



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: Fire
Department No.: 031
For Agenda Of: October 18, 2022
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Mark Hartwig, Fire Chief / Fire Warden, 805-681-5500
Director(s)
Contact Info: Rob Heckman, Deputy Fire Chief of Administration, 805-681-5501
SUBJECT: Grant Agreement #5GG21155 between the State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) and the Santa Barbara County Fire Department

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve the attached Resolution (Attachment A) authorizing the Fire Chief or designee to approve and execute Agreement #5GG21155 (Attachment B) with the State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) for the acceptance of \$250,000 of grant funds to purchase equipment to implement fuel reduction maintenance projects in the area designated by the Agreement; and
- b) Determine that the above-recommended actions do not constitute a project subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4), finding that the actions are the creation of a governmental funding mechanism or other government fiscal activity, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

Summary Text:

The Agreement allows the Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBC) to utilize \$250,000 in State grant funding to purchase a tracked mulcher to support, implement and maintain current and future fuel

reduction projects throughout the County. The State has requested that a signed Board Resolution approving and executing the agreement be returned to them by Friday, October 21, 2022.

The tracked mulcher will be used by the Santa Barbara County Fire Department Construction Section's Heavy Equipment Operators to reduce fuel loading along roads, create and improve community defensible space and prepare plots identified for prescribed fire projects. The Fire Department has over 30 projects within the Unit Strategic Fire Plan covering 283 miles of roadside and fire roads, and 10,658.6 acres of overall fuel reduction treatments.

Although limited by certain terrain and topography, tracked mulchers are capable of treating five acres of brush per day versus ¼ to ½ acre per day with a 20-person hand crew. The tracked mulcher is intended to augment the efforts of the Santa Barbara County Fire and Fuels Crews by allowing the hand crews to focus efforts on more technical treatments on steeper terrain. The purchase of this equipment will greatly expand the Fire Department's capability to reduce fuels, provide improved safe separation distances for firefighters, provide opportunities for access to keep fires smaller and improve egress along transportation corridors. Improved capacity to reduce fuels throughout the wildland urban interface (WUI) will also reduce the impacts of fire to homes and reduce the release of carbon into the environment.

This purchase of the tracked mulcher to reduce fuels in Santa Barbara County is consistent with both the California Strategic Fire Plan and the Santa Barbara County Unit Strategic Fire Plan. The project supports the goals and objectives of the Santa Barbara County Vegetation Management Program.

Background:

In February of 2022, the Santa Barbara County Fire Department submitted an application for a grant through the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) California Climate Investments (CCI) Fire Prevention Grants Program. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department applied for \$250,000 in grant funds (the maximum available under this grant program for equipment purchases) for the purchase of a tracked mulcher. At the time of the grant application, it was estimated that the tracked mulcher could cost as much as \$332,750. The current cost estimate is nearly 10% higher than the estimate utilized in the grant application so the Fire Department is continuing to evaluate and determine the particular specifications that will be required in the purchase of this equipment.

The tracked mulcher, which has a typical lifespan of 10 to 12 years benefits at least roughly 159,000 homes in Santa Barbara County which are in or adjacent to State Responsibility Areas (SRA). With an extensive history of large wildland fires in this County, this equipment purchase is intended to augment the Fire Department's current resources with additional fuel reduction capacity and capabilities. This equipment will be utilized on fuel treatments throughout the County to improve firefighter access, safety zones and staging areas. The tracked mulcher will also improve the efficiency of the SBC Fire and Fuel Crews, while reducing the potential for injuries.

The implementation of this tracked mulcher on the Fire Department's planned fuel and roadside treatments are intended to protect communities, reduce the number of ignitions, and limit the size and intensity of fire occurrences. The purchase and implementation of this equipment directly limits overall greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the size and intensity of future wildland fires.

Project Implementation Plan:

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department plans to purchase the fuel reduction maintenance equipment in FY 22/23. The Fire Department will train and familiarize personnel with the equipment, including addressing:

- Health and safety concerns when engaged in fuels management activities
- Equipment familiarization
- Care, storage and maintenance of equipment
- Usage as it pertains to the Unit Strategic Fire Plan and other pertinent strategies
- Practical hands-on deployment of equipment
- Limitations of equipment

CEQA Compliance:

A requirement of the grant is compliance with CEQA; if applicable, and all other local, state, and federal environmental laws. The purchase of the tracked mulcher is exempt from CEQA. Purchase of this equipment does not commit the County to completing particular fuel management actions, which are separately considered under CEQA before being undertaken.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Due to timing constraints and volatility in pricing and specifications, a budget revision for this project will be processed once the State has executed the grant and the Fire Department has finalized the necessary equipment specifications. State funding will cover \$250,000 of the total cost of the tracked mulcher and the County Fire Department will cover the remaining balance of the cost utilizing Fire District fund balance. Based upon a current cost estimate of \$363,975, the Fire Department/District share is anticipated to be \$113,975. However, the department is continuing to evaluate and explore alternatives associated with this purchase in an effort to reduce the total acquisition cost.

Fiscal Analysis:

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u>
General Fund			
State	\$ 250,000		\$ 250,000
Federal			
Fees			
Other: Fire District	\$ 113,975		\$ 113,975
Total	\$ 363,975	\$ -	\$ 363,975

Staffing Impacts:

There are no staffing impacts. The purchase will result in the increased efficiency of current staffing.

Special Instructions:

Upon Board approval and execution, the Clerk is asked to PLEASE RUSH the return of a scanned copy of the fully executed resolution to Battalion Chief Fred Tan at: ftan@countyofsb.org by October 20, 2022. Once the State has executed the agreement via DocuSign, Chief Tan will return the fully executed copy to the Clerk of the Board.

Attachments:

- A. Grant Resolution
- B. SBC Fuel Reduction Maintenance Equipment Project Grant Agreement #5GG21155

Authored by:

Rob Hazard, Division Chief

cc:

Shawna Jorgensen, Chief Financial Officer

Rob Hazard, Division Chief

Fred Tan, Battalion Chief