Editor's Note: During 2006, we discovered that there was no written history of the Huntington Fire Department. To remedy this, our Chief, Brother Chris undertook a fact-finding mission to gather information to write the history. We welcome updates, revisions, contributions and especially pictures to include in this document...

History of the Huntington Lake Fire Department

The Big Creek Fire Department Era: 1987 - 1993

Fire service in the Huntington Lake area began with the construction of the condominiums on the former Fresno State College property near the east end of the Lake. The association of condominium owners (the Huntington Association) found that they needed to be protected by a fire department to obtain insurance for their property and improvements. To meet this need, the condominium association added on a two bay garage to their sewer treatment plant, which was the minimum structure necessary to meet the insurance requirements for a firehouse.

After construction of the firehouse the condo association entered into an agreement with the Big Creek Fire Department to establish a remote station at Huntington, and Stan Beach, manager of the condos, was directed (part of his job description) to oversee and serve as a member of the department. Arlo Westmoreland of Big Creek served as the liaison to the Huntington Lake station and assisted in establishing fire services in the area. The Big Creek department felt that there should be a local fire chief and Stan Beach requested that someone other than himself take on that role. Loren Martin offered his services and became the first fire chief to serve the area as "Station Chief" at the Huntington Station of the Big Creek Fire Department. Earl Roberts joined the department from the outset and he and Stan Beach served as the only active members for a number of years after Loren Martin's retirement. The department offered limited fire suppression and rescue services. It is believed that the members did not participate in any approved training or certification programs.

The condo association began assessing their members a fee to help pay for the service and the Huntington Lake Association agreed to collect an assessment for the Big Creek Fire Department from the cabin owners at Huntington who would also benefit from the service.

The Big Creek department established an annual "Fireman's Ball", that was held at Lakeshore and was later moved to Sierra Summit, which benefited both the Big Creek and Huntington Lake stations during the early years. The Big Creek members prepared a deep pit barbeque beef and brought it up the beaver slide for the event!



For approximately three years Steve and Don Gillette brought firefighters from the Los Angeles City Fire Department during the summer to assist with operations and maintain the fire apparatus. Additionally, Rich Harsh from the Huckleberry Tract, joined the department and was responsible for training and assisted Earl Roberts and Benny Brimer with apparatus maintenance Rick also worked with the L.A. City firefighters to purchase a used 1956 Crown fire engine from Los Angeles similar to the fully restored one shown left. Later Rick was instrumental in purchasing a used Ford engine from the San Jose Fire Department.

Sierra Summit also contributed to early efforts at the firehouse by helping to construct a

second floor within the structure. Wayne Gault a Shaver Lake designer donated the plans and Rick Harsh, Benny Brimer, Pete Johnson, Jeff Preheim, and Phil Carriage built the structure.

Although early documents from the Huntington Lake Association (cabin owners) refer to addressing health and safety concerns, there is no evidence that any kind of fire/rescue service was ever initiated or operated by the Huntington Lake Association.

Members of the Big Creek Fire Department serving the Huntington area during the period (dates of service are not known):

Loren Martin Earl Roberts Stan Beach Rick Harsh

HLVFD Established in 1993

In the early 1990's Earl Roberts, who, at the time, was serving as a member of the board of the Big Creek Fire Department, and others serving at the "Huntington Station" were concerned that much of the money collected from the residents of the lake were being spent on improvements in Big Creek. After helping to fund a new station in Big Creek, the Huntington Lake members sought to establish an independent fire department at Huntington Lake.



By April of 1993, the Huntington Lake Volunteer Fire Department was incorporated as a non-profit independent corporation in the state of California. The corporations' board of directors chose Tom Zinn, a Captain in the Clovis Fire Department, as Chief. Within a year, Tom had in place a 1969 diesel powered structure engine to replace the aging Big Creek engine, and a 1959 water tender. He also recruited several new members and initiated a formal training program for the firefighters.

Although the original by-laws called for the board to be made up of people from "Eagles Nest", "Grouse Creek", "Tamarack Estates", and "cabin owners" it appears that Earl Roberts became the founding President and Tom Barile and Harold Nelson served as members of the Board of Directors. There was no stated term of office for the Board members.



