

# VENTURA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Board of Directors  
Ventura County Fire Protection District  
800 S. Victoria Avenue  
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## SUBJECT:

Approval of, and Authorization for the Fire Chief of the Ventura County Fire Protection District to Sign, an Agreement with Southern California Edison Company in the Amount of \$3,150,000 to Fund the Stand-By Time Portion of a Lease and Services Agreement with Coulson Aviation Incorporated for the Operation of Fire Suppression Assets for the 2021 Fire Season; Approval of, and Authorization for the Fire Chief of the Ventura County Fire Protection District to Sign, a Lease and Services Agreement with Coulson Aviation Incorporated for the Operation of Fire Suppression Assets with Service to Commence June 15, 2021, and to Continue for 150 Days; Authorization for the Fire Chief of the Ventura County Fire Protection District to Extend the Agreement with Coulson Aviation Incorporated Provided Certain Conditions Are Satisfied; and Authorization for the Auditor-Controller's Office to Process the Necessary Accounting Transactions.

**(RECOMMENDATION NO. 4 REQUIRES A 4/5 VOTE)**

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve, and authorize the Fire Chief of the Ventura County Fire Protection District (Fire District) to sign, an agreement with Southern California Edison Company (SCE) (Exhibit "1") to accept \$3,150,000 (and up to \$3,780,000) to fund the stand-by time portion of a separate lease and services agreement with Coulson Aviation Incorporated (CAI) for certain fire suppression assets and their related operation to commence on June 15, 2021, and to continue for 150 days (and up to 180 days if SCE exercises an option to extend the agreement).
2. Approve, and authorize the Fire Chief of the Fire District to sign, a lease and services agreement with CAI (Exhibit "2") for certain fire suppression assets and

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their related operation to commence June 15, 2021, and to continue for 150 days (and up to 180 days if SCE exercises the option to extend its agreement with the Fire District), provided the funding agreement between the Fire District and SCE (Exhibit "1") is executed.

3. Authorize the Fire Chief to extend the term of the agreement between the Fire District and CAI (Exhibit "2") up to an additional 30 days (from 150 days to up to 180 days) if SCE exercises its option to extend the agreement between the Fire District and SCE (Exhibit "1"), subject to review and approval by the County Counsel's Office.
4. Authorize the Auditor-Controller's Office to process the necessary accounting transactions to adjust the following revenue, appropriations, and fund balance. **(REQUIRES 4/5 VOTE)**

Fire District S600, Unit 2721			
Increase	2700-2721	Charges for Services	\$ 146,538
Increase	2700-2721	Miscellaneous Revenues	\$ 315,000
Increase	2700-2721	Salary and Benefits	\$ 29,250
Increase	2700-2721	Service and Supplies	\$ 3,275,000
Decrease	Fund S600 - Restricted Public Protection		\$ 2,842,712

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Mandatory: No  
 Source of Funding: Southern California Edison Company  
 Funding Match Required: No  
 Impact on Other Departments: None

<u>Summary of Revenues and Costs:</u>	<u>FY 2020-21</u>	<u>FY 2021-22</u>
Revenue:		
Charges for Services	\$ 146,538	\$ 1,611,913
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 315,000	\$ 3,465,000
Total Revenue	\$ 461,538	\$ 5,076,913
Costs:		
Direct	\$ 469,250	\$ 5,161,750
Indirect-Agency/Dept.	0	0
Indirect-County CAP	0	0
Total Costs	\$ 469,250	\$ 5,161,750
Net Cost:	\$ 7,712	\$ 84,837
Recovered Indirect Costs:	\$ 0	\$ 0

<b>FY 2020-21 Budget Projection for Fire District – Operations and Support Services - Unit 2721</b>				
	<b>Adopted Budget</b>	<b>Adjusted Budget</b>	<b>Projected Budget</b>	<b>Estimated Savings/(Deficit)</b>
Appropriations	\$155,677,434	\$176,118,842	\$ 177,714,200	\$ (1,595,358)
Revenue	\$156,426,507	\$156,670,507	\$ 176,035,063	\$ 19,364,556
Net Cost	\$ (749,073)	\$ 19,448,335	\$ 1,679,137	\$ 17,769,198

**Sufficient appropriations have been included in FY 2021-22 Budget to fund this contract including 30-day extension if granted.**

**DISCUSSION:**

Wildland fire remains the most significant threat to life and property in California. Lives, property, and natural resources are threatened on a 24-hour basis. A recent risk assessment conducted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) concluded that an estimated 11 million residents, or the equivalent of 1 in 4 Californians, live in areas considered to be at high risk of a wildfire. Given the devastating and destructive wildfires of 2018, and historic 2020 wildland fire season, Governor Gavin Newsom, as well as fire agencies and utility companies throughout the state, have emphasized that wildfire mitigation and suppression are a top priority. As a regional fire agency, the Fire District plays a key role in wildfire mitigation and suppression in Southern California.

