

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Santa Barbara, CA 93101
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Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 11/15/05
Department Name: Fire
Department No.: 031
Agenda Date: 11/22/05
Placement: Departmental
Estimate Time: 30
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: John M. Scherrei
Fire Chief
STAFF Tom Franklin
CONTACT: 681-5501
SUBJECT: Fuels Crew Update

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

(A) Receive an update on the Fuels Crew pilot program implemented in July 2005.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation is primarily aligned with Goal No. 2: Safe and healthy community in Which to Live, Work and Visit

Executive Summary and Discussion: At the June 7, 2005 Board of Supervisor's Hearing, the Board authorized the Fire Department to implement a 7-day a week Fuels Crew Program. Fire was directed by the Board to return in November with a report on the possibility of making the Fuels Crew Program permanent. Over the last 6 months, the Fuels Crew has played an integral role in fuels management and fire suppression countywide, specifically in areas such as:

- o The Burton Mesa Chaparral Reserve. Fuels reduction and fire safety clearances behind homes off Calle Lindero.
- o Colson Canyon. Brush removal from roadside.
- o Casmalia Road. Brush removal from roadside.

- o Lake Cachuma campgrounds. Roadside brush removal, bridge repair, large-scale removal of brush from campground area and formation of burn piles that will be eliminated in spring.
- o Painted Cave and the Highway 154 corridor. Roadside brush removal from Highway 154 directly below the Painted Cave community and along Painted Cave Road.
- o Cleared accumulated debris from several pier bridges over the Santa Ynez River at Avenue of the Flags in Buellton.
- o Assist with the 2000 acre Lausten Range Improvement Burn north of Lake Cachuma.
- o In the 2005 Fire Season, the crew responded to and assisted on 85 wildland fires.

There are many outstanding projects for the Fuels Crew that will be handled as time allows. Some of these projects include continued work at Burton Mesa Chaparral Preserve and clearing of debris from various county bridges along the Santa Ynez River.

Current Configuration and Costs

Currently, the Fuels Crew consists of two, 12-person crews working a rotating schedule allowing for 7-day a week coverage. Beginning December 16, 2005 the crew will receive a one month layoff, returning on January 16th. Beginning January 16, 2006 the crew will consist of one 12- person crew through the end of the fiscal year. Staff will evaluate the resources available to continue the Fuels Crew Program and make appropriate recommendations during the FY 2006-07 budget process.

Mandates and Service Levels:

This is not a mandated program. However, the Fuels Crew has proven to be a countywide benefit from hazardous vegetation removal to culvert and bridge abutement clearing for flood control. The crew has provided a much needed service to the county that has not existed for 14 years.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

As of October 31, 2005 the Fuels Crew has cost Fire \$514,000. The Department will spend an additional \$530,753 for the remainder of FY 2005-06 including \$262,000 from the General Fund.

Special Instructions:

Provide Fire Department with three (3) copies of approved Minute Order.

Concurrence:

CEO