The Huntington Lake Association and the Condo association continued to collect an assessment for the fire department, now payable to the newly established HLVFD. The assessment of \$15.00 (later increased



to \$20) for cabin and condominium owners and \$100 (later increased to \$250) for camps and businesses was paid to the Huntington Lake Fire Department.

Personnel that served during this period (dates not known)

Firefighters

Tom Zinn - Chief	Keri Gilliham
Lisa Allbright	Gabby Kant
Stan Beach	John McClellan
Mike Bradley	Earl Roberts
Kelly Gilliham	Steve Sherry

Board Members: Earl Roberts - President Tom Merchie

Lisa Allbright (Coleman) Harold Nelson Tom Barile

Summer 1998

At the beginning of summer 1998 Brothers Chris and Jack joined the fire department to find the department in disarray. There was only one regular responding firefighter left in the department, there was no Chief, none of the apparatus functioned and a planned firehouse expansion project that had been started years before had stalled at the foundation stage. In addition, there was virtually no money remaining in the department accounts and the board of directors was no longer functioning.

Lisa Allbright, the one remaining firefighter, and Brothers Jack and Chris began to work on a plan to rebuild the fire department. These three firefighters worked diligently to establish a training program, get the fire engine and water tender functioning, and improve funding for the department. It was also their hope to restart the firehouse expansion project and to obtain a small, "first out" engine that could respond from the Line Creek Area, thus taking advantage of 24/7 staffing that the Brothers at Camp could provide. In addition, new members needed to be added and a fire chief recruited to train, guide and lead the department.

They met with first with Chris Oberti, Chair of the Huntington Lake Association (the cabin owners) and later with the HLA Board of Directors to ask for their help in rebuilding the fire department. The firefighters specifically asked HLA to help the fire department in three ways.

1. To increase the amount of the assessment HLA was collecting for the Department from \$20.00 to \$35.00 for the next year (which was intended to cover the "daily operational expenses"), and in each year thereafter to increase the amount based on the cost of living at Huntington (with special attention paid to the cost of fuel at Huntington).

2. To run the annual pancake breakfast as a benefit and "friend raiser" for the department, thereby releasing the firefighters to spend their time on the critical tasks of training and operations.

3. To cover the costs and to assist with mailings for the Department, especially an "Annual Appeal" for funds to improve the department over time.



The HLA generously and unanimously agreed to run the pancake breakfast, and assist with the annual appeal and agreed to increase the amount they billed cabins.

The secretary of the HLA board noted that they did not have the direct authority to change anything on their annual bill to the tracts without the approval of the association. Since the fire department had no other means of collecting fees at that time it was decided to ask the membership of the HLA to vote on increasing the amount at the next regular meeting to be held the following August.

A presentation was made the following summer to each of the tracts to explain the crisis and to ask for the support of the cabin owners. A similar presentation was made to the condominium owners. That summer Lisa Allbright (Coleman), Brothers Jack and Chris and Brad Driscoll (who joined the department that summer) made presentations explaining the state of the department and the need for financial support.

The HLA membership overwhelming approved increasing the amount of assessment that HLA would "bill" and approved a cost of living increase for a period of three years (at a meeting a few years later the membership approved an annual increase every year).

By the end of the summer in 1999 Tom Zinn had agreed to return to the department as Chief and the board was re-constituted with the following members: Lisa Allbright (chair), Tom Merchie (Treasurer), Rich Bailey, Tim Glines and Br. Jack (Br. Chris replaced Br. Jack in 2000). This constitution was intended to better reflect the population we serve, condos, cabin owners, business interests, and organized camps (although the by-laws were not changed from 1993!). In the spring of 2000, Tom Zinn arranged for Fresno County Fire to donate a 1970 type III engine that could respond from Camp La Salle (Station 262), located mid-lake at Line Creek.



The Annual Appeal was established in the spring of 1999 and has grown each year to fund

the main firehouse improvement and expansion, repairing the apparatus, funding the training program, replacing dangerous and outdated firefighting apparel, establishing medical kits, purchasing defibrillators, and purchasing new fire apparatus. This annual appeal has also served as a springboard for the major grants that we have received: One from an anonymous donor for \$80,000 towards the purchase of a new structure engine and the second for \$100,000 from Southern California Edison towards the purchase of a new tender. In 2009, a single foundation donated a new Rescue 62 valued at over \$225,000.