Given this designation, the Fire District has been presented with the opportunity to partner with Southern California Edison (SCE) and Coulson Aviation Inc. (CAI) to provide Large Helitanker (LHT) services that will benefit Ventura County and the residents and businesses within the SCE service territory.

In 2019, Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) entered into a similar arrangement with SCE and CAI, where SCE agreed to provide OCFA funds for OCFA to contract for CAI's fire suppression assets/equipment (a similar helitanker) and the operation of those assets/equipment. Specifically, the SCE funds were used to pay for the fixed lease costs of the stand-by time portion of a lease and services agreement with CAI, and OCFA paid CAI for the costs associated with operating the assets and equipment during flights and missions.

The Pilot Program was designed to enhance the regional wildland aerial firefighting capabilities through the use of various innovative technologies. The CAI LHTs are equipped with technology to collect data on flight time conducting suppression missions versus standby hours, gallons of water or retardant dropped and the number of drops per fire incident, number and location of wildfires attacked, and whether and to what

extent the LHT is utilized outside of SCE's service territory. This data collection is required by SCE's funding agreement. CAI LHTs are also equipped with SMART Delivery System Controller technology, which allows for automated target drops for night vision goggle firefighting operations. SMART gives pilots the capability to adjust water/retardant flow rates based on speed and altitude. The 2019 Pilot Program proved to be a successful partnership, and the Southern California region realized the benefits of having these additional resources available. The program was utilized on 19 incidents throughout Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, Ventura County, Riverside County, and Orange County. Some of the larger incidents that benefitted from the Pilot Program included the Saddleridge Fire, Getty Fire, Tick Fire, and Maria Fire.

The Pilot Program has been extended to increase the effectiveness of aerial response to wildland fires for the 2021 fire season. Specifically, SCE has agreed to provide the Fire District \$3,150,000 for 150 days (and up to an additional \$670,000 for up to an additional 30 days) to cover the fixed lease, stand-by time costs of an agreement with CAI to host a S-61 Helitanker in Ventura County. This aerial firefighting resource will have the capability of dropping 1,000 gallons of water or fire retardant during daytime and nighttime operations. During the 2021 fire season, the S-61 Helitanker will be based at Camarillo Airport and operate primarily within the defined fire threat areas of the SCE service territory as illustrated in the map (Exhibit "3"). The agreement with CAI would make the LHT services available to respond to incidents 24/7 for 150 days commencing on June 15, 2021, and it may be extended up to an additional 30 days if SCE provides the Fire District additional funds to cover the fixed lease, stand-by costs of any such extension of the Fire District's agreement with CAI.

The table below details the estimated budget for the CAI lease and services agreement:

Equipment/Personnel	Detail	Total
<b>Estimated Costs:</b>		
S-61 Helitanker Lease	\$21,000 a day x 150-days (fixed cost)	\$3.15M
S-61 Helitanker Lease	\$21,000 a day x 30-day extension (fixed cost)	\$630K
Helitanker Flight Time	300 Estimated No. of Hours	\$1.5M
Helicopter Management Costs	Staffing	\$351K
	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$5,631,000</b>
<b>Estimated Funding Sources:</b>		
Southern California Edison	Fixed cost contribution (Assumes 30-day extension)	\$3.78M

State and Federal Agencies	Assumes 95% of flight time is reimbursable	\$1,758,450
Fire District Funds	Estimated unreimbursed flight time	\$92.6K
	<b>Total Funding Sources</b>	<b>\$5,631,000</b>

The Fire District would be responsible for the costs of flight-time and missions of the S-61 Helitanker. The Fire District is estimating 300 flight hours for the 150-day term and 30-day extension, if exercised by SCE, for the CAI agreement. The flight hour estimate is based on the 2019 Pilot Program of 150 flight hours for an 83-day agreement scaled to 180 days for this agreement. It is expected that 95% of flight-time and mission costs would be reimbursed by State and Federal agencies.

This Board letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel. If you have any questions, please contact me at (805) 389-9704 or Business Services Bureau Manager Tom Kasper at 389-9764.



MARK LORENZEN  
Fire Chief

ML/TK/JM/GM: dc

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1 – Funding Agreement with Southern California Edison Company
- Exhibit 2 – Lease and Services Agreement with Coulson Aviation
- Exhibit 3 – SCE Service Territory Map