



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GREG COX  
First District

DIANNE JACOB  
Second District

PAM SLATER-PRICE  
Third District

RON ROBERTS  
Fourth District

BILL HORN  
Fifth District

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**DATE:** April 22, 2009

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT \$7 MILLION IN FEDERAL GRANTS FOR HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION ACTIVITIES (District: 1,2, 5)

### SUMMARY:

#### Overview

The County has a deep commitment to safeguarding lives and property from wildfires. On June 16, 2004 (4) the Board established the Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program to resourcefully and effectively implement a comprehensive program to complete over \$47 million in fuels reduction activities. The program was extremely successful, however, fuel loads in areas of the unincorporated county still pose a threat to citizens and property, providing the opportunity for more dead, dying and diseased tree removal and hazardous brush thinning.

This is a request to authorize the Director, Department of Planning and Land Use to accept federal grant funds as they become available, currently estimated at up to \$7 million, for the Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program efforts, and to approve actions to secure contract services to begin the work on both public and private lands in the unincorporated area of the county. This grant requires a 10% match, which will bring the total amount available for fuel reduction to \$7.78 million. Matching in-kind vegetation work will be provided by an existing agreement with San Diego Gas and Electric, at no additional cost to the County.

#### Recommendation(s)

##### CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Find that the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as specified under Section 15269(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, for the reasons detailed in the Notice of Exemption Form dated March 16, 2009 on file with the Department of Planning and Land Use.
2. Authorize the Director, Department of Planning and Land Use to accept up to \$7 million in grant funds from the United States Forest Service as necessary to carry out hazardous fuels reduction activities through Fiscal Year 2012-2013.
3. Authorize the Director, Department of Planning and Land Use to conduct all

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negotiations and execute and submit all documents that may be necessary for implementation of the grants including any amendments that do not materially impact or alter the grant program.

4. In accordance with Article XXIII, Section 401, et seq. of the County Administrative Code, authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to issue Competitive Solicitations and award contracts, and to amend the contracts as needed to reflect changes to services and funding, for project management services and tree and brush removal services.

**Fiscal Impact**

Funds for this request are not included in the FY 2008-2010 Operational Plan. This action may result in grant revenue of up to \$7 million which will be used over multiple years for hazardous fuels reduction activities in the unincorporated area of San Diego County to help prevent future damage to lives and property from wildfires. The funding source is federal grants administered by the United States Department of Agriculture, United States Forest Service. The work will be accomplished through tree and brush removal contracts, as well as consultant contracts for the identification of hazardous vegetation, environmental surveys, inspection activities and administrative tasks. These contracts will be administered by existing staff. A match of 10% is required (up to \$780,000) and will be provided at no additional cost to the County through in-kind vegetation work performed by San Diego Gas and Electric. If approved, funds for this request will be included in the FY 2009-2011 CAO Proposed Operational Plan Change Letter. This request will not require any additional staff years.

**Business Impact Statement**

The County is committed to reducing fire hazards and supporting economic viability for utilization of the resulting woody biomass. The County will seek beneficial uses for all resulting biomass. Practical uses of biomass, such as onsite ground cover and transporting to chipping and composting companies, benefit both the environment and supports local biomass processors.

**Advisory Board Statement**

N/A

**BACKGROUND:**

The San Diego region has been devastated by two major firestorms, in October 2003 and again in October 2007, as well as by many other wildfires. The fires caused widespread damage and the largest evacuations in the history of California. Driven by Santa Ana winds, the wildfires scorched a combined 761,538 acres in San Diego County (391,876 acres in 2003 and 369,662 in 2007). Additionally, years of drought in Southern California continue to provide a home to the opportunistic bark beetle, which has resulted in widespread infestation levels throughout San Diego County. Estimates of conifer and oak tree mortality are as high as 80% with small isolated

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stands experiencing 100%. Catastrophic wildfires continue to be a threat to residents, businesses and the environment with these dead, dying and diseased trees providing a ready source of fuel.

The County's Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction (FSFR) program has already spent nearly \$47 million since 2004, including general fund money, federal grants and match funds provided by San Diego Gas and Electric Company, to aggressively remove dead, dying and diseased trees in the most impacted areas. Program accomplishments to date include:

- Over 417,000 hazardous trees have been removed on roughly 3,350 parcels.
- Work was completed one year ahead of schedule (three years total)
- The targeted acreage was doubled (over 18,000 acres)
- Five times the expected road miles have been treated (nearly 250 road miles).

