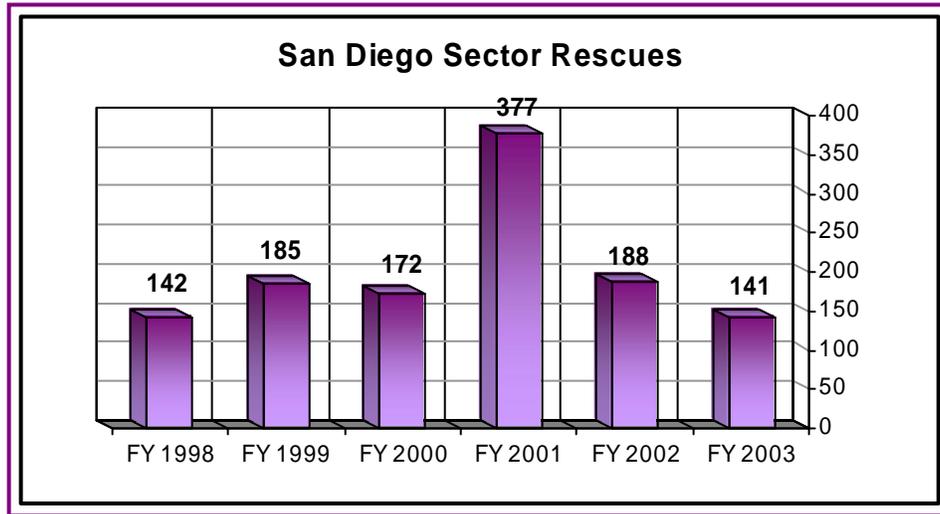
The office has several collaborative efforts underway, including:

- San Diego State University / NASA Trail Extraction Project. This effort uses remote sensing to extract trail network from imagery



GIS technologies detect the changes in vegetation and illustrate new trails as in the image.

- San Diego Police Department / San Diego Sheriff’s Department Data sharing. ETD is working with both agencies to develop a common operating picture for emergency response in the area.
- San Diego County Border Agency Fire Council Mapping Project. ETD is facilitating the production of new maps for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The maps contain over thirty layers of information.



SAN DIEGO SECTOR NARCOTIC SEIZURES – QUANTITY AND VALUE

Narcotic Type (in pounds)	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Marijuana	25,882 \$20,732,599	33,629 \$25,678,211	26,561 \$9,460,822	20,656 \$8,280,555	36,177 \$12,663,646
Cocaine	414 \$13,265,647	198 \$4,378,521	63 \$639,318	43 \$426,200	152 \$1,521,337
Heroin	132 \$567,486	5 \$11,207	116 \$99,733	2.02 \$1,636	0.16 \$145
Other Drugs	141 \$2,939,407	1,221 \$419,297	252 \$279,648	155 \$347,172	16.512 \$99,430



SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

The mission of the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is to coordinate San Diego County's response to disasters. Deborah Steffen, Director, has overall responsibility for managing OES and for directing the Emergency Operations Center in times of an emergency; co-chairing the Terrorism Working Group; and representing the county with state and federal agencies. OES assists public and private organizations in San Diego County with preparing for, responding to and recovering from major emergencies, including terrorism.

County OES has been an active supporter of the Border Agency Fire Council. OES has:

- Received approval by the County Task Force on Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services on a spending plan of \$400,000 for twelve fire protection agencies to meet their capital needs and improve the fire protection services to the public.
- Secured \$11,699,841 for the San Diego Operational Area in 3 separate Homeland Security Grants.
 - FY02 - \$1,187,908
 - FY03 - \$2,822,925
 - FY03 (Part II) - \$6,689,008
- Performed the regional homeland security needs assessment (required by the federal government for the San Diego Operational Area to be eligible for future Homeland Security Grants).
- Secured \$480,000 for the development of a County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Secured \$81,600 for the development of a County-wide Citizen Corps/CERT Program.
- Worked with USFS, CDF, AW&M and local fire agencies on the bark beetle infestation and tree mortality issues.
- Activated the OA Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for:
 - Super Bowl
 - Iraqi War
 - Firestorms 2003

As a member of BAFC, staff from OES provided technical assistance in the original development of the Operating Plan. OES also assisted with the update of the plan again this year. The BAFC Operating Plan coordinated medical and rescue response to any multi-casualty incident.



