

**PLACER COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Holly L. Heinzen, Interim County Executive Officer
by Dick Simmons, Emergency Services Program manager

DATE: May 22, 2012

SUBJECT: Obligate funds from the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 and the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 to support conforming projects, and authorize 45 day public noticing of the County's intended use of these funds.

ACTION REQUESTED

1. Obligate the remaining balance (\$4,719) of Placer County's Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 Title III discretionary funds (hereinafter PL 106-393 funds) to the existing Title III project, "Biomass Strategic Plan Formulation."
2. Obligate remaining balance (\$100,972) of Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, Title III discretionary funds (hereinafter PL 110-343 funds) to two previously approved projects and to four new, PL 110-343 compliant projects
3. Authorize a 45 day public noticing of the planned use of those funds for each project.

BACKGROUND

Public Laws:

PL 106-393, was enacted in October 2000 to offset the loss of revenues in rural counties due to declining timber harvests and the decrease of income generation on federal lands. It provided qualifying counties with predictable funding for rural schools and roads for federal fiscal years (FFY) 2001 through 2006 and was extended by Congress through FFY 2007. Despite the extension, spending is limited to previously approved methods or projects.

In October, 2008, Congress enacted the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (PL 110-343) which included reauthorization of the "Secure Rural Schools" program. However, this law has a significantly lower level of funding and restricts the use of funds to supporting:

- Activities under the *Firewise Communities* program
- Reimbursement for search and rescue (SAR) on federal lands
- Development of community wildfire protection plans (CWPP)

Current Federal guidance: Recently received federal guidance on the expenditure of Title III funds requires all funds remaining *unobligated* as of September 30, 2012 to be returned to the Treasury. That guidance affects a total of \$105,691 of Placer County's Title III funds: \$100,972 from PL 110-343 (includes recently received FY 2012/13 \$62,000 allocation) and \$4,719 from PL 106-393 funds.

All remaining Title III funds previously received by Placer County are obligated for projects approved by your Board.

Recommended use of unobligated funds:

PL 106-393: The PL 106-393 County trust fund balance will be added to \$5,000 already obligated in FY 2011/2012 to update the Placer County Biomass Strategic Plan. Adding these funds (\$4,917) leaves that project supported at a total of \$9,719, and adequately supports update of the plan. If approved, all PL 106-393 funds received by the County will have been obligated.

PL 110-343: As stated above, there is a \$100,972 unobligated fund balance the majority of which is the recently received \$62,000 allocation for FY2012/2013. Due to the limitations in use of these funds as explained in the paragraph on Public Laws (above), staff recommends obligating these funds as follows:

Reimbursement for Search and Rescue on Federal Lands:

- *To Placer County Sheriff's Office* \$15,000

Firewise Communities program:

- *Fire Mitigation Coordinator* \$40,000
- *Grant Writer* \$15,000
- *Project Canyon Safe support* \$ 6,000
- *Public education initiatives* \$14,000
- *Firewise Communities Coordinator* \$10,000

All recommended projects meet the requirements of PL 110-343. Detailed project descriptions for all unobligated funds are attached.

Upon approval by your Board, staff will ensure public notice of the required 45-day public comment period and return to your Board in July with input received, if any, to request final approval of recommended expenditures.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the General Fund as a result of these actions. There is adequate fund balance in Placer County's Forest Reserve Title III fund to support these activities.

Attachments

FY 2012-2013 Recommended Projects

Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act Reauthorization
FY 2012-2013 Recommended Projects
May 22, 2012

PL 106-393:

PROJECT: BIOMASS STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE:

Issue/Background: This project obligates the remaining PL 106-393 funds balance, \$4,719, to be utilized for updating the Placer County Biomass Strategic Plan. Combined with the \$5,000 authorized by the Board in 2011, the project will have a balance of \$9,719 with which to complete the update.

Alternatives: The update, if undertaken by County Staff, would fall victim to competing projects as well as daily work by a staff already stretched thin by existing fiscal constraints. It could possibly delay the update at a time when Biomass is a priority project for Placer County.

Responsible Office: CDRA/Planning Division

Funds to be Obligated: \$4,719

PL 110-343:

PROJECT: REIMBURSEMENT FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) OPERATIONS ON FEDERAL LANDS

Issue/Background: This project makes funds available to support search and rescue operations (performed primarily by Sheriff's Office volunteers) on federal land in 2012/2013. The funding covers SAR costs such as fuel, equipment and supplies, maps, and food for personnel as well as for search and rescue animals. This project has been funded every year since 2006.

Alternatives: Conduct federal land SAR without reimbursement, but that puts future or other operational capabilities in jeopardy.

Responsible Office: Sheriff's Office

Funds to be Obligated: \$15,000.

PROJECT: FIRE MITIGATION COORDINATOR FY 2012/13

Issue/Background: This project continues to fund the Placer County Fire Mitigation Coordinator, a part time contract position, for 2012/2013. The Coordinator represents the County with citizen groups, fire safe councils, the Fire Safe Alliance and fire departments/districts involved in wildfire protection planning. He assists with public education, fire mitigation project planning and implementation as well as coordination between professional and community organizations in implementing fuel reductions. The Coordinator seeks is building a community-based fire mitigation vision with consistent goals.

Alternatives: Allow fire mitigation departments, districts, fire safe councils, etc. to operate alone. However, this method forfeits optimization of programming and scarce funding.

Responsible Office: Office of Emergency Services

Funds to be Obligated: \$40,000

PROJECT: GRANT WRITER

Issue/Background: This project provides funding for a part time grant writer to seek out grant opportunities and write up and submit proposals for the four fire safe councils and the Placer County Fire Safe Alliance. Placer County is continuing to coordinate the work of these volunteer groups, and having a dedicated person(s) to do the time consuming work of searching out grants, preparing the proposal and seeking matching funds needs a fire-knowledgeable person with expertise in grants. That person is currently not available within the Fire Safe Councils or on County Staff. Addition of a grant writer should greatly assist in the funding for forest management and fire fuels reduction projects desperately needed.

Alternatives: Add the task of seeking, coordinating, writing up and submitting fire grants to existing staff. This would make grants subject to the other job tasks and priorities of the designated staff office, thereby delaying and potentially, zeroing out the acquisition of grants altogether.

Responsible Office: Office of Emergency Services

Funds to be Obligated: \$15,000

PROJECT: PROJECT CANYON SAFE

Issue/Background: Project Canyon Safe is a project, utilizing volunteers, to reduce the levels of dry wood and brush on federal lands on the rim of the American River Canyon in the Greater Auburn area. One of the requirements set by the Federal Government for access to its property, however, is that a certified biologist conducts inspections to ensure compliance with the Federal Bird nesting Act. There is also a need within this project for a volunteer coordinator who would ensure the safe use of both chipper services and volunteer support.

Alternatives: The Greater Auburn Area Fire Safe council would have to hire both the biologist and the coordinator to ensure safe project completion. Auburn Fire department is not currently staffed at a level that would allow it to take on this role.

Responsible Office: Office of Emergency Services

Funds to be Obligated: \$6,972

PROJECT: PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Issue/Background: A long standing goal of the Fire Safe Alliance is to outfit each of the Fire Safe Councils (FSC) with the appropriate equipment and materials needed for outreach to their communities. Provision of each FSC with a banner, folding table, chair, paper materials display stands, etc. is a projected use of these funds. In addition, these funds are to be used for mailings to assist in projects in the Dry Creek and rural Lincoln areas in which local landowners would be encouraged to disc the perimeter of their parcels to prevent the spread of wildland fires. Finally, these funds would be added to other, previously approved funds, to design, prepare, print and distribute fire safe printed materials for the public.

Alternatives: There are no other funding alternatives other than those fund-raising efforts undertaken within each community.

Responsible Office: Office of Emergency Services

Funds to be Obligated: \$14,000

PROJECT: FIREWISE COMMUNITIES COORDINATOR

Issue/Background: *Firewise Communities* is a program of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) that encourages local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, communities, planners, developers, firefighters and others in efforts to protect people and property from wildfire risks. It is a nationwide program at the end of which, after completion of numerous actions, projects and efforts, a community can be certified "Firewise." This can have a bearing on homeowner and business insurance costs, as well as on the security of the individuals living in the area. The Coordinator, would do surveys of communities, work with local officials on goals and projects, and, in the end, help in seeking official *Firewise Communities* certification.

Alternatives: None – each community would have to do the research, coordinate its own projects and surveys, and finally submit for certification – all of which is too much to expect from a volunteer.

Responsible Office: Office of Emergency Services

Funds to be Obligated: \$10,000