During 2005, we also initiated a review with the IRS to assure that the HLVFD complied with the IRS regulations for a qualified charitable, not-for-profit entity. The original incorporation established the department as a 501 (3) (d), which specifically lists non-for-profit volunteer fire departments. It was determined that the department in the future should investigate changing the IRS designation to paragraph (c) which is better known among matching gift officers!

Personnel who served throughout the period

Tom Zinn – Chief; EMT	Bob Leach, EMT
Brother Chris, Deputy Chief, EMT	Mike Smith
Lisa Allbright (Coleman), Captain, EMT	Peter Gregg, EMT

Brother Jack, Training, EMT

Personnel for served for one or two years	
Brad Driscoll, EMT	Niles Kant
Josh Copeland	Paxton Roberts
Dan Duerr	Rock
Mike Wakefield, EMT (3 yrs.)	Axe
Board Members: (dates?)	
Lisa Allbright - Chair	Tim Glines
Tom Merchie - Treasurer	Br. Jack
Rich Bailey	Br. Chris (replaced Br. Jack in 2000)

Fall 2006 – New Board and By-Laws

During 2005 the board, having been in place for seven years and having accomplished many of the goals they had set down in 1998 began to investigate the possibility of recruiting new members to replace them. It was thought that having board members that lived in more tracts/condos from up and down the lake would benefit the department. In addition, it was felt that the new board should possess the skills necessary to bring the department the financial solvency not only for the present day needs but also for many years to come. It was clear that building endowments for future replacements of apparatus, and buildings, as well as gathering funds for the immediate replacement of our old apparatus was another priority.

The board actively began seeking out cabin/home/condo owners who had the skills necessary and those willing to serve during the summer of 2005.

As the process continued, the outgoing board reviewed the Fire Department's 1993 articles of incorporation and the by-laws. It was found that even though several changes had been made over the years in the way the corporation operated, no changes to the by-laws had been registered with the State since the corporation had been established thirteen years previously. The board up-dated the by-laws to meet existing practices and filed those changes with the State in the fall of 2005. Soon thereafter, the board nominated and elected a new board of directors and the former members of the board resigned.

It was also during this period that the department petitioned the IRS to change our status to a 501 (3) (c) rather than a 501 (3) (d) as was written in the original formation of the Huntington Lake Volunteer Fire Department Corporation. Although there is no legal difference between the two paragraphs in the IRS code, the IRS publicly lists those not-for-profits that are covered under paragraph (c). Many

matching gifts officers and grant providers use that listing when they assign funds. This re-classification has helped significantly in us receiving grants from several groups.

Board Members 2005 - 2016:

John Slater, President Steve Soares, Vice President Phyllis Thomas, Finance Bob Wilson, Legal Ned Fox, At-large Bro. Chris Donnelly, Chief Bob Leach, (2005 - 2009) Fire Fighter Representative Lisa Coleman, (2009 - Present) Fire Fighter Representative

In the fall of 2016, Dr. Connor Telles replaced Ned Fox and Jane Tamberi replaced Bob Wilson on the HLVFD Board of Directors. Captain Lisa Coleman replaced Bob Leach in after his death in 2009.

Karen Bare-Kamimoto (Secy)

Department Members:

2008 Roster

Bro. Chris Donnelly – Chief Brad Driscoll– Asst. chief Lisa Coleman – Captain Bro. Jack Henderson – Training Officer Jeff Heberle Dave Newton Elaine Newton Jeff Paul Mark Richards Peter Gregg Bob Leach Peter Allbright

Arrivals and Departures: (2009 - 2016)

In 2009 Bob Leach died and Eric Luinga joined us for one summer as an EMT and Colton Richards began his term as an Explorer ending in 2014. Niles Kant and Steve Sherry served this year as first responders.

In 2010 Bill Hall, Spencer Faraday and Matt Ferreira joined us for a year and David Gyer served two summers.

John Foldberg served as a firefighter from 2011 - 2015 and Freddie Weinholz became a member.

Terri Crow began her tenure during summer 2015 and she resigned in 2018.