Firestorms 2003

Background - The firestorms that occurred in San Diego County beginning at approximately 5:37 p.m. Saturday, October 25, 2003, were the worst in County history and second in damage statewide, only to the East Bay/Oakland Hills Fire in 1991. The day the

"When these fires started, the conditions in southern California were set up for a disaster. The drought had left the vegetation in a stressed condition, much of it already dead or dying. It was ready to explode into flames if any fire escaped initial attack efforts."

**Tim Duane, Associate Professor, Environmental Engineering
University of California, Berkeley**

initial fire started, the temperature in Julian reached 99 degrees Fahrenheit and the humidity was 8%. Santa Ana winds were a major contributing factor to the fire's unpredictable behavior and rapid progression. On Sunday, October 26th, humidity levels dropped to 7%. These hot, dry winds continued to fan the fire. Flames in excess of 200 feet in height were reported. The fire generated thermal convections which produced extreme erratic fire behavior and made it impossible for firefighters to forecast the fire's path and spread.

The Cedar Fire burned 273,246 acres; claimed the lives of 14 civilians and one firefighter and destroyed 2,820 structures. The Paradise Fire charred 56,700 acres and resulted in two civilian fatalities with 413 structures destroyed. The Otoy Fire, which consumed 46,291 acres, destroyed six structures but fortunately no lives were lost.

"The Cedar Fire burned 80,000 acres in 10 hours. That's over two acres per second."

**Tim Turner,
San Diego Area Coordination Team**

"They've had spread rates of 10 miles in seven hours. When a fire does that, your efforts are turned from the firefight to firefighter and public safety. You just hope you can get all the people out of the way in time."

**Larry Hood, US Forest Service
Fire & Fuels Specialist**

Summary of Operations - In response to notification from the Sheriff's Department Operations Center (DOC), the Office of Emergency Services (OES) activated the San Diego County Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at approximately 5:20 a.m., on Sunday, October 26, 2003 and deactivated on Saturday, November 1, 2003. The EOC was staffed by representatives from various County Departments as well as by agency liaisons.

This was the first time in San Diego County's history that the County EOC was activated on such an unprecedented scale for an actual event. Prior to this, EOC activations had been limited in scope, usually as a precaution during a large special event such as the Republican National Convention, Y2K or the Super Bowl. Other EOC activations occur on a routine basis as part of scheduled drills or exercises. EOC training was conducted for County staff prior to each exercise.

County EOC staff truly underwent a "trial by fire". Fortunately, the EOC staff had participated in three dress rehearsal exercises, three federally graded exercises, and a regional Weapons of Mass Destruction exercise within the past 12 months. This provided the EOC with a cadre of well-trained and experienced individuals. Many of the trained non-OES EOC staff were unavailable for this activation as they were staffing their Department Operations Centers (DOCs). This resulted in a large number of individuals staffing the EOC with limited training and exposure to EOC operations. In spite of this, interagency coordination functioned effectively. Coordination amongst EOC staff was seamless, despite the myriad of disciplines and agencies represented. This is attributable, in part, to the excellent support received from the various Department Operations Centers throughout the County. Individuals that served in the EOC are to be commended for their ability, commitment and dedicated efforts in support of those in the field.

Fire Recap

Cedar Fire: 273,246 acres burned; 2,820 structures destroyed; 2,232 homes; 22 businesses; 566 outbuildings; 15 fatalities (14 civilians; and 1 firefighter). Cost \$27,000,000 to fight.

Paradise Fire: 56,700 acres burned; 413 structures destroyed; 221 homes; 192 outbuildings; 2 Civilian fatalities; Cost \$10,300,000 to fight.

