

Exclusive: Siskiyou County Sup. Ray Haupt's Meeting with the President

A 33-year career forester is invited to share his expertise with President Trump at wildfire meeting

By Katy Grimes, September 17, 2020 3:43 pm

President Donald Trump made a stop in Sacramento, CA Monday to meet with Gov. Gavin Newsom and state and local officials to discuss the 2020 wildfires.

One of those officials was Siskiyou County Supervisor Ray Haupt. How he got tapped in to the presidential meeting demonstrates how much President Trump and his administration work with people on the ground, Haupt said in an exclusive California Globe interview. "The President doesn't like filtered information," Haupt added.



Siskiyou County is one of the northernmost counties in California, and borders Oregon. Siskiyou County is home to Mount Shasta, and is in the Shasta Cascade region. Yreka is the largest city in the county with a population estimated at 7,556.

In the meeting with President Trump Monday, Haupt told the President, "I come to you as a forester, an elected official, and a past land manager for the U.S. Forest Service, and firefighter."

Supervisor Ray Haupt wasn't kidding when he said he's a forester. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Management and Forestry, a certificate in Logging/Transportation Engineering and Economics, he retired in 2010 as District Ranger on the Klamath National Forest after 33 years of federal service. Since retirement Ray has worked with the U.S. Congress on several Natural Resource bills, is an active member of SFAC (Sustainable Forest Action Coalition), Director of Water Yield Research in Sugar Creek with UC Berkeley and UC Merced, is the Science Chair for the Elimination of Catastrophic Wildfire, and teaches Forest Science courses at College of the Siskiyous in Weed.

Haupt owns a Forest and Natural Resources Consulting Business, is a California Registered Professional Forester, a member of the California Professional Foresters Association, an Ag

advisor for Etna High School and the College of the Siskiyous tech programs, and is an author of multiple Forest Management and Fire Policies for NAFSR, the National Association of Forest Services Retirees.

And that is why Supervisor Haupt met with the President Monday.

Haupt said over the weekend he and his wife watched the President's rally in Henderson, Nevada. But Haupt said as he watched the news, he was getting frustrated with claims by local and state officials that climate change is causing wildfire.

"I told my wife, 'if I could just get five minutes with the President, I could provide him with important information,'" Haupt said.

This spurred Haupt to write a letter to the White House affairs office. "I actually got a response," Haupt said. "And then I received a phone call with a Washington, D.C. number. When I answered and the caller said it was the White House, I thought it was a prank call," Haupt said. "But then the caller asked, 'How far from Sacramento are you?'"

Haupt said he was five hours away. "Can you meet the President tomorrow morning at McClellan Air Force Base?" the White House caller asked.

Haupt was there Monday morning to meet President Trump and discuss California's wildfire problems.

"My county continues to repeat the things that you saw in Paradise when you were there, on a smaller scale" Haupt said. "The town of Happy Camp, this year, is under the Slater fire that took off. And in a 24-hour period, we lost 258 structures in a very small town. Half of my population is displaced."

Haupt said 158 homes have been completely destroyed.

