



## VENTURA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Dustin Gardner, Fire Chief  
165 Durley Avenue, Camarillo, CA 93010-8586

December 13, 2022

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

### **SUBJECT:**

Ratification and Authorization of the First Amendment to the Existing Lease and Services Agreement with Coulson Aviation Incorporated (CAI), Extending the Term of the Lease Seven days, Until December 13, 2022; Approval of, and Authorization for the Fire Chief of the Ventura County Fire Protection District to Sign, a Lease and Services Agreement with CAI for the Operation of Fire Suppression Assets with Service to Commence December 13, 2022, and to Continue for 383 Days; 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 \$9,340,000 to Fund the Stand-By Time Portion of the Lease and Services Agreement with CAI to commence December 13, 2022, and to continue for 383 days; and Authorize the Auditor-Controller to process the necessary accounting transactions.

**(RECOMMENDATION 4 REQUIRES 4/5THS VOTE).**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Ratify and authorize the amendment to the lease and services agreement with Coulson Aviation Incorporated (CAI) (attached hereto as "Exhibit 1") extending the term of the lease seven days, until December 13, 2022.
2. Approve, and authorize the Fire Chief of the Fire District to sign, a lease and services agreement with CAI (attached hereto as "Exhibit 2") for certain fire suppression assets and their related operation to commence December 13, 2022, and to continue for 383 days.
3. 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) (attached hereto as "Exhibit 3") to accept \$9,340,000 to fund the standby time

portion of the lease and services agreement with CAI (Exhibit 2) for certain fire suppression assets and their related operation to commence on December 13, 2022, and to continue for 383 days.

4. Authorize the Auditor-Controller to process the necessary accounting transactions to establish the following appropriations (requires 4/5th vote):

Fire District S600, Unit 2721

Increase: Salary and Benefits	\$ 389,580
Increase: Service and Supplies	11,960,679
Increase: Charges for Services	1,359,526
Increase: Miscellaneous Revenue	4,877,285
Decrease: Fund Balance Restricted For Public Protection	6,113,449

**REASON FOR RATIFICATION:**

FY 22/23 is the second year the Fire District has participated in the Quick Reaction Force program, discussed more fully below. SCE has funded the fixed lease costs of a lease and services agreement with CAI for approximately six months each year. In October 2022, SCE decided to fund the Quick Reaction Force program year-round. This did not allow the Fire District adequate time to obtain formal Board approval to amend the current agreement and add seven days to keep CAI under contract until the new contract term starts on December 13, 2022. Therefore, the Fire District, with the assistance of County Counsel, prepared and signed an amendment to the lease and services agreement extending the term of the current agreement. The Fire District is now requesting ratification and approval of this amendment.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Mandatory: No

Source of Funding: Southern California Edison Company, CAL FIRE, United States Forest Service, and Fire District Fund

Funding Match Required: No

Impact on Other Departments: None

**Summary of Revenues and Costs:**

Revenue:

	<b><u>FY 2022-23</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2023-24</u></b>
Charges for Services	\$1,359,526	\$ 1,670,526
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$4,877,285	\$ 4,462,715
Total Revenue	\$6,236,811	\$ 6,133,241

Costs:

Direct	\$6,387,869	\$ 6,318,855
Indirect-Agency/Dept.	0	0
Indirect-County CAP	0	0
Total Costs	\$6,387,869	\$ 6,318,855
Net Cost:	\$ 151,059	\$ 185,614
Recovered Indirect Costs:	\$ 0	\$ 0

<b>Current FY 2022-23 Budget Projection for the Fire District - BU 2721</b>				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Budget	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	176,915,058	199,391,168	199,391,168	-
Revenue	179,155,685	179,155,685	179,155,685	-
Net Cost	(2,240,627)	20,235,483	20,235,483	-

**DISCUSSION:**

Wildland fire remains one of the most significant threats to life and property in California. 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 high risk of a wildfire. Given the devastating and destructive wildfires in the past decade, 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 continue partnering 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 for the remaining 2022 fire season and 2023 Fire Season. Fire season has changed over the past decades to year-round. The Southern California Geographic Coordination Center Predicted Services bulletin issued on October 28, 2022, calls for below-normal precipitation from November 2022 through February 2023. There has been no change to the drought conditions across Central and Southern California. Ventura County remains in the "Extreme Drought" category.

In 2021 and 2022, Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA), Los Angeles County Fire Department, and Ventura County Fire Department entered into an agreement with SCE and CAI, where SCE agreed to provide the three host agencies funds to contract CAI's fire suppression assets/equipment and the operation of those assets/equipment. Specifically, the SCE funds were used to pay for the fixed lease costs of the standby

time portion of a lease and services agreement with CAI. The three host agencies paid CAI for the costs associated with operating the assets and equipment during flights and missions.

Collectively this program is called Quick Response Task Force (QRF) and was designed to enhance the regional wildland aerial firefighting capabilities using 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 QRF Program has proven to be a successful partnership, and the Southern California region realized the benefits of having these additional resources available. The QRF program was utilized on four incidents throughout the region, including the Fairview Fire, the Route Fire, the Gulch Fire, and the Howard Fire. Here in Ventura County, the LHT (HT61) flew on 41 incidents for a total of 48 flight hours and dropped over 105,000 gallons of water to date.

This program has been extended to increase the effectiveness of aerial response to wildland fires for the remainder of the 2022 and continued 2023 fire season. This extension to include 383 days of availability will allow our agency to be equipped year-round for an extended fire season due to the continued drought conditions. SCE has agreed to provide the Fire District \$9,340,00.00 for 383 days to cover the fixed lease and standby time costs of an agreement with CAI to host an S-61 Helitanker for 151 days and a CH-47 Helitanker for 232 days in Ventura County. These aerial firefighting resources will have the capability of dropping 1,000 gallons (S-61) to 3,000 gallons (CH-47) of water or fire retardant during daytime and nighttime operations. For the remainder of the 2022 fire season and the 2023 Fire Season, the S-61 Helitanker and when replaced with the Ch-47 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 4). The agreement with CAI would make the LHT services available to respond to incidents 24/7 for 383 days commencing on December 13, 2022.

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	\$24,386 per day x 151-days (fixed cost)	\$3,682,350
S-61 Helitanker Flight Time	118 Estimated Flight Hours	719,459

CH-47 Helitanker Lease	\$24,386 per day x 232-days (fixed cost)	5,657,650
CH-47 Helitanker Flight Time	182 Estimated Flight Hours	1,901,220
Helicopter Management Costs	Staffing	746,045
	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$12,706,724</b>
<b>Estimated Funding Sources:</b>		
Southern California Edison	Fixed cost contribution	\$9,340,000
State and Federal Agencies	Assumes 90% of flight time is reimbursable	3,030,052
Fire District Funds	Estimated unreimbursed flight time	336,672
	<b>Total Funding Sources</b>	<b>\$12,706,724</b>

The Fire District would be responsible for the costs of flight time and missions of the S-61 and CH-47 Helitankers. The Fire District is estimating 300 flight hours for the 383-day term. It is expected that 90% of flight time and mission costs will 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.



Dustin Gardner  
Fire Chief

DG/TK/NC:bw

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1 – First Amendment to Public Aircraft Lease and Services Agreement
- Exhibit 2 – Public Aircraft Lease and Services Agreement with Coulson Aviation
- Exhibit 3 – Funding Agreement with Southern California Edison Company
- Exhibit 4 -- SCE Service Territory Map