Otay Fire: 46,291 acres burned; 6 structures destroyed; 1 home; 5 outbuildings; No fatalities; Cost \$ 350,000 to fight.



The firestorms in San Diego County resulted in 383,269 total acres burned. At the height of the fires, 5,754 personnel were assigned to fires in San Diego County. A total of 2,453 residential structures, 22 commercial properties and 763 outbuildings were destroyed. Approximately 3,000 large animals (horses and livestock) and 500 small animals were evacuated. There were 17 fatalities including 1 firefighter.

EOC ACTIVATION AND FACILITY – NOTIFICATION - The County of San Diego Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated on Sunday, October 26, 2003, at 0520. Initial staffing included the OES Director, the OES Fire Services Coordinator, and the Staff Duty Officer. Shortly thereafter, additional OES staff reported for EOC activation and support. The EOC was organized in accordance with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) Regulations, (Government Code 8607).





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Since wildlife has been affected by the dramatic increase of human traffic, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) joined BAFC and have been actively involved from the beginning. The FWS oversees 15,000 acres of wildland, which provide 12 critical habitat areas that are home to 21 threatened or endangered species in San Diego County.

Removing the Hazards – Fish and Wildlife crews are working with CDF and the East County Fire Protection District to implement fuel breaks and other hazard abatement work in the east county. These projects involve removing dry brush and weeds, which propel wildfires into the natural habitat and the adjacent homes. Through National Fire Plan Grants, FWS in Partnership with San Diego Rural Fire Protection District, USF&WS has implemented a community chipping program to reduce the fire hazard in Jamul. Two chippers have been purchased and operators have been hired to work this program.



U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management

The United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) oversees 172,000 acres of federal land in San Diego County. Much of this land is classified as "Wilderness" and is therefore protected from certain activities which might threaten the habitat or the wildlife in the area. There are 12 plant and animal species that are listed as threatened or endangered and another 70 plant and animal species which are considered rare and sensitive.

Increased Immigration - The number of undocumented immigrants appears to be increasing in the area between the communities of Potrero and Campo. Fresh footpaths lead directly into some of the most inaccessible of the BLM lands, including the Mt. Hauser Wilderness area. This is of concern because people are more likely to become injured or trapped in this rugged area, and because fire engines cannot fit through the narrow paths.



Comisión Nacional Forestal Gerencia Regional I Península de Baja California

What is CONAFOR? - The Forestry National Commission (Comisión Nacional Forestal-CONAFOR) was created as a decentralized federal agency, as a part of SEMARNAT (Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources) on April 4, 2001. Its mission is to inspire the participation from our society to make the necessary changes to create a new sustainable forestry development policy. Its general goal is to develop and to impulse productive activities and forest conservation and restoration.

In agreement with the Mexico's General Law of Forestry Sustainable Development, CONAFOR is the federal agency responsible for the coordination of the prevention of wildfires, detection and suppression in all the country, with the assistance of other federal, state and county public administration agencies.

Mexico is divided in 13 regions, each region has a Regional Manger called "Gerente Regional", our region includes both, Baja California and Baja California Sur (Baja California Peninsula).

One of the CONAFOR's priority programs is the protection against wildfires, because it is an important damage factor of the Baja California wildlands.

CONAFOR as a member of BAFC - For some years CONAFOR was participating in the BAFC as an invited agency. From January 2004, by unanimous decision of its membership CONAFOR is participating as a permanent member of BAFC. It is very important to CONAFOR because we believe that it is a good forum to work against wildfires in a coordinate way with fire agencies in both sides of the border.

CONAFOR Wildfires Protection Program - On average, during the last 20 years, Baja California has 113 wildfires per year that burned 14,500 hectares or 35,800 acres. Many of these fires were registered in the California-Baja California international border. In the Tecate-Tijuana/San Diego region.



The Baja California Annual Wildfire Protection Program has four main issues:

Presuppression - It contains some activities to prepare for the upcoming fire season, it includes coordination meetings, to prepare equipment, and others.

