

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



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

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 5/12/05
Department Name: Fire
Department No.: 031
Agenda Date: 5/24/05
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time: 6/7/05 1hr
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 Proposal

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

Set a public hearing date for June 7, 2005 to:

- A) Receive a report on the County Fire Department's efforts to mitigate flammable vegetation.
- B) Approve a 14 person Fuels Crew effective immediately.
- C) Authorize the Fire Chief to enter into agreement with Ventura County Fire for the use of one Crew Carrying Vehicle at no cost.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation is primarily aligned with Goal No. 1, An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community and Goal No. 2, A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

The Board of Supervisors recently requested information on the type of programs County Fire implemented to deal with flammable grasses and vegetation. This question was the result of the record rainfall received this winter, followed by a bumper crop of annual grasses and chaparral. Additionally, the question was raised regarding what other measures could be taken to deal with the ever present threat of wildfire to the urban interface areas of the county.

Santa Barbara County Fire Department currently operates several programs to mitigate fire hazards associated with accumulations of dead or flammable vegetation in the rural and urban interface areas of the county.

- The California Fire Plan/Santa Barbara County Wild Fire Management Plan
- Annual Hazard Reduction Program
- High Fire Hazard Area Burn Permits
- Vegetation Management Program
- County Fire Arson Investigator
- Santa Barbara County Public Works Department
- Cal-Trans

Although the current programs are effective tools in reducing the impacts of flammable grasses and vegetation, there is more that could be done to mitigate the potential damage of wildland fires.

A Fuels Crew would have a significant impact in dealing with vegetation management countywide. This proposal is for a 14 person crew operating 7 days per week for 13 pay periods. The total estimated cost for this period is \$390,000. During the initial 4 months of this program, the Department will continue to evaluate the feasibility of a limited year round crew.

Mandates and Service Levels:

This is not a mandated program.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The \$390,000 estimated cost of this program will be funded through the use of unanticipated Fire District property tax revenues from FY 04/05. A final budget adjustment will be processed to appropriate funds in FY 05/06 for this program. There are no facilities impacts as the crew will utilize Lake Cachuma for their base operations and will primarily be out in the field.

Special Instructions:

Please send a copy of the minute order to Fire Dept., attn. Rose Pueschel

Concurrence: