



## COUNTY OF PLACER

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THOMAS M. MILLER, County Executive Officer

175 FULWEILER AVENUE / AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603  
TELEPHONE: 530/889-4030  
FAX: 530/889-4023  
www.placer.ca.gov

**TO:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Thomas M. Miller, County Executive Officer  
By Brett Storey, Senior Management Analyst

**DATE:** July 23, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR 2389),  
FFY 2007-08 Funding Request

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### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

- 1) Authorize public noticing to announce the County's planned use of Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR 2389), Title III discretionary funds in FFY 2007-08 for hazard mitigation, wildfire protection and biomass utilization activities costing a total of \$410,000 (\$325,000 from this FY allocation and \$85,000 from carryover funds during last several years budget)
- 2) Reiterate your Board's support for reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act (HR 2389) was enacted in October 2000 to provide rural counties with a predictable level of funding for schools and roads for federal fiscal years 2001 through 2006, in order to offset the effect of decreased revenues to counties from declining timber harvests and other income generating activities on federal lands. The United States Congress has enacted a one year extension of the program at full funding levels for FFY 2007-08. Future years funding will require new federal legislation.

The Act requires that 15-20% of the funds allocated are to be used for Title II or Title III projects. In May 2005, your Board directed that 20% of the funds be spent on Title III discretionary projects eligible under the Act. For this extended-year federal appropriation, County staff recommends that the following hazard mitigation, wildfire protection and biomass utilization activities are funded:

- Placer County Chipper Program - \$75,000
- Fire Mitigation Coordinator - \$65,000
- Annual Defensible Space - \$30,000
- Fire Prevention/Biomass Education Materials - \$7,500
- Fire Prevention Practices Plan - \$5,000
- Search and Rescue Operations on Federal lands - \$20,000
- Biomass Project Management - \$75,000
- Tahoe Basin Biomass Removal Program - \$5,000 (total funding \$30,000 including other sources)
- Biomass Box Program - \$5,000 ((total funding \$55,000 including other sources)
- Biomass Website Development - \$2,500
- Placer County Masticator - \$10,000
- Health Effects Study -\$25,000
- Biomass Program Coordinator - \$50,000
- Biomass Joint Planning - \$35,000

(A more comprehensive description of the activities and estimated costs is attached.)

Upon authorization by your Board, staff will commence the required 45-day public noticing period, and will return to your Board in September with input from the community, and to request final approval of these expenditures. Upon public review the Board will be requested to approve in final this budget.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

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

Attachment: Secure Rural Schools & Community Self Determination Act of 2000, FFY 07-08  
Recommended Activities and Estimated Costs

TM/BS

**Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000  
FFY 2007-08 Activities and Estimated Costs – Placer County**

**PROJECT #1: PLACER COUNTY CHIPPER PROGRAM**

**Issue/Background:** Since 1998, the Placer County Chipper Program has provided a free service to residents of Placer County. This helps to lower the cost of creating and maintaining defensible space and reduces the amount of outdoor burning, associated air pollution, and escaped fires.

The Chipper Program has received an excellent response. The program has responded to over 10,000 requests and processed over 25,000 tons of material.

The Chipper Program is currently funded through a WUI Grant. This program will have an approximate \$150,000 shortfall this fiscal year resulting in reduced services causing reduced defensible space compliance, increased risk of catastrophic wildfires and increased residential burning.

**Other Alternatives:** Taking no action will result in less compliance with defensible space requirements. Other funding will be needed to make up the expected shortfall this year. **Total Cost Estimate:** \$150,000

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Office of Emergency Services

**Cost Estimate:** \$75,000

**Benefit:** All communities within Placer County will benefit from the work of the Placer County Chipper Program. The program results in reduced property loss, increase defensible space compliance and reduced burning.

