



Fire Station by the Sea

By Deanna Baxman, Battalion Chief, Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit



On the Northern most tip of the Sonoma County Coast, south of Mendocino County, lies The Sea Ranch community. CAL FIRE's fire protection history for The Sea Ranch area dates back to the late 1940's.

Back then, the California Division of Forestry staffed the Mendosoma Forest Fire Station located in a remote area south of The Sea Ranch, in the heart of logging country. The Mendosoma station was eight miles inland from Highway 1 and the Sonoma County coast.

The station housed two fire engines, one bulldozer and one patrolman. The response areas for the Mendosoma station covered several thousand acres and the "next in" fire engine was at least one hour away.



By the early 1970's, logging slowed and many lumber mills in the area closed. At that time, up on the coast, the eclectic Sea Ranch community had planted roots and was beginning to grow. What set this community apart from others was the unique vision for the homes and surrounding property to blend in with the natural Sonoma County coastal landscape.

In 1972, the California Division of Forestry signed a "Schedule A" agreement with the County of Sonoma to staff a fire engine at The Sea Ranch. The agreement began with one fire captain, three days per week and a small group of volunteer firefighters. The station was housed in a small building owned by the Sea Ranch Water Company.

In 1975, the Division of Forestry purchased property within the Sea Ranch community and a new station was built on Annapolis Road.

The Sea Ranch Fire Station blends into the community and is consistent with the architectural guidelines created by The Sea Ranch Design Committee. The new fire station became the home to the Mendosoma (Schedule B) and The Sea Ranch Fire Department (Schedule A). The Sea Ranch Fire Station was opened for business in the winter of 1976. Both programs were staffed by CAL FIRE personnel.

CAL FIRE's commitment to The Sea Ranch community continues today. Since 1990, The Sea Ranch Association (TSRA) has been implementing a Fire Management Plan to reduce fire hazards on its property. CAL FIRE has partnered with TSRA by providing property inspections for homeowners and educating the community members on the importance of fuel reduction and defensible space.

Today, The Sea Ranch's "Schedule A" program is staffed by one fire captain and four fire apparatus engineers. The current roster includes 12 volunteers.

The crew maintains a fleet, including three fire engines, one rescue squad, one air and light unit, a chief's vehicle and one utility. The "Schedule B" program consists of two fire captains and five firefighters who staff one engine seasonally.

Captain Shelley Spear said, "Working as a captain for The Sea Ranch community is rewarding. The residents of The Sea Ranch have a great partnership with CAL FIRE personnel. The unique location and engaging residents, make this a great assignment for all of us who work at The Sea Ranch."

