

**PLACER COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Thomas M. Miller, County Executive Officer
By Rui Cunha, Program Manager

DATE: May 26, 2009

SUBJECT: Authorize public notice to announce the County's planned use of reauthorized Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act, (Public Law 110-343) Title III discretionary funds in FY2009-2010, for 5 activities costing a total of \$107,000.

ACTION REQUESTED

Authorize public notice to announce the County's planned use of reauthorized Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act, (Public Law 110-343) Title III discretionary funds in FY2009-2010, for 5 activities costing a total of \$107,000.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act was reauthorized in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009 under Public Law 110-343. Compared to the previous Act (Public Law 106-393) the reauthorized Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Public Law 110-343) significantly narrows the activities that can be funded under Title III.

Title III funds may be used to:

- (1) carry out activities under the Firewise Communities Program to provide homeowners in fire sensitive ecosystems education and assistance with implementing techniques in home siting, home construction, and home landscaping that can increase the protection of people and property from wildfires;
- (2) reimburse the participating county for search and rescue and other emergency services, including firefighting that are performed on Federal land after the date on which the use was approved and paid for by the participating county; and
- (3) develop community wildfire protection plans in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture.

Placer County was authorized \$107,217 in FFY 2009 and is expecting to receive \$96,495, \$86,965 and \$26,107 in FFYs 10, 11 and 12 respectively. Placer County's total Title III funding represents 7% of the full funding reauthorized under PL 110-343. We expect to receive a total of \$316,785 in Title III funding during the limited years of reauthorization.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

The activities below comply with the requirements of PL 110-343 and are consistent with Board of Supervisors policies related to previous uses of Title III funding. In addition, these projects are consistent with Placer County's priorities as detailed in the Placer County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan approved by your Board in April 2005, the Strategic Plan for the Wildfire Protection and Biomass Utilization Program dated October 2007, and the Western Slope Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) approved by your Board in March 2008.

Board Memorandum
Activity Authorization – 45 Day Comment Period
May 26, 2009
Page 2 of 2

For this funding cycle, County staff recommends the following activities:

- Develop a Rural Lincoln Area (including Fowler, Thermalands, and Sheridan areas) annex to the West Slope Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) - \$35,000
- Augment the 2009 defensible space inspections program with emphasis in the Meadow Vista, Applegate, Weimar areas - \$5,000
- Defray costs for search and rescue operations on federal lands - \$10,000
- Reproduce and disseminate Firewise education materials through Firesafe Councils in Placer County - \$7000
- Provide funding for the Placer County Chipper Program - \$50,000.

A more comprehensive discussion of the projects and estimated costs is attached.

Upon receipt of authorization by your Board, staff will commence the required 45-day public noticing period, and will return to your Board meeting on July 20 with input from the community, and request final approval of these expenditures.

FISCAL IMPACT

Title III funding of \$107,217, authorized under PL 110-343 for FFY 2009, has been deposited in the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act Trust Fund and are available to be encumbered following the 45 day public comment period. There is no impact to the General Fund as a result of this action.

Attachment

Activity Discussion

Activity Discussion

Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act Reauthorization FY 2009-10 Recommended Activities and Estimated Costs – Placer County

May 26, 2009

PROJECT #1: DEVELOP A RURAL LINCOLN AREA (INCLUDING FOWLER, THERMALANDS, AND SHERIDAN COMMUNITIES) ANNEX TO THE WEST SLOPE COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)

Issue/Background: The West Slope Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was approved by the Board of Supervisors in March 2008. This covered the areas from Emigrant Gap to Ophir, and the Newcastle and Penryn communities. Both the Foresthill Firesafe Council and the Placer Sierra Firesafe Council have used analysis from last year's CWPP effort to apply for fuel reduction grant funding for this coming fiscal year. CWPPs are a recognized fire mitigation best practice. Repeatedly communities that have taken the effort to complete a plan are more competitive for grant funding to assist with public education, fuel reduction, and fire safety. The greater Rural Lincoln area to include, but not limited to, the communities of Fowler, Thermalands, and Sheridan will benefit from this planning effort. This planning effort along with the establishment of a Rural Lincoln Firesafe Council should help to improve community education and preparedness over time.

Other Alternatives: This area could be included in the revision of the West Slope CWPP estimated for 2013.

