

Reflections of Angora Fire 5 years after the devastation

Life goes on, but that does not mean we can or should forget the past. To do so means the likelihood of forgetting what we have learned. Complacency can set in – which is never a good thing.

That is why with the five-year anniversary of the Angora Fire coming up later this month *Lake Tahoe News* is taking a look back and a look forward. This fire that started on June 24, 2007, wiped out 254 houses on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe. These were homes primarily filled with our friends and colleagues.

While no one has been brought to justice for not fully extinguishing the campfire near Seneca Pond that started the fire, the investigation continues.



Angora Fire -- 5 years later

The people living in the Angora burn at the time of the fire and today are resilient folks. They had to endure heartache and suffering, and still today all the wounds are not healed. Perhaps, they never can heal. But the people are moving forward.

We know it can be hard to do so when reminders of the fire can't be ignored. Charred trees still dot the landscape. Winds blow like they never did before. Lights from neighbors are visible when before the trees blocked that glare.

Vegetation and animal life have changed. It's not just the people who were affected by this inferno.

Plenty of lessons have been learned from this fire that burned about 3,100 acres – mostly on U.S. Forest Service land, caused more than \$150 million in damage and cost \$23 million to fight.

About 80 percent of the terrain burned in Angora was charred within eight hours.

What has happened to that land in the last five years and do we have the resources to fight another Angora?

Those questions and more will be answered during the course of the next four Sundays as *Lake Tahoe News* explores various aspects of this wildland fire.

We have not attempted to cover every angle of this fire and the aftermath. We are not here to point fingers.

What we hope the four-day series will do is provide a glimpse of what has gone on in the past five years. It's also an opportunity for people and agencies close to the fire to offer their perspectives.

Anyone who was here while the fire raged has a story to tell. We hope you will share yours during the question of the week that is posted on Wednesdays, through letters, or in comments. But, please, be respectful in your comments on stories.

We want to thank everyone who wrote a story for this endeavor, who shared his or her stories. Thank you to the U.S. Forest Service and Lake Valley Fire Protection District for providing many of the photos. Thank you to Tahoe Production House for

compiling the video and slideshows.

Thank you to the firefighters, law enforcement and others who contributed to ensuring not a single life was lost and that the fire, while horrendous, was not any worse than it was.

Thank you to the people of the Angora burn area – those who stayed and those who moved elsewhere – for showing everyone what courage, tenacity and community are all about.

Facts:

- June 24, 2007, Angora Fire started
- July 2, 2007, fire fully contained
- 3,100 acres burned
- 254 houses destroyed
- July 5, 2007, bi-state commission formed
- Aug. 9, 2007, Stan and Diana Freeman are the first to pour their foundation.
- 56,317 tons of ash and rubble were removed and transported for disposal (2,823 truckloads); 6,134 tons of concrete (352 truckloads) and 2,001 tons of metal were recycled (90 truckloads); and 8,511 tons of trees were recycled for lumber (405 truckloads).
- El Dorado County waived building fees for people not expanding their footprint. However, more than half went bigger.
- May 27, 2008, governors declare state of emergency in Lake Tahoe Basin. Fire commission's 247-page report's six categories are: Environmental Protection, Issues of Governance, Community and Homeowner Fire Prevention, Forest and Fuels Management, Fire Suppression, and Funding.

- June 2008, 63 percent of the homeowners had filed building plans with the county. Of those 161 permits, 153 applications were filed in 2007 so they could use California's old building regulations.
- June 2012, of 499 affected parcels, seven vacant parcels have changed ownership, 77 single-family residences have changed ownership.