Despite the great success of the program, hazardous fuel loads in areas of the unincorporated county still pose a threat to citizens and property. Additional trees should be removed and brush should be thinned to reduce fuel loads that easily ignite during dry and windy weather conditions. The necessity of fuels mitigation was starkly evident in the wake of the 2007 firestorm. Communities were spared and significant damages averted due to aggressive tree removal coupled with fire fighting efforts. For example, the Palomar Mountain area, which is home to hundreds of residents, a youth camp and world famous Palomar Mountain Observatory, was spared significant damages. The FSFR program removed approximately 96,000 dead trees from the Palomar area. As a result, a limited number of trees fell over evacuation routes and suppression actions were able to turn the fire from entering the mountain community. The Department of Planning and Land Use is aggressively seeking additional funding to continue the vital work of the FSFR program.

The \$7 million grant, if received, will be awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. These funds will be used to reduce hazardous fuels by removing dead, dying and diseased trees and other selected hazardous brush within a maximum of 500 feet from evacuation corridors and habitable structures. Some open space areas will be treated to minimize the fire threat to communities.

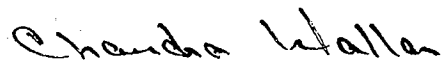
**Linkage to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan**

The development and implementation of strategies to mitigate the risks of wildfires while protecting as much of the watershed resources as possible contributes to the County's Environment and Safe and Livable Communities strategic initiatives and especially the objective to improve emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation capabilities for both natural and man-made disasters. The implementation of mitigation strategies will help protect our communities by reducing future risk of wildfires

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Respectfully submitted,



CHANDRA L. WALLAR  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A – Notice of Exemption

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT \$7.0 MILLION IN FEDERAL GRANTS FOR HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION ACTIVITIES (District: 1,2, 5)

**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**CONCURRENCE(S)**

**COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW**

*APS*  
 Yes

Written disclosure per County Charter §1000.1 required?

Yes  No

**GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Yes *Kaz*  N/A

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Requires Four Votes

Yes  N/A  
 Yes  No

**GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR**

Yes  N/A

**COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE**

Yes  N/A

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

Yes  N/A

**Other Concurrence(s):** Department of Purchasing and Contracting *Wanda McCall*

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** Department of Planning and Land Use

**CONTACT PERSON(S):**

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COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
2009 APR 9 PM 12 11  
THOMAS J. PASTUSIKA  
CLERK OF THE BOARD  
OF SUPERVISORS

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:**

*[Signature]*  
For ERIC GIBSON, DIRECTOR

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**  
(continued)

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:**

April 23, 2008 (9), authorized the application for and acceptance of \$4.5 million in Federal grants for hazardous fuels reduction activities; June 16, 2004 (4), established the San Diego County Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program to maximize federal grant funds and provide comprehensive fuels treatment in all high-risk areas; May 19 2004 (14), accepted \$39.904 million in grant funds for hazardous fuels treatment activities; March 24, 2004 (29), adopted revisions to the Removal of Combustible Vegetation and Other Flammable Materials Ordinance; January 7, 2004 (2), received a report from the Chief Administrative Officer summarizing the actions proposed to be taken in response to Firestorm 2003; December 2, 2003 (2, 3, & 4) directed the development of actions and recommendations on the County of San Diego's response to the devastating wildfires that burned through the County in 2003; August 13, 2003 (6) Receive the report entitled Mitigation Strategies for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks and authorized the Chief Administrative Officer to seek additional State and Federal funding for wildland fire mitigation projects and to apply for grant opportunities as they arise; March 12, 2003 (17) determined that there is a need to continue the local emergency for damaging conditions caused by the bark beetle infestation of pine trees in San Diego County; March 5, 2003 (1) Determined need to continue Local Emergency for Damaging Conditions Caused by the bark beetle Infestation in San Diego County; February 12, 2003 (13) Determined need to continue Local Emergency for Damaging Conditions Caused by the bark beetle Infestation in San Diego County; January 28, 2003 (13) Determined need to continue Local Emergency for Damaging Conditions Caused by the bark beetle Infestation in San Diego County; January 8, 2003 (9) Adopted second resolution proclaiming the existence of a local emergency resulting from Bark Beetle infestation in San Diego County; December 10, 2002 (32) Determined need to continue Local Emergency for Damaging Conditions Caused by the Bark Beetle Infestation in San Diego County; December 3, 2002 (1) Adopted resolution of Continuance for Damaging Conditions Caused by the Bark Beetle Infestation in San Diego County; November 12, 2002 (19) Adopted resolution proclaiming the existence of a local emergency resulting from Bark Beetle infestation in San Diego County

**BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:**

B-29, Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery

**BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:**

Board Policy B-29: Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery. In accordance with Board Policy B-29, the Department of Planning and Land Use certifies that the activities to be funded by the proposed grant substantially benefit the County of San Diego and would be worthy of expenditure of County funds in the absence of external funding. The program will reduce the threat to citizens and property from fire.

**CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):**

The Department will obtain an Oracle Award upon notification that it received the grant award.