Prevention - It includes activities such as education sessions in rural communities, fuel break lines, rehabilitation, construction, controlled burns, and information.

Detection - These are activities to find wildfires, it includes lookout tower operation, monitoring hot spots detected by satellite, communication with airports to receive reports from commercial flights, and others.

Suppression - It includes squad operations from CONAFOR, State Government, City “Bomberos”, Mexican Army, Volunteers, and many others. It includes the coordination between some federal, state and local agencies to suppress fires.

Our priority is the protection of the “Sierra de Juarez” and “Sierra de San Pedro Mártir” . These are two national parks, and their forest (conifer) ecosystems. It is important to us to protect against wildfires in the Tecate-Tijuana Region too, because the high frequency of fires and high burned area registered there each fire season.

Fire Season 2003. This fire season there were 152 wildfires in Baja California. It was the worst fire season in the last 20 years, were burned 67,000 acres of forestry lands.

COUNTY	FIRES	BURNED VEGETATION (Acres)				TOTAL
		GRASSLANDS	SHRUBS	TREES		
				YOUNG	ADULT	
TECATE	81	9,276	29,979		1,302	40,558
ENSENADA	60	1,457	21,175	124	1,872	24,630
TIJUANA	9	837	1,007	0.00	0.00	1,845
ROSARITO	2	136	259	0.00	0.00	395
TOTAL	152	11,706	52,420	124	3,174	67,428
	%	17.36	77.74	0.18	4.71	100.0

During the “California Fire Storm” on October 25-30, 2003, in Baja California there were 12 fires, two of these were big fires. One crossed into Mexico from Otay Mountain, burning 1,150 acres in Tijuana County. The other fire that was big, it was registered in San Antonio De las Minas, near Ensenada City. This fire burned 11,400 acres, and unfortunately two people died.

To prevent other fires from crossing the International Border from the United States to Mexico, agencies (CONAFOR, Baja California Agriculture Secretary, Water National Commission) coordinated their efforts to build a fuelbreak 19 miles along the international border in Tecate County, near Rancho Canoitas, because one “American” fire threatened to advance toward Baja California.

One of the important issues in which we had been working from 2003 is about the update of Border Emergency Operations Plan. In this plan works CONAFOR, SFA, DEPC, USFS and Mexican and American Consulates.



As a part of a CDF Vegetation Management Program (VMP), on October 15, 2003, was the first “Binational Controlled Burn”. It was on both sides of the border, in Bell Valley, into the United States and John Bill Canyon, into the Mexican territory. Mexican and American fire agencies, such as: CONAFOR, CDF, Baja California Agriculture Secretary, USF&W, Rural FPD participated.

75 acres on the Mexican side and 60 acres in American side were treated. It was a very good experience for all participant agencies.

Ing. Juan Ramón Cruz Domínguez
BC Wildfire Coordinator

BAFC Membership

Thirty-two organizations and elected officials are active members of the Border Agency Fire Council. Each contributes staff and funds to this unique collaborative effort.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Office of the Governor
U.S.D.A. Forest Service
U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Border Patrol
Office of Supervisor Dianne Jacob
San Diego County Office of Emergency Services
U.S. Attorney's Office
Office of Congressman Duncan Hunter
California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
California Highway Patrol
San Diego County Department of Health Services Agency
Rural Fire Protection District
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
San Diego County Sheriff
Office of Senator Bill Morrow
Office of Senator Dennis Hollingsworth
Office of Senator Denise Ducheny
Joint Task Force 6
California Department of Fish and Game
San Diego Trauma Hospital Administrators
California Department of Corrections
Southern California Watershed Fire Council
U.S. Consulate General Tijuana
San Diego Fire and Rescue Department
FireSafe Council San Diego
CONAFOR (Comician Nasional Forestal), B.C., Mexico
Director de Proteccion Civil del Estado, B.C. Mexico (Baja OES)
Estatal de Forestal y Fauna Ensenada, Mexico
Tecate Fire Public Safety (Bomberos de Tecate)

Border Agency Fire Council (BAFC) Area of Concern

