

Community Comment  
September 12, 2014  
Sam Pennisi

### A Dry Season and 911 Remembrance

Sharon and I are hardly retired. She is officially retired from HSU, but writes and teaches each semester. We both operate our Inn and that keeps us quite busy. We also have three grandchildren and help their working parents daily with the kids. But the one thing we demand of ourselves is our daily walk. We walk for an hour mostly in the morning and generally take two or three grandddogs with us. We do this for our health and our peace of mind.

Most days we walk in Arcata on the lower trails in Redwood Park. We can walk from home and get a fair amount elevation rise which is good for the heart as well as the knees. When we can, we also enjoy hiking thru Trinidad and around the Head. Also, good elevation rise and about an hour's time. Both these places have something in common and it's not good.

In the years since I've been in Humboldt County I've never seen it this dry. While we tend to think of our county, especially on the coast, as the asbestos coast, it is burnable. We know we have had significant fires in the past and we should be concerned about fire safety now; especially this year.

Redwood Park is not only tinder dry but it is being abused. The amount of unofficial side trails being carved into steep slopes is alarming. Not only will these be a source of unnecessary erosion when we get some rain, but the people making and using these trails camp, make fires and leave litter away from the real trails where access would be easy and smoke would be more noticeable. A major fire in the forest could easily trap runners and hikers and would also threaten homes and property. We are a city that cares about forest management activities but one major fire could do far more damage than controlled activities.

In Trinidad, the south facing slope over old home beach below the Memorial Lighthouse and East is also tinder dry. A friend responded as a volunteer fire fighter to the Head the other day and was concerned that some thirty people could have been trapped on the top. A small fire was found and put out according to him. As in Arcata, the chance of loss of life and property is a real and ongoing issue. But we seem to be complacent about the danger. The slope in Trinidad is down hill from my house which would have little chance of surviving an upslope fire. I have seen smoke from small camp fires on this slope a few times a year. This year, at this time, a small fire could have major consequences.

While we are blessed with cooler and moist air, we have the conditions for a serious fire. We need to take these conditions seriously.

Yesterday was a sad anniversary. 9-11 was a shocking day that resulted in terror, destruction and most importantly, the loss of some three thousand innocent souls. In their memory, we need to figure out a better response to this kind of barbaric act. Our choice to attack Iraq has sure not worked. We, as a people, have work to do; with an open mind.

To the memory of those souls and their families, the first responders, and the troops we all asked to fight for us.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.