



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Executive Office / OES
Department No.: 990
For Agenda Of: October 23, 2007
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Michael F. Brown, County Executive Officer
Contact Info: Michael D. Harris, Emergency Operations Chief
681-5526
SUBJECT: Continuing Proclamation of Emergency Associated with Zaca Fire

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors reaffirms the ongoing existence of local emergency due to environmental impacts, response and recovery costs from the Zaca Fire.

Summary Text:

Government Code Section 8630(c)(2) mandates the Board to review the need for continuing a local emergency at least every 14 days, until the local emergency is terminated.

Background:

On July 4, 2007, the Zaca Fire was ignited north of Los Olivos, and east of Foxen Canyon Road. Although the Zaca Fire was declared "contained" on September 4, 2007 (60 days after its ignition), the Zaca Fire continues to burn in areas within the containment area. This continued burning, and the approximately 240,207 acres of burn area in watershed areas have created conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property in Santa Barbara County.

Fire History

On July 4, 2007, because the fire posed threat to persons in the area who were using the area for recreational purposes, the County staffed and prepared the Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Although the EOC was not formally “activated” it remained at the ready, with staffing, for several hours on July 4, 2007.

Again, because of the dynamic nature of the fire, on July 16, 2007, the unified commanders of the Zaca Fire requested the issuance of evacuation orders and warnings for various areas of the northeast area of the Santa Ynez Valley. OES staff activated the EOC and, working with the Sheriff’s Department, Public Health Department (EMS and Animal Services), Public Works Department (Roads), General Services Department as well as other departments and non-governmental agencies, in a supportive role, the evacuation orders and warnings were quickly executed. The OES remained operational until the immediate threat to the Santa Ynez Valley residents had been reduced.

Proclamation

On August 3, 2007, the Zaca Fire had grown to over 38,000 acres and was threatening populated areas, which necessitated mandatory evacuations. At 1425 hours, when the Board of Supervisors was not in session, County Executive Officer Michael Brown, acting as the Director of Emergency Services, proclaimed the existence of a local emergency due to conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property caused by the Zaca Fire and ordered a copy of the proclamation forwarded to the State Director of Emergency Services and the Governor of California with a request that the Governor proclaim a State of Emergency.

At the direction of Chair Brooks Firestone, an emergency meeting of the Board of Supervisors was convened at 1600 hours, at the Emergency Operations Center, to consider ratification of the local emergency. The proclamation of the local emergency was ratified by the Board and memorialized in Resolution 07-277 (That resolution was updated to the current resolution on September 11, 2007).

Near the conclusion of the emergency meeting, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger visited the EOC to receive a first hand briefing on the Zaca Fire. After the briefing, the Governor signed a proclamation that Santa Barbara County was in a State of Emergency, retroactive to July 4, 2007, due to the Zaca Fire. The proclaimed State of Emergency remains in effect. The EOC was “deactivated” on September 4, 2007, at 1700 hours in accordance with the diminished threat.

Current Fire Conditions

According to the National Forrest Service, the Zaca Fire has burned approximately 240,207 acres. As of September 4, 2007, the cost of battling this fire, the second largest in California history, was \$118.3 million (not including County or other political sub-division costs). While the Zaca Fire burned predominantly in remote areas of the county, the burn area encompasses significant portions of watershed areas that relate to the Sisquoc, Cuyama and Santa Maria Rivers. In addition, areas of watershed associated with the Gibraltar Reservoir, Cachuma Lake, and the Santa Ynez River, fall within the burn area.

The National Forrest Service's Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team has been received by staff. According to the BAER report, *"This analysis indicates that increased debris flow, slope movements, and greater sediment generation are likely from the twelve affected watersheds."* The report goes onto state, *"Peak flow increases from the fire will be bulked by ash, debris and other floatable and transportable material within the channel areas. There is a high probability that post-fire flows from the first runoff producing rain events will see a high concentration of ash discharged from the burn area a long distance downstream to the Gibraltar and Cachuma Reservoirs. This has high potential to affect the municipal water supplies in both Cachuma and Gibraltar Reservoirs. The drainage area above Lake Cachuma is a Municipal watershed that supplies drinking water to the entire front country of Santa Barbara County from Carpenteria (sic) to Goleta. The total area of watershed burned above Lake Cachuma is about 56%. Of this, 36% burned at high and moderate burn severity. The potential for adverse water quality effects, post fire flooding and sediment yield is very high."*

At the time of this Board letter preparation, the Emergency Operations Chief is working with executives of the Los Padres National Forrest and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to promote a response by the National Forrest Service that will protect downstream infrastructures and the public.

Because of the serious impact to identified watersheds within Santa Barbara County, staff recommends that a local emergency shall continue in effect until the Board of Supervisors proclaims its termination.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Preliminary estimates indicate that approximately \$2 million of expenses have been incurred by the County in addressing the Zaca Fire. Final fiscal impacts have yet to be determined.

Special Instructions:

The Clerk of the Board should agendize this item every 14 days for Board review, until the local emergency is terminated.

Attachments:

Board Resolution 07-_____

Authored by:

Michael D. Harris