**PROJECT #2: FIRE MITIGATION COORDINATOR**

**Issue/Background:** In FY 05-06, Placer County hired a Fire Mitigation Coordinator. This action would continue this work in FY 07/08. This is an over 50% contracted position. The Fire Mitigation Coordinator will assist in accomplishing a variety of tasks, some but not all of which, are:

Coordinate the activities of all Fire Safe Councils;

- Act as the County staff representative to all Placer County Fire Safe Councils;
- Coordinate with the RCD, the Fire Safe Alliance and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy;
- Coordinate with other counties to develop funding for fire safe activities;
- Develop and coordinate grant proposals for fire safe activities;
- Assist in implementing components of the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan;

- Attend MAC, HOA, and public meetings to educate the public on Fire prevention activity and programs;
- Assist in implementing and monitoring Placer County's fire prevention programs.
- Develop the Fire Prevention Practices Plan

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Office of Emergency Services

**Cost Estimate:** \$65,000

**Benefit:** All communities within Placer County will benefit from the work of the Fire Mitigation Coordinator who will provide a focal point for the many fire prevention/ mitigation activities within Placer County and the Sierra Foothills.

### **PROJECT #3: ANNUAL DEFENSIBLE SPACE INSPECTIONS PROGRAM**

**Issue/Background:** CAL FIRE indicates that ensuring defensible space is the single most important action that a homeowner can take to increase wild land fire survivability of homes and structures. Conversely, defensible space helps to protect wild land from the effects of a structure fire, and provides firefighters with a safe place to work while defending a home or structure. Fire fighters can only defend a home if they can do so safely.

Many homeowners are not aware of the requirement to maintain defensible space, especially newcomers moving into the unincorporated County and those formerly from highly urban areas. However, during a wildfire, urban area tactics and coverage is not operationally feasible, and homes' and structures' first line of defense is defensible space that may allow these dwellings to be protected from an approaching wildfire with little to no assistance from firefighters.

Effective January 2005, the State increased the minimum defensible space requirement from 30 to 100 feet in rural areas. Regular inspections then, based on the requirements of California law as specified in Public Resources Code (PRC) 4291 help ensure that homeowners create and maintain that defensible space. An inspection is also an opportunity to educate and motivate homeowners to further improve wild land fire safety even beyond legal requirements.

Whereas CAL FIRE has the legislative mandate to perform these inspections, its budget only provides for occasional inspections, despite the many requests by homeowners. Since 1998, PRC 4291 inspections in the Placer County Foothills region have been funded by grants from the Community-Based Wildfire Protection Program, through the California Fire Safe Council and Bureau of Land Management, and through these Title III funds.

The annual Defensible Space Inspections Program is currently funded through a Prop 40. This program will have an approximate \$100,000 shortfall this fiscal year resulting in reduced services causing reduced defensible space compliance, increased risk of catastrophic wildfires and increased residential burning.

**Other Alternatives:** Taking no action will result in less compliance with defensible space requirements. Other funding will be needed to make up the expected \$100,000 shortfall this year. **Total Cost Estimate: \$130,000**

**Responsible Office:** CDF/Placer County Fire Department

**Cost Estimate: \$30,000**

Total cost estimate - \$130,000. Inspections cost approximately \$10.50 per home or structure for the inspector's time and insurance, mileage, and management oversight. Administrative overhead brings the cost to about \$11.50 per home. Additional costs include those for handout literature, the most important of which is the Homeowner's Checklist (downloadable at <http://www.fire.ca.gov/php/education/checklist.php>). Color copies of this document cost from \$1.50 to \$2.00 each depending on the number of copies.

**Benefit:** Increased life safety and reduced property loss. A cost of \$13.00 per home inspected (\$11.50 + \$1.50) is about 0.005 percent of the average Assessor's Roll Value of about \$260,000 per home (which is far below actual replacement value).

