

The **Sand Fire**: Here is the first day of the fire. I am flanked by the two attack engines that I run myself. The one on the right is the prototype that Phoschek built for us.



August 2016

Dear Partner,

On Friday July 22, my daughter and I were returning from the pet shop where we bought worms for the baby birds we are nursing. In the distance we could see smoke, the beginnings of a brush fire.

By the time we got to the freeway at Sand Canyon, the fire was burning out of control and heading Northeast due to the heavy winds. I knew this was going to be a bad one.

Being 15-miles away, I thought it might threaten us in a few days, so I called our staff and had them be ready to come to the sanctuary at night if need be. I told them to pack extra food too.

Good thing. That same night I got a call at midnight from our security guard saying the flames were visible in the mountains above our animals!

With no sleep, I called our people in. At 3 a.m. we had fire hose deployed from our stationary fire pumps, and our five fire engines were up and running. On two of them I am the engineer, operator and nozzle man. But I also have ex-firemen that I called in to help out too. We dug in and we were ready for battle. That heightened state of readiness and anxiety lasted many days.

Between the fatigue and hunger, I was exhausted by morning. But this was only day one of three intense days where we faced fire threats on multiple fronts to a number of our animal properties all at once.

Fires usually approach us from one main fire head. But this fire was crazy. This was the many-headed monster from our worst nightmares.

For days I felt like one of those novelty acts from the old Ed Sullivan Show where the guy was spinning over a dozen plates in the air on long sticks. My three phones were going constantly directing the defense of our animals, all the while manning three charged hose lines on two fire engines myself . . . imagining the worst.

In 2004 we had the **Crown Fire** next door to us. It burned for three days through Acton and into Palmdale. Choppers took water from our pond and poured it on the flames threatening our animals before moving off and fighting the fire in the mountains as it made its run.

But in May of 2009 there was a 15-acre fire in heavy wind next door to us, on the other side. This one threatened 200 of our cats in the first ten minutes. I beat the fire engines to the scene and I jumped into the fire using a fire pump we have set up on the ground. It was an intense battle, but after half an hour, I won. The County fire department brought four engines, a dozer, and a chopper and they knocked down the flank that was burning up to our sanctuary.

After that fire I decided to get a small fire truck. Three months later I watched the burning forest bearing down on us during the **Station Fire**. We moved the dogs around to avoid potential flames but I thought for sure we would get hit. At the last minute it went around our mountain but burned for another month.

After seeing that fire, I bought two more engines including the big type one parked at our entrance. A donor donated a water truck so we have that parked at one of our catteries. Those three trucks are what was ready at our sanctuary. But we were threatened miles away too

The engine I ran between properties was the prototype that Phoschek built for us. They are the company that makes the red chemical you see the planes dropping on fires. It is a retardant. What is covered in Phoschek simply cannot burn. It is a barrier to the spread of fire, but fire can jump over the retardant line if the winds are high enough . . . and they were extremely high in the Sand Fire.

To their credit, my friends at Phoschek called and texted me all during the fire to check on our well being and offering cautionary safety tips based on their years of studying erratic fire behavior.

While the fire threatened us and 20,000 people evacuated the area, we have to shelter in place. We are like a zoo . . . there is no place to evacuate to! We were ready, but we still needed man power.

On the third day, the **Governor's Office of Emergency Services** had a four-engine strike team staged on our property to defend us. Their chief toured the sanctuary and he was impressed with our defensible space and hydrants. He called in the **US Forest Service** when he discovered that we had a deep pond that nobody was using!

For the last five days and nights the USFS has been using our water to stomp the active end of the fire above us. They have saved lots of wildlife and habitat thanks to our water. And every time I feed my baby bird throughout this fire, it warms my heart to know that some other baby bird will live . . . thanks to our sanctuary's water, and to YOU!



Here is a "Bambi bucket" lowering into the front edge of our pond away from our ducks. The chopper lets it sink into the water sending the fish away from it. Then with tremendous force the chopper lifts it out again and delivers it to the fire, knocking out the flames burning our forest, our wildlife, and their habitat.



This fire cost us a lot of money. We have to pay our staff for being there around the clock for days. We also have to pay the ex-firemen who manned our sanctuary engines and pumps for the same days. Then there is the daily food bill since the roads were closed and we had to buy food that we could pick up with a fire engine.

So far the bills are over \$15,000 and counting, besides our normal cost of caring for all our animals. So please, send your best gift today, and maybe a little extra for the fire expenses if you can afford it.

For the animals,

Leo

Leo Grillo, founder

PS:

Turn over for more pictures of the massive federal USFS and BLM operation at our sanctuary. They were thrilled to have a water source so close to the fire. It took three days off the back end of the firefight and saved countless animal lives. Every flight time minute saved helps their objective (right from their incident action plan) to "Protect the sensitive T&E habitat with an emphasis on riparian areas." And our own sanctuary is one of those riparian areas!



With a **US Forest Service** and **Bureau of Land Management** 5-engine strike team, I could finally calm down after an incredible week!



This is a portable water tank the feds set up on our helo pad at the height of the fire.

Here, one of the sky cranes fills with 1500 gallons of our pond water that was pumped into the holding tank on our helo pad. We moved the dogs from below the pad to a quieter section.

The fire is on the other side of the farthest mountain in this picture, just a few minutes away.



It's not over yet but, but here I am enjoying a wonderful moment knowing that our pond is saving more wildlife with each load.

We truly are dedication and everlasting love to ALL animals ... dogs, cats, horses, goats, pigs, birds, **and all wildlife**. And I am proud that you are part of this mission.



Dedication & Everlasting Love To Animals

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