



NEWS



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Fire damages three cabins at Pirates Cove

By Bill McMillen, Mohave Valley Daily News

May 31, 2023



Fire Boat 32, from the San Bernardino County Fire Department's Needles Station 32, uses its deck cannon to attack Monday night's fire at Pirates Cove Resort.

NEEDLES — Three vacation cabins were heavily damaged Monday night in a fire at the Pirates Cove Resort on the Colorado River southeast of Needles near Topock.

No injuries were reported in the blaze that was called in to the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department at 7:57 p.m. Monday, a few minutes after civilians apparently attempted to control it with fire extinguishers. "Multiple 911 callers stated cabins (were) on fire at the resort with people possibly trapped," said SBCFD Battalion Chief and Public Information Officer Mike McClintock.

Firefighters from the Mohave Valley Fire Department responded to the resort in the Maobi Regional Park on the California side of the Colorado River, about 11 miles southeast of Needles, to join by the SBCFD Needles Station 32 crew that was the first to arrive at the scene. An engine from the Fort Mojave Mesa Fire District also responded.

"Firefighters arrived on-scene to find three two-story cabins well involved in fire with multiple other structures threatened," McClintock said. "Crews initiated an aggressive attack, working under heavy fire conditions to limit the fire from spreading to adjacent structures and nearby vegetation. To assist their fire attack, crews also utilized nearby Fire Boat 32."

Fire Boat 32, deployed from Needles Station 32, is equipped with a high-pressure deck water cannon and provided coverage from the lagoon just off the beach at the resort. He said the buildings were searched for occupants but none were found.

The fire began in one of the cabins in a row of four two-story beachfront structures along the resort's lagoon on the Colorado River. The popular resort also has 10 cabins near its marina, an RV park, a boat launch, a restaurant/bar and a general store.

Donnie Gibson, fire marshal for the Mohave Valley Fire Department, said that when the three-member crew on MVFD's Engine 821 arrived, they found the three cabins "pretty well engulfed." He said that at least one of the cabins was occupied at the time of the fire; the occupants attempted to use fire extinguishers to put out the blaze before calling 911.

"If I learned anything from this fire, it was that we kind of need to share the message: They need to call 911 first," he said. "Call 911 to get the crews on their way, then use the fire extinguishers. This may have been limited to one or two of the cabins (had crews been notified earlier). It didn't have to be as bad as it was."

The three responding departments managed to prevent the fire from spreading. There were initial concerns that the fire might reach vegetation in the area, turning it into a wildfire that could impact both sides of the river. Those concerns were allayed.

"We had 14 people, not counting rehab," Gibson said. "These guys did a lot of work in a short amount of time."

He said the MVFD engine and rehab unit were on scene for a little more than three hours, clearing at 12:15 a.m.

McClintock said SBCFD personnel remained on the scene for "multiple hours" as the mission changed from fire suppression to salvage, overhaul and investigation.

"Thankfully, no injuries to citizens or firefighters were reported," McClintock said, adding that the cause of the fire remains under investigation by the San Bernardino County Fire Department.

The Medic 32 unit from Needles and Engine 911 from Fort Mojave Mesa were delayed in arriving at the Pirates Cove scene after encountering an active recreational vehicle fire on Interstate 40 en route. That fire prompted the California Highway Patrol to closed a section of westbound Interstate 40 temporarily to allow the emergency services to respond.

<https://mohavedailynews.com/news/146913/fire-damages-three-cabins-at-pirates-cove/>

How California overtime law threatens the use of goats to prevent wildfires

By Terry Chea, Associated Press

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A goat chews through weeds near the Reagan library in Simi Valley, CA Friday, April 29, 2022. Goats are in high demand to clear vegetation as the wildfire season approaches, but a farmworker overtime law threatens the grazing business.

Hundreds of goats munch on long blades of yellow grass on a hillside next to a sprawling townhouse complex. They were hired to clear vegetation that could fuel wildfires as temperatures rise this summer.

These voracious herbivores are in high demand to devour weeds and shrubs that have proliferated across California after a drought-busting winter of heavy rain and snow.

“It’s a huge fuel source. If it was left untamed, it can grow very high. And then when the summer dries everything out, it’s perfect fuel for a fire,” said Jason Poupolo, parks superintendent for the city of West Sacramento, where goats grazed on a recent afternoon.

Targeted grazing is part of California’s strategy to reduce wildfire risk because goats can eat a wide variety of vegetation and graze in steep, rocky terrain that’s hard to access. Backers say they’re an eco-friendly alternative to chemical herbicides or weed-whacking machines that make noise and pollution.