Roster Summer 2016 Bro. Chris Donnelly – Chief Brad Driscoll– Asst. chief Lisa Coleman – Captain Bro. Jack Henderson – Training Officer Peter Allbright Terri Crow Jeff Heberle Callie Newton (Explorer) Dave Newton Elaine Newton Jeff Paul Mark Richards Mitzi Richards Freddie Weinholz

The "Academy Program" and the purchase of a Condo 2017 -18

From its very beginning in 1987, the Fire Department had struggled to have enough trained responders, especially in the fall and winter months. In 2017 Captain Freddie Wienholz, then a part time instructor at the Fresno Fire Academy, began a program for recent Academy graduates to volunteer with HLVFD. Graduates from the academy are fully trained firefighters and first responders, and most are EMT's. Additionally, recent academy graduates need to either be hired in a full time department or gain experience in a volunteer department to earn their firefighter I certification. Our 'Academy Program' helps both the firefighters to gain critically needed experience and the people of Huntington Lake by providing well-trained firefighters to staff the station.

Recent Academy graduates generally did not have accommodations at Huntington, so in 2017, the department was loaned a large travel trailer to run a 'pilot program' to house these folks and in 2018, the department bought a Condo to house the firefighters. The goal is to

have at least two fully trained firefighters staffing the department every weekend. The tenure of each candidate at Huntington is a year or two, from their graduation until a full-time department hires them..

Continuing Fire Department Projects

Quick Response Engine acquisition and Replacement Project (E262)

The need was recognized during the summer of 1999 that an engine that could respond from Line Creek area would greatly reduce response times. The Chief, Tom Zinn got a 30-year-old engine donated from Fresno County, which was put into service in 2000. While this engine served us well and many lives were saved and fires were controlled, it was clear early on that this engine lacked the power and grade ability and the weight bearing capacity to effectively meet our needs. In fact, fully equipped the engine could reach speeds of only 18 miles per hour up hills! The board determined that replacing this engine with a more capable one was the number one priority.



After an extensive search and continued fund raising, in the summer of 2005 a used engine (2001 model year) was purchased at half the retail cost of a new engine.

Structure Engine Replacement Project

The HLVFD board of directors, which had placed the replacement of our 1969 Structure Engine as our third priority, after the replacement of our 1959 Water Tender changed our priorities when an anonymous donor stepped forward with a challenge grant of \$80,000 to purchase a new structure engine to replace our 1969 engine.



The donor specified that the old engine would be replaced with a new engine (2006). The board recognized that with this generous donation the department could replace the old structure engine with a new one for

less than it would cost to buy a ten-year-old used one. After a five-year search for a used engine, it was also becoming clear to the department and the board that it would be difficult to find a suitable used engine less than 15 years old, since most fire departments keep their apparatus about 20 years and firefighting pumps had little life left after a 20 year career.

While the old structure engine could access all the cabins and condominiums, it did so with some difficulty. (Our firefighters often said that we can get E62 anywhere, but sometimes it is difficult to get it out!) The new structure engine has much better clearance, a shorter wheelbase, and much better turning radius that allows us easier access to all the cabins and condominiums. This engine is a critical unit during all fires to provide additional pumping capability and water supply. The new engine carries 1,000 gallons of water, 300 gallons more than the one it replaced. The major gifts committee asked several Huntington families to contribute the balance of the purchase price to make this purchase possible. Essentially 12 Families and one foundation bought this fire engine for the entire community!

Water Tender Replacement Project



The tender was our oldest apparatus (1959) and is critical for fighting all fires. Because of the limited water supplies in all of the tracts, a water tender is needed for both structure and wild land fires. The old tender only carried 1,500 gallons of water. The 2010 tender increases that amount to 2,000 gallons, which is the maximum amount a two axle tender can carry.

With lots of work on the part of Chris Oberti, Maureen Barile, and Bob Leach, Southern California Edison has committed to donating \$100,000 towards the purchase of a new water tender. Together with donations from the residents of Huntington Lake, the new tender was in service by the summer of 2009.

Rescue 62

During the summer of 2005 the fire department began discussing ways that we might further improve the quality of medical care we provide. One of several things we began to research was the possibility of having a "basic life support" ambulance at Huntington that could be used to transport patients partway down the mountain. This unit would be staffed by volunteer Huntington Lake firefighters who are also EMT's.



It was clear that for years there were many occasions when the ambulance stationed at Shaver Lake was not available and we would have to wait for an ambulance from Prather or the Valley (a few times the wait had been nearly two hours!). Having a "basic life support" ambulance at Huntington would allow us to get the patient started down the mountain to meet the incoming ambulance somewhere on highway 168.

