

As Paradise rebuilds, a divide over safety a year after fire

California town rebuilding after wildfire killed 85 people

By **DON THOMPSON**
Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. — There was “no way in hell” Victoria Sinclair was rebuilding in Paradise.

She'd thought she was going to die during the six hours it took her to escape the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history.

Sinclair and tens of thousands of others in nearby communities fled the wind-whipped inferno that killed 85 people and incinerated roughly 19,000 homes, businesses and other buildings on Nov. 8, 2018.

Despite her vow to stay away, Sinclair's family was one of the first to rebuild, braving the enduring threat of wildfires, and now, repeated power outages as the nation's largest utility tries to prevent its equipment from sparking blazes on windy days like it did in Paradise a year ago.

Weeks after the wildfire, Sinclair had an epiphany. She returned to the ruins of her home and felt more at peace than any time since fleeing the flames, even as she stood in the ashes of her living room.

“I want people to see that Paradise is a place to return home to,” Sinclair said. “The scars run deep here, but so do the roots that help it grow.”



AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Bill Husa plants a new tree to replace trees lost in last year's Camp Fire that destroyed his home in Paradise, Calif. Husa's home is one of nearly 9,000 Paradise homes destroyed in the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history.

“Rebuilding the Ridge” is a rallying cry on signs around town, evoking the beauty and peril of rebuilding on a wind-swept jut of land poking out of the Sierra Nevada and begging the question: Will the community be safer this time?

Sinclair's home is one of just nine that have been rebuilt, but the town is on track to issue 500 building permits by year's end.

About 3,000 people have returned, but the town is now largely populated with travel trailers. They're parked on lots scraped clean of more than 3.66 million tons of charred and toxic ruins, the equivalent of four Golden Gate bridges or twice the tonnage that was removed from the World Trade Center site.

“When you drive around, you don't see all the carcasses anymore of the houses and the cars,” town councilman Michael Zuccolillo said. “You'd hear hammers and chain saws and nail guns.”

Wildfire mitigation consultant Zeke Lunder fears Paradise is setting itself up for another disaster.

“As we saw in the Camp Fire, the town's really well set up to kill people with wildfire,” said Lunder, who lives in nearby Chico.

The five routes out of town quickly became gridlocked with traffic, abandoned vehicles and downed power poles during the blaze. Half the town's roads are privately owned, many of them narrow, dead-end tracks leading through

small, densely forested lots.

To make the town safe, officials would have to start fresh with a new grid of interconnected streets and alleys, spend millions a year to keep brush and trees in check, and force homeowners to keep their properties clear, Lunder said.

“We're not going to keep fires from burning through Paradise, so whatever they build up there should be something that can survive a wildfire,” Lunder said. “But just building a bunch of wooden houses out in the brush, we already saw what happened.”

Paradise officials have taken steps to make the town more fire resistant as it rebuilds but stopped short of the stringent restrictions adopted by several fire-



AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Pacific Gas and Electric Company workmen bury utility lines in Paradise, Calif. Investigators say faulty electrical lines owned by PG&E ignited tinder-dry vegetation that resulted in the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history. The company is now burying their power lines underground.

prone Southern California communities. They adopted only seven of 15 proposed fire safety standards.

Council members rejected a plan to ban combustible materials within 5 feet of homes until it would allow plants. Policing people's plants, Zuccolillo said, would “kind of go against the fabric of our town. ... We don't want big government telling us what to do.”

Improving evacuation routes and emergency warnings are still under consideration, while city leaders last month required people to remove hazardous trees that could fall into a public right of way.

California's growing homelessness crisis is one reason there is little talk of prohibiting construction in high-risk areas like Paradise. Rural areas are generally much more afford-

able than cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles, which face their own dangers from earthquakes, fires and rising oceans.

More than 2.7 million Californians live in areas at very high risk for wildfires, according to an Associated Press analysis of census data and state fire maps. Nearly 180 cities and towns are in the very high hazard areas.

Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology, said clearing trees is usually counterproductive because the weeds and brush that grow back in open areas are more flammable than the mature trees they replace.

“We have the technology and the know-how to build homes that are less flammable. We have no ability to do that to the forests,” he said.

IN BRIEF

Turkey captures al-Baghdadi's wife

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey has captured a wife of the slain leader of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Erdogan made the announcement in the capital of Ankara on Wednesday but gave no other details. He did not say when or how the woman was captured or identify her by name.