#### **PROJECT #4: FIRE PREVENTION/BIOMASS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

**Issue/Background:** Education material is necessary to keep the public informed of fire prevention/biomass requirements and techniques. With the January 1, 2005 change in the defensible space requirement (SB 1369) from 30' to 100', many homeowners are not aware of the new requirements for defensible space or the usage for biomass. New residents are especially unaware of their roles of maintaining a defensible space around their home. With the change of the requirement from 30' to 100', most of the current education material is outdated and incorrect. A greater knowledge and usage of woody biomass is necessary to deal with the materials collected for defensible space. It is necessary to have this material updated and reprinted. This material will be referenced and distributed by the Placer County Fire Alliance, Fire Safe Councils, MAC's and fire related agencies during public meetings and forums. These educational materials are in accordance with the Strategic Plan.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Office of Emergency Services and Placer County Executive Office

**Cost Estimate:** \$7,500

**Benefit:** The citizens of Placer County will have up to date recommendations of how best to perform the defensible space activities. Additionally they will be able to take advantage of all county programs to support defensible space, and Biomass utilization through this public information & educational material.

#### **PROJECT #5: FIRE PREVENTION PRACTICES PLAN**

**Issue/Background:** Placer County is crafting an approach that emphasizes the community's responsibility to plan for a safe community. This Fire Prevention Practices Plan takes the efforts of fire prevention and planning beyond the efforts of the fire professional and includes community leaders, planners, developers and others to practice the efforts to prevent the loss of life, personal property and natural resources. This includes safer home construction, design, landscaping and maintenance. This plan is in accordance with the Strategic Plan and is an overarching plan that will tie together all activities in this area to provide our community and the county with a path to success. This plan will be developed this year based upon all of the activities, programs and community groups input and finalized during the following year for implementation.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Office of Emergency Services (Fire Mitigation Coordinator)

**Cost Estimate:** \$5,000

**Benefit:** This program encourages participation in firewise practices at the community level. Defensible space and firewise techniques through out an entire community increases the effectiveness of the program, expanding the possibility of preventing catastrophic wildfire with the community.

#### **PROJECT #6: SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS ON FEDERAL LANDS**

**Issue/Background:** This action makes \$20,000 available to support Search and Rescue operations on Federal lands. The Placer County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) uses these funds for equipment and personnel costs associated with actual operations.

**Responsible Office:** PCSO

**Cost Estimate:** \$20,000

**Benefit:** This project helps defray costs allowing PCSO to continue to maintain one of the most successful Search and Rescue Operations in the State.

#### **PROJECT #7: BIOMASS PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**Issue/Background:** Since 2006 the BOS has provided a Biomass Manager to oversee and coordinate Placer County's efforts to determine the feasibility and options for removing flammable wood products from national forest lands and turning those products into economically sustainable forms of energy production or to other beneficial uses.

With the Biomass Manager and other pertinent County Staff now hired and working directly with the Biomass Technical Committee and the Wildfire Protection & Biomass Policy Advisory group consisting of Supervisor Bruce Kranz, Supervisor Jim Holmes and Assistant CEO Holly Heinzen, activities and issues are actively being accomplished in support of the BOS direction.

Several specific responsibilities and plans have been requested to ensure this valuable program has a positive effect on the protection of rural areas of Placer County from wildfire and improving the economic possibilities from the removal of the valuable woody biomass. These activities are guided by implementation of the 5-year biomass utilization strategic plan.

**Other Alternatives:** Taking no action will result in not implementing the strategic plan. Other funding will be needed to make up the expected total cost (including program expenses) this year. **Total Cost Estimate:** \$125,000

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office

**Cost Estimate:** \$75,000

**Benefit:** The benefit will be a logical, strategic, well planned program to implement and monitor both fire prevention and biomass utilization programs throughout Placer County.

#### **PROJECT #8: TAHOE BASIN BIOMASS REMOVAL PROGRAM**

**Issue/Background:** For many years various agencies and landowners have cleared biomass material and created piles in the Lake Tahoe Basin. In the fall they have been subjected to burning as a means to remove the material and thereby reduce the threat of wildfires. This program was implemented in 2006 to reduce the amount of burning in the basin and will be extended to as many potential participants as practical in Placer County. This year we are going to remove materials in Burton Creek State Park and U.S. Forest Service lands.