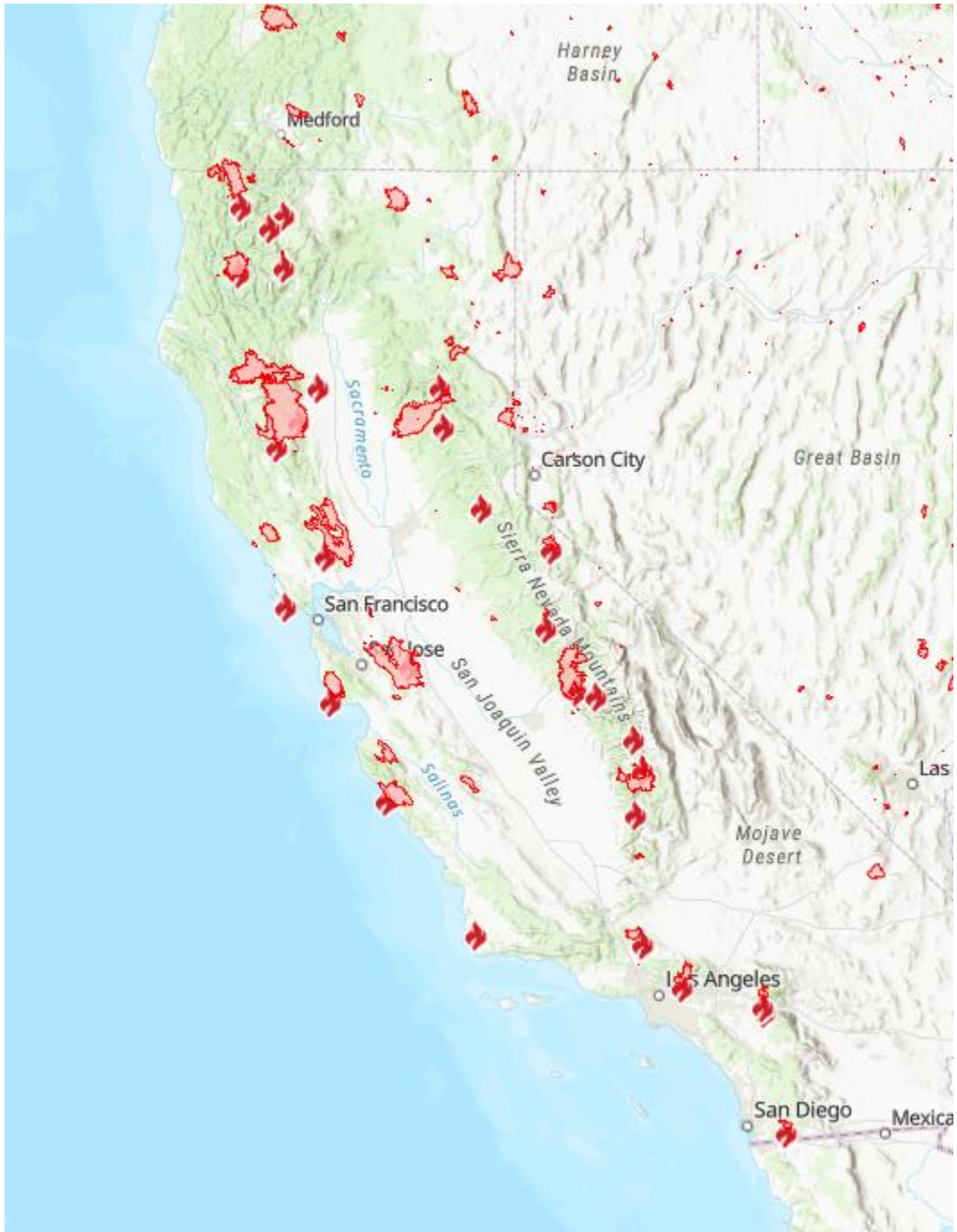
"Will that population come back?" President Trump asked Haupt.

"Sir, that's a tough question because these are very poor people anyway. And they're living through the downturn of the timber economy at this point, and there's very low employment in this area," Haupt said.

"In this area, I've worked with UC Berkeley and UC Davis, and UC Merced on some studies of our forests in the northern region, which historically have been pretty asbestos-like — are carrying four times the density that they did in 1930," Haupt added. "So we have both the increase in brush in the wildland interface, as well as the lack of management, producing these extreme densities."

"And climate change is — climate change is — and I can't do much about that, because as a forester actively managing that forest, I can manipulate fuels and I can do that in a pretty short order," Haupt told the President.

Haupt elaborated with the Globe: "As a forester, I'm not going to get into the climate thing, but as foresters, we can ameliorate the effects of climate with fire management, or large fire behavior modification."



Cal Fire map of California wildfires 2020. (Photo: screen capture Cal Fire)

Haupt said after the event Monday Haupt said President Trump found him and thanked him again, and said they continued to discuss the need for forest management. “I’ve been screaming since year 2000 about this biomass time bomb brewing in forest lands,” Haupt said. “You can look at articles in the Redding Record Searchlight and see this.”

Haupt said he spoke to Gov. Newsom’s Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot, who spent his time at the meeting telling the President it was climate change causing the wildfires, and that this past August was the hottest on record (it wasn’t). Haupt said Crowfoot couldn’t be swayed away from his environmentalist climate change agenda.

Haupt called from his car Thursday morning as he was headed back to the scenes of four different fires in his District. "With four fires, we've had evacuations, and lost so many structures," he said. "I can't stop fires, but I can get vegetation removed and do large fire behavior modification."

Haupt said he was contacted after his meeting with the President by a New York Times reporter who asked him, "Why are you are such a climate change denier."

<https://californiaglobe.com/section-2/exclusive-siskiyou-county-sup-ray-haupts-meeting-with-the-president/>