



**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: CEO/Public Works
Department No.: 012/054
For Agenda Of: May 1, 2018
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1 hour
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director(s) Scott D. McGolpin, Public Works Director

Contact Info: Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer, 568-3400
Thomas D. Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, 568-3436

SUBJECT: **Presentation on Watershed Conditions due to the Thomas Fire, First Supervisorial District**

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file a presentation from the U.S. Forest Service and CalFire Watershed Teams on conditions and impacts of the Thomas Fire on local watersheds; and
- b) Determine that the proposed actions are administrative activities that do not involve commitment to any specific project, and are therefore not a project as defined by State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Sections 15378 (b)(5).

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to receive and file a presentation from the U.S. Forest Service Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team and the CalFire Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT) on watershed impacts resulting from the Thomas Fire. The WERT Report also includes a report from the Cal OES Watershed Task Force. The County and partner agencies will use this information, in conjunction with other resources, to plan for potential future rain driven events that may be dangerous due to the post-fire conditions of local watersheds.

BAER & WERT Post-Fire Reports:

During the Thomas Fire that began on December 4, 2018, two teams formed to evaluate watershed impacts that could threaten life, property, and cultural and natural resources. The BAER Team evaluated changes to the watershed primarily in the Los Padres Forest Lands, while the WERT evaluated similar changes, primarily to private land outside the Los Padres Forest Lands.

In early January, the two teams were still in the early stages of their assessments as a major storm system approached Santa Barbara County. The County combined preliminary information provided by the teams with other data to prepare for the potential for debris flows that a future storm could cause. The BAER and WERT reports were completed in late February, and the County and public safety partners continue to use them in preparing for future storms.

Background:

During the Thomas Fire, that began on December 4, 2018, the U. S. Forest Service formed a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team. The BAER Team's purpose is to assess threats to life, property, and cultural and natural resources from fire-induced changes to the watershed that can cause erosion, sedimentation, flooding, and debris flows. While the Thomas Fire BAER report focuses on the Los Padres National Forest, it is essential in understanding the impacts on all areas below the National Forest. The information is also critical for assessing the impacts on local reservoirs within the watersheds.

At about the same time, CAL FIRE Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT) was also formed to evaluate the impacts on the lands outside the Los Padres Forest boundary. The WERT report presents the results of a rapid evaluation of post-fire geologic and hydrologic hazards to life-safety and property for non-federal lands affected by the 2017 Thomas Fire in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

In December, as the Thomas Fire burned, the State Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) began assembling the Watershed Task Force, and by January 5th the Task Force was engaging state and federal agencies, BAER and WERT members, and affected counties regarding the Thomas Fire burn scar and concerns about incoming weather. The BAER, WERT and SoCal Watershed Task Force teams are made up of geologists, foresters, civil engineers, hydrologists, soil scientists, and GIS specialists from several agencies.

During the Thomas Fire, the teams collaborated in their evaluations. The County of Santa Barbara recognized the value of integrating these scientific teams closely with County personnel to ensure understanding of watershed conditions. The teams gave regular briefings to County staff on their post Thomas fire observations.

Following the January 9th Debris Flow disaster in Montecito, Watershed Task Force was deployed to assess and map affected areas and further assist the County to identify and begin addressing post-fire and post-debris flow threats to life and property.

To ensure public access to the full report, the document has been posted on the ReadySBC.org Post Fire Reports page: <https://readysbc.org/additional-resources/post-fire-reports/> . We also provided a hard copy for the public to view at the EOC and copy for the Clerk's public viewing area.

Note: the BAER and WERT reports are not intended to be fully comprehensive and/or conclusive, but rather to serve as tools to assist emergency responding agencies, utility companies, and other responsible agencies with their missions.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No

Fiscal Analysis:

Narrative:

There are no fiscal impacts associated with these presentations.

Authored by:

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