But new state labor regulations are making it more expensive to provide goat-grazing services, and herding companies say the rules threaten to put them out of business. The changes could raise the monthly salary of herders from about \$3,730 to \$14,000, according to the California Farm Bureau.

Companies typically put about one herder in charge of 400 goats. Many of the herders in California are from Peru and live in employer-provided trailers near grazing sites. Labor advocates say the state should investigate the working and living conditions of goatherders before making changes to the law, especially since the state is funding goat-grazing to reduce wildfire risk.

California is investing heavily in wildfire prevention after the state was ravaged by several years of destructive flames that scorched millions of acres, destroyed thousands of homes and killed dozens of people. Goats have been used to clear fuels around Lake Oroville, along Highway 101, and near the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

“My phone rings off the hook this time of year,” said Tim Arrowsmith, owner of Western Grazers, which is providing grazing services to West Sacramento. “The demand has grown year after year after year.”

His company, based in the Northern California city of Red Bluff, has about 4,000 goats for hire to clear vegetation for government agencies and private landowners across Northern California. Without a fix to the new regulations, “we will be forced to sell these goats to slaughter and to the auction yards, and we’ll be forced out of business and probably file for bankruptcy,” Arrowsmith said.

Companies have historically been allowed to pay goat and sheepherders a monthly minimum salary rather than an hourly minimum wage, because their jobs require them to be on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But legislation signed in 2016 also entitles them to overtime pay. It effectively boosted the herders’ minimum monthly pay from \$1,955 in 2019 to \$3,730 this year. It’s set to hit \$4,381 in 2025, according to the California Department of Industrial Relations.

So far the herding companies, which have sued over the law, have passed along most of the increased labor costs to their customers.

But in January, those labor costs are set to jump sharply again. Goatherders and sheepherders have always followed the same set of labor rules last year. But a state agency has ruled that’s no longer allowed, meaning goatherders would be subject to the same labor laws as other farmworkers.

That would mean goatherders would be entitled to ever higher pay — up to \$14,000 a month. Last year a budget trailer bill delayed that pay requirement for one year, but it’s set to take effect on Jan. 1 if nothing is done to change the law.

Goatherding companies say they can’t afford to pay herders that much. They would have to drastically raise their rates, which would make it unaffordable to provide goat grazing services.

“We fully support increasing wages for herders, but \$14,000 a month is not realistic. So we need to address that in order to allow these goat-grazing operations to exist,” said Brian Shobe, deputy policy director for the California Climate and Agriculture Network.

The goat-grazing industry is pushing the Legislature to approve legislation that would treat goatherders the same as sheepherders. A bill to do so hasn’t yet received a public hearing.

Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, who heads the California Labor Federation, said goatherders are among the “most vulnerable workers in America” because they are on temporary work visas and can be fired and sent back to their home country anytime. Most of them work in isolation, speak minimal English and don’t have the same rights as Americans or green-card holders.

“We have a responsibility as a public to ensure that every worker who’s working in California is treated with dignity and respect, and that includes these goatherders,” said Gonzalez Fletcher, who sponsored the farmworker overtime bill when she was a state Assemblywoman representing San Diego.

Arrowsmith employs seven goatherders from Peru under the H-2A visa program for temporary farmworkers. He said the herders are paid about \$4,000 a month and don't have to pay for food, housing or phones.

"I can't pay \$14,000 a month to an employee starting Jan. 1. There's just not enough money. The cities can't absorb that kind of cost," Arrowsmith said. "What's at stake for the public is your house could burn up because we can't fire-mitigate."

<https://www.sbsun.com/2023/05/30/no-kidding-california-overtime-law-threatens-use-of-grazing-goats-to-prevent-wildfires/>

Three People Killed In A Crash On I-15 Near Stateline Has Been ID

By Staff Writer, Pain In The Pain

May 30, 2023



STATELINE, CA. (Pain In The Pass) >> Three people who were killed in a two vehicle crash near Stateline have been identified by the San Bernardino County coroner's office.

James Manuel, age 57, and Amelia Lloyd, age 80, both of Palmdale. The third victim was a 40-year-old Michael Mandelsberg, resident of Kent Washington. They were all pronounced dead by emergency medical personnel.

California Highway Patrol with firefighters from **San Bernardino County Fire** Department and Clark County Fire Department responded to the crash scene. The crash scene was on Interstate 15 about one mile before Yates Well Road exit.

Details of the accident were not immediately released by authorities. This incident will be under investigation by the California Highway Patrol Barstow Office.

<https://paininthepass.info/2023/05/30/three-people-killed-in-a-crash-on-i-15-near-stateline-has-been-id/>