While three ambulance companies had offered to give us a free (used) ambulance in the past, many issues needed to be worked out, such as liability, training, staffing, insurance, etc. Additionally, we did not have a firehouse big enough to house another response unit and there were questions about how our fire department could operate an ambulance in Fresno County, where the American Ambulance has an exclusive operating agreement to be the sole provider of ambulance services.

In the winter of 2007, we were granted funding from a foundation, which wished to remain anonymous, for the purchase of a new 4-wheel drive ambulance! The leadership of the department starting working hard to work out the challenges to bring this service to the community. Fresno County pointed out that while fire departments that did not have pre-existing ambulance services could not start them, any fire department could provide a "First responder transport capable vehicle". Since any patient transport from Huntington would involve rendezvousing with an American Ambulance somewhere on 168 that would finish the trip to Fresno, there was no objection for us to operate a "Rescue". Rescue 62 has been in operation since the summer of 2008, is equipped to provide 'Basic Life Support', and carries a great deal of specialized equipment needed in our remote area.

Station 62 Expansion Project



One of the priorities noted in 1999 by the 'reorganized' fire department was to finish the planned expansion of the firehouse. When the condominium owners association built the firehouse and established a remote station of the Big Creek Fire Department around 1987, their intent was to build the minimum building necessary to establish a remote station so that they could obtain fire insurance for their new condominiums.

The facility had remained unchanged since its construction, there was no plumbing, inadequate heating (water in the fire engine pumps and hoses froze one winter severely damaging the engine). The length of the bays did not accommodate the structure engine and there was no room for a quick response engine. The electrical service to the building was inadequate and the unbalanced electrical loads that the firehouse created posed a real

danger to the sewer treatment facility.

It was clear to all involved that the stalled building project needed to move forward. During the summer of 1999, Brother Chris began redesigning the remodel that was planned in the mid '90s to reduce costs and to meet the projected needs.

After the redesigned, a massive effort was launched to collect donations of goods, materials, and money to support the building effort. During the summer of 2000, Brother Chris and the Camp La Salle Staff did most of the construction. Lisa Allbright (Coleman) and her children Peter and Sarah helped paint the exterior, and some of the Gold Arrow staff assisted with the installation of donated insulation. Lakeshore donated a boom truck and Rancheria donated a forklift to aid in construction.

A developer from the valley, who wishes to remain anonymous, donated the labor of two journeyman carpenters to install the trusses, deck the roof and install the fascia.

Station 262 Construction Project

With the new Rescue 62 on the way it was clear the department need additional space to house apparatus. Since a type III was obtained in the spring of 2000, it had been stationed under a "Costco tent" at Camp La Salle during the summer and moved to station 62 for the winter. Having a station at mid-lake that was "manned" 24 hours a day, 7 days a week greatly reduced our response times to emergencies. With the addition of a new Rescue, there was simply no room for all our apparatus without building a new structure. It was decided that a permanent structure at Camp La Salle that could house engine E262 in the summer and the water tender in the winter would be the best solution.

Since Camp La Salle is under a special use from the USFS, the Forest Service made it clear that any permanent structure at the Camp would have to be owned by the Brothers and meet all the special use requirements. Conversations were held with the Brothers and it was determined that Camp would build and own the structure and allow the fire department to store/station one apparatus there year around.

Camp La Salle and the fire department jointly designed the structure and Steve Bowker, who has a cabin in Idylwilde Tract, donated the design and engineering for the project. Three donors made significant contributions to help Camp La Salle finish the project and Brother Chris and the Camp La Salle staff built the structure during the summer of 2008. The Sherry's and Kant families of Lakeshore donated the

use of backhoe/loader and a boom truck to aid in the construction and Roger Welton of Rancheria Enterprises contributed a significant amount of tractor work to prepare the sight. A developer based, in the valley, contributed the labor for the installation of the roof decking and roofing.

New "Type Two" Fire Engine



The Rosenbauer Fire Engine, purchased in 2012, serves as our "First Out" engine and responds to all emergency 911 calls. It is housed in our mid-Lake station (Station 262) in the Lower Line Creek Tract that is staffed 24/7 during the summer season. This Type II engine has a 750 gallon per minute pump and carries 500 gallons of water and several different kinds of ladders. It also has a foam generator that dramatically improves firefighting capability.

