

Latest Chipper Campaign
(Written following the first of three chipper sessions in 2008)

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Council)

Eleven homeowners in Mt. Shasta Vista participated in the Juniper Flats Fire Safe Council's latest free mobile chipping campaign this February. They lowered fire loads on their lands, spiffed up the land's appearance, and gave valuable soil nutrients back to the earth. A generous grant from Siskiyou County Resource Advisory Committee and Klamath National Forest cobbled together by council members makes available this freebee to any and all interested land owners in our local fire safe council area.

CutWright Services of Mt. Shasta, run by Todd Wright, did a neat and conscientious job with their all-business, mobile chipper-shredder (able to take branches to 14"). They placed the chips where owners specified on earlier coordinating delegation visits by Cut Wright operators; George Jennings of the Northern California Resource Center (NCRC); Mary Cameron, fire chief, Mt. Shasta Vista Volunteer Fire Co.; and council facilitator, Lynn Corliss.

To further sweeten the deal, a thoughtful sack of items donated by related agencies and businesses was gifted to each participant. There were useful things in it, too: a handy ruler, a couple Smoky the Bear bandannas, even a dandy letter opener.

As the accompanying before-and-after pictures taken by George and others show, it's magic the way huge piles of brush - too often burned at risk of starting wildfires - are safely transformed to neat, park-like ground cover. Environmentally, the fuels burned hauling the chipper around and running it are far offset by all the gasses from backyard burns saved from being released into the atmosphere.

Mt. Shasta Vista has gazillions of tons of dead brush and juniper limbs choking its mostly absentee-owned properties. This can be daunting indeed in any effort to render our neighborhoods more fire-resistant. But any action is valuable: fires come in all shapes and sizes, and simply reducing the fire load on one's own land could well save one's home in the future.

The more property owners participate, of course, the better the odds of our homes and lands being spared the next serious wildfire. And the better we can work in flow with fire agencies to safely evacuate and make their jobs – difficult under the best circumstances - easier. Thinning out the land and safely chipping are the first steps towards working with nature to keep our rustic wonderland safe to enjoy for time to come.

With grant renewals, based on continued and growing support from property owners, Free Chipper Days will likely be an ongoing seasonal event, promising us a firmer foothold in establishing fire safe conditions.