Responsible Office: Placer County Office of Emergency Services

Cost Estimate: \$35,000

Benefit: CWPPs are accepted as a community best practice to focus limited mitigation moneys in areas that are shown to bring the greatest cost / benefit. The Rural Lincoln CWPP will allow the newly forming Rural Lincoln Firesafe Council to compete for local, State or Federal funding to accomplish community designated high priority projects. While the planning effort does not contribute directly to a safer community, it enables improved competitiveness and increased prioritized focus.

PROJECT #2: ANNUAL DEFENSIBLE SPACE INSPECTIONS PROGRAM

Issue/Background: The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) indicates that ensuring defensible space is the single most important action that a homeowner can take to increase wild land fire survivability of homes and structures. Conversely, defensible space helps to protect wild land from the effects of a structure fire, and provides firefighters with a safe place to work while defending a home or structure. Fire fighters can only defend a home if they can do so safely.

Many homeowners are not aware of the requirement to maintain defensible space, especially newcomers moving into the unincorporated County and those formerly from highly urban areas. However, during a wildfire, urban area tactics and coverage is not operationally feasible, and homes' and structures' first line of defense is defensible space that may allow these dwellings to be protected from an approaching wildfire with little to no assistance from firefighters.

Effective January 2005, the State increased the minimum defensible space requirement from 30 to 100 feet in rural areas. Regular inspections then, based on the requirements of California law as specified in Public Resources Code (PRC) 4291 help ensure that homeowners create and maintain that defensible space. An inspection is also an opportunity to educate and motivate homeowners to further improve wild land fire safety even beyond legal requirements.

Whereas CAL FIRE has the legislated mandate to perform these inspections, its budget only provides for occasional inspections, despite the many requests by homeowners. Since 1998, PRC 4291 inspections in the Placer County Foothills region have been funded by grants from the Community-Based Wildfire Protection Program, through the California Fire Safe Council and Bureau of Land Management, and through these Title III funds.

Other Alternatives: Taking no action will result in less compliance with defensible space requirements.

Responsible Office: CAL FIRE/Placer Hills Fire Protection District

Cost Estimate: Total cost estimate - \$5,000. Inspections cost approximately \$15.00 per improved property for the inspector's time and insurance, mileage, and management oversight. Additional costs include those

for handout literature, the most important of which is the Homeowner's Checklist (downloadable at <http://www.fire.ca.gov/index.php>) Color copies of this document cost from \$1.50 to \$2.00 each depending on the number of copies.

Benefit: Increased life safety and reduced property loss. A cost of \$17.00 per home inspected (\$15.00 + \$2.00) is about 0.005 percent of the average Assessor's roll value of a home in Placer County.

PROJECT #3: SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS ON FEDERAL LANDS

Issue/Background: This action makes \$10,000 available to support Search and Rescue operations on Federal lands. The Placer County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) uses these funds for equipment and personnel costs associated with actual operations.

Other Alternatives: Continue to conduct Search and Rescue with limited and uncertain resources.

Responsible Office: Placer County Sheriff Office

Cost Estimate: \$10,000

Benefit: This project helps defray costs allowing PCSO to continue to maintain one of the most successful Search and Rescue Operations in the State.

PROJECT #4: FIREWISE EDUCATION MATERIALS

Issue/Background: This project provides limited public information materials to active Firesafe Councils, the Dry Creek Fire Protection Advisory Committee and the Placer Firesafe Alliance, leveraging their community leadership and connections to disseminate important information about making properties firesafe.

Other Alternatives: Continue reliance on various "pull-based" public education tools available through the worldwide web.

Responsible Office: Placer County Office of Emergency Services

Cost Estimate: \$7,000

Benefit: This project contributes to the continued firesafe education throughout Placer County.

PROJECT #5: PLACER COUNTY CHIPPER PROGRAM

Issue/Background: Placer County Resource Conservation District has applied for and received approval for a Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant in the amount of \$300,000 to sustain the Placer County Chipper Program through FY 09/10. While this grant is approved, funding will not be available until late summer or early fall. In the mean time, the Placer County Chipper Program has limited remaining funding to operate through the summer months. Backlog for chipper services is over 200 jobs and increasing daily. This project provides limited funding designed to sustain the Placer County Chipper Program for a period of approximately 60 days until longer term funding is available. Staff expects to use this funding by early fall.

Other Alternatives: Burn slash and clippings.

Responsible Office: Placer County Office of Emergency Services

Cost Estimate: \$50,000

Benefit: The Chipper Program encourages attainment and maintenance of defensible space and makes available an alternative means to burning for disposal of slash and other fire prone natural fuels. In addition this project contributes to improved air quality.