Again this year we will partner with Fire agencies and Fire Safe Council's to reach more citizens with this program. The idea is to chip the woody biomass either into a box (and then to our Cabin Creek facility) or directly into a truck and then remove the material to existing nearby biomass recycling facilities.

This program is part of an overall effort to remove biomass from Placer County before it either burns or is mixed in with other waste and sent to the landfill. Eventually this program will formulate the basis of fuel loads for any potential biomass facilities that are created within 50 to 100 miles of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

This year we were fortunate to win a \$70,000 grant from the Placer County Air Pollution Control District to remove woody biomass from areas throughout the county and these funds will be used to supplement the money requested in this action.

**Other Alternatives:** The TRPA directive is to open burn this type of material thereby putting particulate matter into the air and water of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office (Biomass Program Coordinator)

**Cost Estimate:** \$5,000 **Total Program Estimate:** \$25,000 (including APCD Grant)

**Benefit:** The entire Lake Tahoe Basin will benefit from this program by preventing some portion of the potential open burning. The effect on air & water quality should be dramatic over time. We hope to have this program grow into the main method of biomass material removal for the basin in time.

#### **PROJECT #9: BIOMASS BOX PROGRAM**

**Issue/Background:** This program was recently launched this year (2007) to support the increased minimum defensible space requirement from 30 to 100 feet in rural areas. The County's Solid Waste Management Division will contract Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal Company & Auburn Placer Disposal Company to place biomass boxes in various locations to allow the citizens and businesses of Placer County to place woody biomass material into them and have them picked up on a regular basis.

The intention is to annually provide this type of service to various locations which are susceptible to fire danger in Placer County. This will include areas within each of the 5 supervisorial districts.

This program is part of an overall effort to remove biomass from Placer County before it either burns or is mixed in with other waste and sent to the landfill.

This year we were fortunate to win a \$70,000 grant from the Placer County Air Pollution Control District to remove woody biomass from areas throughout the county and these funds will be used to supplement the money requested in this action.

**Other Alternatives:** This material will not be removed from the ground, sit in piles creating a larger wild fire potential, be burned and fill the County air with smoke or be mixed in with regular waste and have to be sorted at our land fills.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office (Biomass Program Coordinator)

**Cost Estimate:** \$5,000 **Total Program Estimate:** \$55,000 (including APCD Grant)

**Benefit:** The citizens and businesses of Placer County will now be provided a low cost option to dispose of the biomass materials which are required to be removed around buildings and homes. This will go a long way to prevent forest fires and should provide another method to assist in reaching our recycling goals.

#### **PROJECT #10: BIOMASS WEBSITE**

**Issue/Background:** Since the biomass program began, staff has been talking with community groups, citizens and agencies about our goals and effort in implementing our plans. In order to reach a wider, growing audience with accurate and timely information a website dedicated to our progress is being requested. Only a small amount of funding is requested to get this site on-line and an even smaller amount of maintenance funding would be required in future years. This will be placed under the Fore Mitigation Coordinator to implement and monitor working with the Biomass Program Manager direction. This will assist in implementing several of the goals in the Strategic Plan complemented this year. This will be linked to the County web site as well.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office (Biomass Program Coordinator)

**Cost Estimate:** \$2,500

**Benefit:** The citizens and businesses of Placer County will now be provided an up to date web site of information regarding our progress in the biomass utilization arena.

## **PROJECT #11: COUNTY MASTICATOR**

**Issue/Background:** This year the parks department requested a masticator to work with the currently county chipper program to implement a full service program to work towards clearing our county parks of hazardous fuel conditions and removing the biomass. They were successful in winning a grant from the Placer County Air Pollution Control District for \$60,000 towards the total \$102,000 needed. The parks department contacted the biomass program to see what funding was available in this year's budget. We are requesting that \$10,000 be used leaving a shortfall of \$32,000 to purchase.

When fully funded and operating this program can also provide services to the county's many open space areas which are highly susceptible to wildfire.