This engine carries "jaws of life", lift bags capable of lifting 30 tons up to 24", stabilizing struts, over-the-side rescue

apparatus, SCBS's, generator, chainsaw, and many other firefighting and rescue tools.

Property Protection Class (PPC) Rating- not a 5 / 5Y!

Over the past decade insurance for properties in the forest has become increasingly expensive and in some cases unobtainable. Although the department had made extraordinary strides improving its firefighting capabilities over the years the progress was often unrecognized by insurance providers. During the summer of 2014, the Huntington Lake Fire Department began to work with the Insurance Service Organization (ISO) to obtain its first PPC rating to reduce the cost and increase the availability of insurance coverage.

ISO is the agency that rates fire departments in North America and assigns PPC ratings for all departments. Ratings range from 1 (the best rating) and 10 (the lowest rating - assigned to areas with no fire department or and those with no documented



firefighting capabilities. From the summer of 2014 to the spring of 2015 ISO conducted an extensive examination of the fire department and members of the department worked many hours to document the departments training, hydrant and apparatus capability and even the purchase of a second water tender. In July of 2015 the department was assigned a "split rating" of 6 / 6Y. Five years later the department had made many significant improvements leading to a new better *rating of 5 /5Y!!* A PPC 5 rating for areas with rated hydrants and PPC 5Y for areas that depend on water tenders to bring the necessary water to fight a structure fire. This rating has reduced the cost of insurance by approximately 50%!

Additional Water Tender



In the spring of 2015 the department purchased its second water tender to help meet the ISO requirements for a fire property protection class rating for those properties without rated fire hydrants. During ISO's examination of the department it became clear that the fire department was not capable of bringing 4,000 gallons of water to many of the tracts

within the time limit required (Within 6 minutes of the first arriving fire engine.)

We purchased the used 1969 water

tender shown above and converted it to fire service to make sure we have the water we need to fight a structure fire.

In the spring of 2019, we were able to have a "new to us" pumper/tender assigned to us to replace the 1969. The newer apparatus has only 22,000 miles, and is 30 years newer! The new unit also has a much better pump allowing it to serve as both a fire engine and water tender.



Fire Boat 62

Over the years, it had become clear that we had no effective way of transporting patients across the lake or providing any fire suppression to the camps on the south side of Huntington Lake. The Chief began negotiations with the Blue and Gold Fleet of San Francisco who had acquired a former harbor patrol boat from Mare Island Naval Shipyard. Blue and Gold eventually donated the 28-foot boat to HLVFD. A 2012 Assistance to Firefighters grant provided \$32,000 to repower the boat and to upgrade navigation and electronics.



Hagglunds Heavy Rescue Snow-Cat (SC 62)



The Hagglunds snow-cat carries 13 and operates on pavement, dirt and gravel, ice and snow and can "swim" in rivers and lakes. With four driving tracks, the Hagglunds is capable of operating in the most severe winter conditions and has saved lives in the middle of winter.

Originally purchased by the US Marine Corps, this 1985 unit was donated to the Forest Service and later to the Huntington Lake Volunteer Fire Department in 2010. Huntington Fire repainted the Snow-Cat in 2013 and a remanufactured engine and new tracks were added in 2014.

The Hagglunds is constructed of lightweight fiberglass and effectively "floats" over heavy power snow and has been credited with several rescues. The California State Parks Division has provided grant funds for scene lighting and medical equipment.

Kawasaki Teryx 4

The California Parks OHV Division provided a grant to the department in 2014 to purchase this ATV for off highway rescue. The unit is fitted with trauma, oxygen administration, c-spine, backboard, stokes basket, etc. to support off-road rescues. The grant included funds for a trailer, electronic and communications equipment.

Huntington Fire responds to emergencies on nearly 300 miles of 'jeep trails' during the summer months. The Teryx will significantly help to reduce the time it takes for us to reach patients and the time it takes to get patients to an advanced care facility.

A 2016 grant from California Parks OHV Division extended the mission of the Teryx to cover winter operations with funds to purchase a cab enclosure, snow Tracks, a Cab Heater, and a snowplow. In 2019, the OHV Division provided funding for defibrillators, radios and medical bags for both the Hagglunds snow-cat and the Teryx.

