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Letters to the Editor

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.
email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



Dear Editor:

Recently read that the John Muir Land Trust is in the process of purchasing the Carr Ranch property in Moraga. What great news!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Carr family for preserving the beautiful ranch property for the residents of Moraga and the surrounding communities. What a wonderful gift to the community. We applaud them for their farsightedness in thinking of the future of this community in having the JMLT manage the property for future generations to enjoy.

With so much development either planned, or actual construction beginning in Moraga, we all owe a debt of gratitude to the Carr family for thinking of the Moraga Valley's future in preserving this beautiful open space.

Gordon & Gail Nathan
Moraga

Editor:

Well, I did it! I added my grain of sand—my petition signature—to support "The Friends of Semi-Rural Moraga" anxiously building a sand moat to protect their sand castles . . . while the tide continues rising. But what could I do? Dick Olsen asks so politely and my wife threatens so graphically!

As I understand it, Councilmember Phil Arth, who wants a roundabout to help him enter and exit St. Mary's Road at Bollinger Canyon, is not at all concerned about increased traffic created by adding new residents next to the firehouse on Moraga Way. Why not? It may be because he plans to recommend a roundabout in front of the fire house. That will not only "solve" the traffic problem but, as roundabout consultant Ron Boyle said, it should help our fire-fighters find their "sense of place."

Of course as long as America adds 25-30 million residents every decade, the only certain "sense of place" Lamorinda residents can count on is a sense of an increasingly crowded place. Stop residences for 100 people here and they'll build residences for 200 people there, or for 300 people there and there. Oh, yes, and those 100 or 200 or 300 people will want roads and schools and hospitals and, take a deep breath . . . water! So, Moraga Town Council, while you're seeking a grant for roundabouts, why not seek a grant for water? Perhaps tonic water would be good!

If you want to know what you might do to help reverse the perpetual population growth tide, visit www.GrowthBiasBusted.org and www.ThePopulationFix.com. It's probably too late to keep Moraga semi-rural, but perhaps we can save some space for our "seventh generation" descendants.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

FireSphere

Bringing satellite imagery down to earth

By Cathy Dausman



Founder and FireSphere developer Scott Farley promotes his crowdsourced app during a May open house at the Orinda fire station on Orinda Way. Photo Cathy Dausman

Scott Farley came to the East Bay seeking water; as a student at UC Berkeley he joined the swim team. But it was another element – fire – that caught his attention six years ago, and helps explain the mobile app and website he has developed to aid Lamorindans in recording and understanding the fire risk they face daily living on the wild land urban interface.

In 2009 Farley, who is originally from Southern California, watched in fascination for weeks as fire crews battled the Station Fire, the largest and deadliest of California wildfires that year. An interest

in cartography and geography and the need to develop an undergrad thesis prompted Farley to improve the standards of the National Fire Danger Rating System.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture explains NFDRS as "a system that allows fire managers to estimate today's or tomorrow's fire danger for a given area," taking into consideration "fuels, weather, topography and risks."

The color-coded fire danger scale runs from "low" to "extreme." NFDRS maps are built from satellite imagery in 30-by-30 meter boxes (approximately one half mile across);

Farley's app increases the resolution to one square meter by applying 750,000 points within that box.

Like NFDRS, FireSphere (www.firesphere.org) grades fire danger based on available fuel sources (grass, trees, type, etc.) and paints a computer-generated color picture of relative wild land fire danger. But satellite imagery may confuse non-burnable concrete with burnable grassland topography. FireSphere makes the distinction, because each user photographs the area and compares it with cached pictures of fire fuels before it is submitted. The information is then geolocated, compiled, and becomes part of the interactive FireSphere website, which produces daily updates on current and predicted local wildfire conditions.

As a free, crowdsourced mobile app, FireSphere relies on users to submit data. The test market is within the confines of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, but Farley hopes to expand his project to include the city of Lafayette. The more users FireSphere has, the clearer the local fire danger "picture" becomes.

Farley has begun speaking to local organizations to raise public awareness about FireSphere. He spoke to the Mt. Diablo Silverado Boy Scout Council in May and was scheduled to attend the Lamorinda CERT training session in Orinda July 13.



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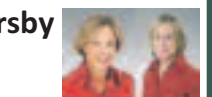
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