**Other Alternatives:** Another \$32,000 will be needed to make up the expected \$102,000 total cost. We will assist in the search for other funding.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office

**Cost Estimate:** \$10,000

**Benefit:** Placer County will now have a complete chipping and removal program to be used in our increasing county park system. This can also be used to protect open space areas from fire.

## **PROJECT #12: HEALTH EFFECTS STUDY**

**Issue/Background:** Dr. Burton has developed a plan for some research to look at the health effects of air pollution on the citizens of Placer County. With the programs we are implementing to reduce the amount of air pollution and the results of this scientific study of the effects, we should be able to project the effects of our strategic plans to reduce burning of forest fuels in the county. Dr. Burton intends to team with UCLA to perform this critical study. He recently was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Placer County APCD but his total study will cost \$180,000. Our amount will allow Dr. Burton to be closer to his goal. He has applied for 2 other grants to reach his goal and enact the study within this fiscal year.

**Other Alternatives:** Other funding will be needed to make up the expected \$105,000 shortfall this year. **Total Cost Estimate:** \$180,000 Dr. Burton has 2 other potential grant funding sources to reach the full amount.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office

**Cost Estimate: \$25,000**

**Benefit:** The citizens and businesses of Placer County will now be provided a measure for the air pollution effects. The biomass program will benefit greatly by utilizing this scientific study in the permit application process for future biomass related facilities throughout the county by estimating the benefits of the reduced air pollution.

**PROJECT #13: BIOMASS PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

**Issue/Background:** In FY 06-07, Placer County directed that a Strategic Plan be written to guide the development of wildfire prevention and biomass utilization. In order to implement many of the "on the ground" programs a part time coordinator is needed to ensure the details of operations will be carried out. This is an under 50% contracted position. The Biomass Program Coordinator will assist in accomplishing a variety of tasks. These tasks are funded by a variety of federal, state, and local appropriations and grants. This contract will only be fully funded upon receipt of all anticipated appropriations, and grants. These projects include but are not limited to, the following:

- Assist with the implementation of the Biomass Utilization Strategic Plan.
  - Design requirements and strategy for biomass related "Road Map" projects.
- Define the Biomass Network and Transportation Plan.
  - Document and evaluate transportation networks and biomass facilities within Placer County
- Expand the current biomass box and Tahoe removal programs. Work with local agencies including Placer County Parks, multiple Home Owner Associations, Fire Safe Councils and Fire Protection Districts.
  - Define projects and implementation plans
  - Schedule box requirements
- Assist with the development of a Biomass Community Education program.
- Develop and maintain the Placer County Biomass Web Site.
- Develop and coordinate grant proposals for biomass utilization
- Attend MAC, HOA, and public meetings to educate the public on Biomass activity and programs
- Assist in implementing and monitoring Placer County's biomass programs.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office (Biomass Program Coordinator)

**Cost Estimate: \$50,000**

**Benefit:** All communities within Placer County will benefit from the work of the Biomass Program Coordinator who will provide a focal point for the many biomass collection, transportation and utilization activities within Placer County and the Sierra Foothills.

**PROJECT #14: BIOMASS JOINT PLANNING**

**Issue/Background:** As the biomass program grows and Placer County requires more interactions with local, state and federal agencies more expertise and coordination is needed from the Placer County Air Pollution Control District. In years past the Director of the APCD has been supportive with his time. In order to move forward and place us on a path to have potential programs and facilities permitted we need to do more joint planning. A modest amount of funding is being requested to allow the APCD Director to fully support our efforts to implement programs that pertain to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, carbon trading, air pollution credit trading and others. He will also be necessary to provide guidance in the areas of acquiring permits and designing programs for demonstration biomass to energy facilities which is the next step in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

**Other Alternatives:** This is only partial funding for the expected level of effort required from the APCD to fully support the County's efforts.

**Responsible Office:** Placer County Executive Office (PCAPCD Director)

**Cost Estimate:** \$35,000

**Benefit:** Placer County will now be able to optimally plan our programs and facilities that support a cleaner air environment as we correctly implement woody biomass usage.