

**PLACER COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Thomas Miller, County Executive Officer
By Brad Harris, Chief, Nevada-Yuba-Placer Ranger Unit, California
Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and County Fire Warden and
Rui Cunha, Program Manager, Office of Emergency Services

DATE: May 13, 2008

SUBJECT: Presentation on conditions in advance of the 2008 Fire Season and
fire protection preparations by Placer County Fire.

ACTION REQUESTED

That the Board of Supervisors receives a presentation on conditions in advance of the 2008 Fire Season and fire protection preparations undertaken by Placer County Fire.

BACKGROUND

Both wildland and urban fires are ongoing concerns for Placer County during a fire season that extends from early spring to late fall. Optimum wildfire conditions, i.e., high temperatures, low moisture content in air and fuel and accumulated vegetation often combine with high winds and drought to increase wildfire's potential. Fire risk in rural areas is predominantly associated with the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), which is that area where development is interspersed with or adjacent to rural areas or wilderness that, by their nature, are particularly susceptible to fire. The WUI has been a major focus of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) fire management strategy since the 1970's inasmuch as a fire here can result in major losses to structures and property and damage to the natural environment. Major WUI fires such as the 2002 Sierra Fire around Loomis, and last year's Angora and Washoe Fires in the Lake Tahoe Basin give vivid meaning to a WUI fire's destructive potential.

Losses and damage from and by wildfire often include that to: human and animal life, structures and other improvements; natural and cultural resources; the quality and quantity of the water supply; timber, range and crop land; recreational opportunities; and the economy. Smoke and air pollution from wildfires can be severe health hazards. In addition, catastrophic wildfire can lead to after the fact secondary impacts such as silt accumulation in streams and waterways from surface run-off and increased flooding and land/mud slides caused by weakening of natural ground covers. The three major factors that *sustain* wildfires and predict a given area's potential to burn are fuel, topography, and weather.

DISCUSSION

As the Board is aware, the Nevada-Yuba-Placer (NYP) Ranger Unit of CAL FIRE serves under contract as Placer County Fire (PCF), the County's fire protection agency. PCF's area of responsibility comprises all areas of the unincorporated County not protected by an independent fire protection district or the US Forest Service. The NYP Unit Chief, in addition to leading and managing fire protection services, serves as the Placer County Fire Warden whose principal task is oversight and direction of the Hazardous Vegetation Abatement (HVA) program delineated in the Ordinance approved by your Board on October 27, 2007.

This presentation is focused on current conditions leading into the 2008 Fire Season and addresses fire protection issues such as current fuel conditions, the below average precipitation during the months of March and April, the potential for and impact on County funding due to the projected early start of the fire season, and a brief general discussion of NYP/Placer County Fire's preparedness actions. In addition, this presentation will provide a brief update on HVA Ordinance implementation.

FISCAL IMPACT

None