Al-Baghdadi was known to have four wives.

Erdogan's announcement comes just days after Turkish forces captured al-Baghdadi's elder sister, as Rasmia Awad, in Syria.

Dems withdraw subpoena for ex-WH adviser

WASHINGTON — House Democrats say they've withdrawn a subpoena for testimony from the former deputy national security adviser as part of their impeachment inquiry.

The Democrats say that they have no plans to try to compel the testimony of Charles Kupperman as the pace of the impeachment inquiry quickens, with public hearings scheduled to begin next week.

Kupperman may have listened in on the July call between President Donald

Trump and the Ukrainian president that sparked the impeachment inquiry.

Iraq protesters storm bridge

BAGHDAD — Anti-government protesters in Iraq stormed a fourth bridge Wednesday in central Baghdad, where security forces pushed them back with batons and tear gas, wounding dozens, and a medic was killed near another bridge while aiding demonstrators.

The military called on the protesters to stop blocking roads and ports, and it vowed to arrest those responsible. The U.S. Embassy urged the government to “engage seriously and urgently” with the demonstrators.

Cartel violence flares in Mexico

SAN DIEGO — As drug cartel violence flares in Mexico, a Trump program that forces asylum seekers to wait south of the border is under scrutiny.

About 55,000 immigrants have been forced to wait in Mexico under the “remain in Mexico” program. The Department of Homeland Security says the program is “an indispensable tool in addressing the ongoing crisis at the southern border and restoring integrity to the immigration system.”

— *Associated Press*

McConnell, Trump joined for 2020, despite setback

Top Republicans keep focus on winning Kentucky

By **LISA MASCARO**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Their man in Kentucky may be losing, but President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell aren't letting Gov. Matt Bevin's election fortunes alter their own pact to win the state together in 2020.

Trump started the affirmation early, tweeting his confidence in the GOP leader Wednesday morning. McConnell arrived later at the White House to celebrate one of their major accomplishments: stacking the federal courts with the president's judges, a fundamental priority of conservative evangelical Republican voters.

Bevin's fate, despite the efforts by McConnell and Trump to prop him up, seemed to have only made their dependence stronger.

“Based on the Kentucky results, Mitch McConnell ... will win BIG in Kentucky next year!” Trump predicted.

At the White House ceremony, Trump singled out McConnell for his role in securing the judicial confirmations. The senator received a long ovation and returned the nod.



AP Photo/Susan Walsh

President Donald Trump, left, hugs Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky., right, as he comes up on stage during a campaign rally in Lexington, Ky., on Monday.

“Mr. President, this is one of the many ways you're helping to make America great again,” McConnell said.

The president's optimistic outlook, though, met a countervailing assessment in Washington: Democrats, with their surprise showing in the Southern states in Tuesday's elections, are gaining ground, particularly in suburban swing areas that are slipping out of reach for the GOP.

These are the headwinds facing McConnell, a consistently unpopular politician at home who is vilified by Democrats nationally as the face of Trump's party in Congress, running perhaps his most difficult re-election campaign yet.

The ascent of Democrat Andy Beshear as a governor in Trump Coun-

try could provide an opening for Amy McGrath, a Marine fighter pilot and a favorite of Democrats nationally, who has already raised more than \$10 million toward her bid to topple the Senate leader.

McGrath told The Associated Press that people voted for Trump because “Kentuckians are so fed up about the dysfunction,” a system that's not working.

“It's Mitch McConnell that built that system,” she said. “You can't drain the swamp unless you get rid of Mitch McConnell.”

Republican allies of McConnell acknowledge the historic flip in Kentucky, with an unexpected surge in voter turnout, but scoff at any suggestion that the Senate leader faces any real trouble at home.

Just 5,000 votes behind,

the governor has asked for a recanvass, and because the election results are inside the margin for a recount in most states, The Associated Press has not yet called the race.

Scott Jennings, a Republican strategist with ties to McConnell, said there was a “branding problem in Kentucky. But not the GOP. All the Republicans won except Bevin. So the problem was his alone.”

Strategists of both parties say Kentucky remains a GOP stronghold and McConnell, a steely politician with a fine-tuned political machine, is far from the most vulnerable of incumbent senators next year.

What's become increasingly clear, though, is that McConnell needs Trump more than ever, which is one reason he was seen spending much of this week at the president's side.

