



County of San Diego

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

DATE: March 23, 2010
TO: Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT: A REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SUPPORT COALITION
(Districts: ALL)**

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
2010 MAR 12 PM 2 27
THOMAS J. ...
CLERK OF THE BOARD
OF SUPERVISORS

Overview:

For the past five years Governor Schwarzenegger has issued executive orders to increase wildfire preparedness levels in the San Diego region as the peak fire season approached. The Governor's annual executive order has allowed CAL FIRE to maintain reasonable preparedness levels through the peak fire season.

The executive order typically brings in an additional \$5-6 million, on top of the \$26 million the State already budgets for firefighting resources in the San Diego region. When this executive order is issued, CAL FIRE in San Diego County hires additional staff that provides a fourth firefighter on each of their 26 State funded fire engines, funds all 21 CAL FIRE personnel to meet the cooperative helicopter program requirements with the San Diego Sheriff's aviation division, and provides critical staffing to augment regional preparedness.

San Diego County needs another executive order for the upcoming peak fire season. Displaying a unified front by gathering signatures from all five members of the Board of Supervisors and 18 mayors in support of another executive order for 2010 will send a strong message of unity to the Governor. The coalition letter would outline potential deficiencies in master mutual aid systems due to budget cuts, immense fuel loads in the State Responsibility Areas (SRAs), and possible staffing challenges for local aerial firefighting assets.

Recommendation(s)

Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price & Vice Chairman Bill Horn:

1. Direct the CAO to prepare a letter for signature by all five members of the Board of Supervisors requesting a 2010 executive order by Governor Schwarzenegger to increase wildfire protection, preparedness, and education levels during the peak fire season in San Diego County.

2. Direct the CAO to solicit the support of all 18 cities in San Diego County of the aforementioned 2010 Governor's executive order through signature of each mayor on the letter. This must be accomplished by the end of April.

3. Direct the CAO to work with our lobbyist in Sacramento to ensure this letter is received by the Governor's office and each of San Diego County's elected representatives to the State of California.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact associated with these recommendations.

Background:

San Diego is a unique region when it comes to fire protection. We have State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) governed by CAL FIRE, Federal Responsibility Areas (FRAs) governed by the U.S. Forest Service, fire protection districts, city fire departments, a regional fire authority, volunteer fire companies, and fire safe councils. All contribute extensively to the 98 percent success rate our regional fire protection has had containing wildfires before they can become out-of-control firestorms.

There are a number of factors contributing to the significant strain on our ability to protect human life and property from fires. An executive order by the Governor to increase wildfire preparedness resources during our peak fire season is critical to our region. A formal request for the Governor to implement an executive order again this year is validated based upon potential deficiencies in mutual aid systems, immense fuel loads in SRAs, and possible staffing difficulties for local aerial firefighting assets.

Local jurisdictions are reeling from budget pressure generated by the drop in property and sales taxes. As a result, municipalities in San Diego County are looking at all options to reduce expenditures. Firefighting resources will not be immune to budget cuts, and challenges will present themselves for our master mutual aid system that is utilized during times of high emergency activity.

A potential inability for municipalities to assist other agencies exemplifies our need for additional funding from the State during the heightened fire season. Previous executive orders have allowed CAL FIRE to provide a fourth firefighter on each of the 26 State funded fire engines in San Diego. If local municipal public safety budgets are reduced, our nationally recognized mutual aid system will be strained, thus, the additional fourth firefighter during the peak season becomes an even more critical component to our regional protection.

Although the wildfires that engulfed San Diego in 2003 and 2007 burned over 745,000 acres, 65-75 percent of our rural areas could still burn due to years of low rainfall totals. This abundance of fuel is being enhanced by a new insect, the Gold Spotted Oak Borer,

which is devastating large oak trees across the region. These existing fuel loads create an imminent threat of catastrophic fires during the heightened fire season.

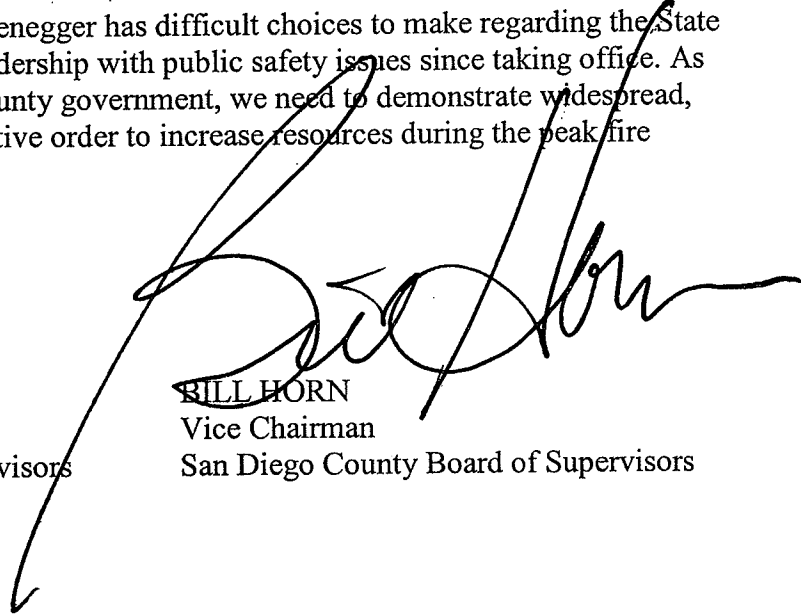
The County of San Diego has a great working relationship with CAL FIRE, and we jointly staff firefighting helicopters during the heightened fire season. Executive orders over the past five years to deploy additional resources have greatly assisted our collaborative effort to maximize aerial firefighting capabilities. The State has expended more than \$10 million in support of this cooperative helicopter program. This program provides an initial attack helicopter crew exclusively for fires and rescue operations throughout San Diego County. This gives us the ability to cooperatively staff both of the County's firefighting helicopters during the fire season. A decision not to deploy additional resources again this year will have a significant impact to our overall preparedness in San Diego.

We understand Governor Schwarzenegger has difficult choices to make regarding the State budget, but he has shown great leadership with public safety issues since taking office. As representatives of the cities and county government, we need to demonstrate widespread, regional support for another executive order to increase resources during the peak fire season.

Respectfully submitted,



PAM SLATER-PRICE
Chairwoman
San Diego County Board of Supervisors



BILL HORN
Vice Chairman
San Diego County Board of Supervisors

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA ITEM
INFORMATION SHEET

SUBJECT: A REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SUPPORT COALITION
(Districts: ALL)

SUPV. DIST.: Three & Five

COUNTY COUNSEL APPROVAL: Form and Legality Yes N/A
 Standard Form Ordinance Resolution
Review Board Letter Only: Yes No

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER REVIEW: Yes No
4 VOTES: Yes No

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES Yes No

CONTRACT REVIEW PANEL: Approved N/A

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTION: N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE: N/A

CITIZEN COMMITTEE STATEMENT: N/A

CONCURRENCES: N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: District Three and District Five

CONTACT PERSON(S): Mark Olson 531-5533 MS A500
Chris Champine 531-5555 MS A500

DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

MEETING DATE