



VENTURA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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October 29, 2024

Board of Directors
Ventura County Fire Protection District
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT:

Ratification of the Ventura County Fire Protection District's (Fire District) Acceptance of an Award of Federal Financial Assistance and Cooperative Agreement 24-CA-11050700-009 with the USDA, Forest Service Los Padres National Forest in the Amount of \$108,350, With No Cost Share Match, for the Ojai Community Defense Zone Fuel Treatments Project; and Authorization for the Auditor-Controller's Office to Process the Necessary Accounting Transactions. **(RECOMMENDATION 2 REQUIRES 4/5THS VOTE)**

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve and ratify the acceptance of an award of federal financial assistance and Cooperative Agreement 24-CA-11050700-009, attached as Exhibit 1, with the USDA, Forest Service Los Padres National Forest in the amount of \$108,350, with no cost share match, for the implementation of the Ojai Community Defense Zone Fuel Treatments project.
2. Authorize the Auditor-Controller's Office to process the necessary accounting transactions to establish the following transfers and appropriations **(RECOMMENDATION 2 REQUIRES 4/5THS VOTE)**:

Fund-Fire District S600, Budget Unit 2721

INCREASE Intergovernmental Revenue	\$ 37,000
INCREASE Salaries and Benefits	\$ 9,000
INCREASE Services and Supplies	\$ 28,000

REASON FOR RATIFICATION:

The USDA Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest, contacted the Fire District in May 2024 to discuss entering into a cooperative agreement. The Fire District agreed and provided the USDA Forest Service with a project description and an estimate of the funding needed for the project. The USDA Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest, notified the Fire District that the project was awarded on August 8, 2024, and requested that the agreement be signed by August 28, 2024. This tight deadline did not allow enough time for the Fire District to obtain formal Board approval. As a result, the Chief of the Fire District signed the agreement after County Counsel reviewed it.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Mandatory:	No
Source of Funding:	USDA Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest
Funding Match Required:	None
Impact on Other Departments:	None

<u>Summary of Revenue and Costs:</u>	<u>FY 2024-25</u>	<u>FY 2025-26</u>
Revenue:	\$ 37,000	\$ 71,350
Costs:		
Direct	\$ 37,000	\$ 71,350
Indirect-Agency/Dept.	0	0
Indirect-County CAP	0	0
Total Costs	\$ 37,000	\$ 71,350
Net Cost:	\$ 0	\$ 0

Current FY 2024-25 Budget Projection for the Fire District - BU 2721				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Budget	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	206,324,066	226,115,054	226,115,054	-
Revenue	209,676,547	209,676,547	209,676,547	-
Net Cost	(3,352,481)	16,438,507	16,438,507	-

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This item supports the County's Strategic Plan priority of providing Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities. The grant award will help the Fire District strengthen its firefighting resources at the Ojai Community Defense Zone, improving our readiness and response capabilities.

DISCUSSION:

The Cooperative Agreement provides funding for the Ojai Community Defense Zone Fuel Treatments. Specifically, the funds will be used for the maintenance of State Responsibility Area sections of Laguna and Chismahoo Fire Roads which are Forest Service Fire Roads, Shelf Fire Road, and the Upper Ojai Community Buffer, which are both Local Responsibility and State Responsibility Areas bordering the Los Padres National Forest.

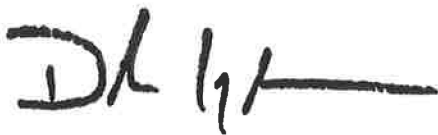
The Fire District maintains critical portions of these fire roads by reducing fuel on both sides of the fire roads to provide access and egress for individuals living along and at the end of Laguna and Chismahoo Fire Roads. Shelf Fire Road is also maintained by reducing fuel on both sides of the fire road. It is strategically located bordering the City of Ojai to the north between the Los Padres National Forest and the City. During the Thomas Fire, firefighters utilized Shelf Fire Road to set a backfire when the fire was backing down toward Ojai, highlighting the importance of these maintenance efforts.

The fire roads require more than normal maintenance due to the damage caused by the Thomas Fire and consecutive years of above average rainfall, which have led to extensive vegetation regrowth. The Upper Ojai Community Buffer is a fuel modification zone designed to reduce fire intensity in the event of a wind-driven fire from the east. This area is maintained through prescribed herbivory.

Abundant regrowth of brush, grasses, and forbs throughout Ventura County due to consecutive years of above average rainfall has led to longer completion times for fuel reduction projects. The additional funds will enable the Fire District to expand its capacity and effectively manage the fuel loading.

Forest Service funds of \$108,350 are currently available for the performance of this project through June 1, 2027.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel. If you have any questions, please contact me at (805) 389-9704, or Assistant Fire Chief Chuck Scherrei at (805) 910-0238.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dustin Gardner', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dustin Gardner
Fire Chief

DG/CS/AO:dm