McConnell flew with Trump on Air Force One to a rally for Bevin in Lexington, Kentucky. On Tuesday, McConnell faced the cameras in Washington to predict that even if the House votes to impeach Trump, the Senate will not convict him and Trump will still be president.

Trump remains popular in Kentucky and McConnell, needs the president's supporters to supplement his own base of establishment Republicans.

EVERY LIVE GAME. EVERY SUNDAY.

Undisputed leader in sports with exclusive NFL SUNDAY TICKET.

iv Support Holdings LLC
855-502-2578
www.satelliteadnow.com/OR

AT&T Preferred Dealer

Frontier
AUTHORIZED SALES AGENT

Serious speed!
Bundle and save today
Simply Unbeatable

Save with Frontier Internet Bundles
Pay one price for two great services: high-speed Internet and a full-featured home phone

BROADBAND ULTRA + PHONE + SECURE

19.99

6 Mbps • Free Wi-Fi Router • 1 Year Price Lock

67.97

12 Mbps • Free Wi-Fi Router • 1 Year Price Lock
Print Your Own, Streaming & File

Frontier
Internet

Call today and pay less
855-972-6641

You can't get 85 from a buffalo.

Imagine The Difference You Can Make

DONATE YOUR CAR

1-844-533-9173

FREE TOWING

TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Help Prevent Blindness
Get A Vision Screening Annually

Ask About A FREE 3 Day Vacation Voucher To Over 20 Destinations!!!

BETTER dish TV FOR LESS!

\$59.99

MONTH for 12 months

190 Channels America's Top 120

\$100 GIFT CARD

4000 1234 5678 9010

12/01

DISH

Add High Speed Internet

\$19.99

/mo.

Subject to availability. Restrictions apply. Offer not valid with other offers. Offer will be billed separately.

CALL TODAY - For \$100 Gift Card

1-866-373-9175

Offer ends 11/13/19. See Help Español Call 7 days a week 8am - 11pm EST. Savings with 3 year price guarantee with AT&T starting at \$59.99 compared to everyday price. All offers require credit qualification. 2 year commitment with early termination fee and AutoPay. Prices include Hopper Duo for qualifying customers. Hopper, Hopper w/ Sling or Hopper 3 Sling more. Upfront fees may apply based on credit qualification. Fees apply for additional TV's. Hopper 3 Sling more, Joey 5 Sling more, Super Joey 5 Sling more.

BETTER dish TV FOR LESS!

\$59.99

MONTH for 12 months

190 Channels America's Top 120

\$100 GIFT CARD

4000 1234 5678 9010

12/01

DISH

Add High Speed Internet

\$19.99

/mo.

Subject to availability. Restrictions apply. Offer not valid with other offers. Offer will be billed separately.

CALL TODAY - For \$100 Gift Card

1-866-373-9175

Offer ends 11/13/19. See Help Español Call 7 days a week 8am - 11pm EST. Savings with 3 year price guarantee with AT&T starting at \$59.99 compared to everyday price. All offers require credit qualification. 2 year commitment with early termination fee and AutoPay. Prices include Hopper Duo for qualifying customers. Hopper, Hopper w/ Sling or Hopper 3 Sling more. Upfront fees may apply based on credit qualification. Fees apply for additional TV's. Hopper 3 Sling more, Joey 5 Sling more, Super Joey 5 Sling more.

LeafFilter
GUTTER PROTECTION

NO MORE GUTTER CLEANING, OR YOUR MONEY BACK - GUARANTEED!

0% FINANCING*

AND!

15% OFF

*Contact us for additional details

SENIOR & MILITARY DISCOUNTS

FREE ESTIMATES!

Promo Number: 285

1-855-536-8838

Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST

CSLB# 1035795 DOP# 10783658-5501 License# 7656 License# 50145 License# 41354 License# 99388 License# 128344 License# 218294 License# 603 233 977 License# 2102212986 License# 2106212946 License# 2703132153A License# LEAFNW6222 License# WWO56912 License# WC-29984-H17 Nassau HC License# H01070002 Registration# 175447 Registration# HC049955 Registration# C127229 Registration# C127220 Registration# 360520518 Registration# PC5475 Registration# RT31804 Registration# 13VH0953900 Registration# PA069383 Suffolk HC License# 52229-H