RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Direction to staff regarding the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council’s proposal for the use of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR 2389) funds. The requested funding amount is $26,750 and is for January 1, 2006, through June 30, 2006. Please see the attached proposal for additional information regarding the request for funding.

Before the Board may formally approve the proposal, there must first be a 45-day public comment period. The action today if the Board decides to pursue this proposal would be to tentatively approve the request for funding and direct staff to notice the proposal and begin the 45-day public comment period. At the end of the 45-day public comment period the Board would then review the comments (if any) and be asked to formally approve the use of Title III funds for the proposal as well as any contracts and/or agreements necessary for the proposal.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
Mariposa County receives approximately $92,000 annually through the year 2006 and the Board has opted to spend these funds on Title III projects. Title III projects include: (1) Search and rescue and other emergency services performed on Federal lands and paid for by the County; (2) Community service work camps (inmate community service on Federal lands); (3) Easement purchases; (4) Forest related educational opportunities; (5) Fire prevention and county planning; (6) Community forestry. The Fire Safe Council’s proposal meets these guidelines.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Do not approve commencing with the necessary actions required to formally approve the proposal. If the Board is not interested in pursuing this proposal, then the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council will need to seek funding sources elsewhere.

Financial Impact? ( ) Yes ( ) No Current FY Cost: $  Annual Recurring Cost: $
Budgeted In Current FY? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Partially Funded
Amount in Budget: $  
Additional Funding Needed: $  
Source:
Internal Transfer
Unanticipated Revenue ( ) 4/5's vote
Transfer Between Funds ( ) 4/5's vote
Contingency ( ) 4/5's vote
( ) General ( ) Other

Clerk’s Use Only:
Res. No.:  Ord. No.  
Vote - Ayes:  Noes: 
Absent: 
Approved ( ) Minute Order Attached ( ) No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.
Date:
Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
County of Mariposa, State of California
By:

Deputy

County Administrative Officer:
( ) Requested Action Recommended
( ) No Opinion
Comments:

CAO:
DATE: December 5, 2005

TO: Mary Hodson, Deputy CAO

FROM: Blaine Shultz, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: HR2389 Title III Project Requests

Enclosed are requests for continued funding for administrative support for the FireSafe Council for the balance of FY 2005-2006

Fire Safe Council

The Council is requesting funding at a rate of $26,750 for the balance of the fiscal year to continue the well supported efforts in education as well as grant production to mitigate our wildfire vulnerability. Our ability to leverage investment to grant dollars remains at 5:1.

Attached is the proposal summary for the FireSafe Council.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,

Blaine Shultz
Fire Chief
Proposal Summary

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR2389)
Funds Request for Mariposa County Fire Safe Council Administrative Support
January 1, 2006 through June 30, 2006

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is requesting HR2389 (Title III) funds in the amount of $26,750.00 for the period from 1/1/06 through 6/30/06. The mission and operations of the Council exactly fit the legislative intent of HR2389 under Fire Prevention and County Planning. We will use this funding to continue our fire prevention education, outreach and planning programs, and to seek additional funding to continue reducing hazardous fuels in Mariposa County. Without this funding, we will be unable to continue our efforts to educate residents about the dangers of wildfire and to encourage, plan and implement countywide fuel reduction.

2006 Goal Highlights:
- Continue educational efforts including elementary school Team Teaching participation, Wildfire Risk Assessment Surveys, creating and staffing booth at Mariposa County Fair, newspaper articles, inserts, ads and press releases, and providing answers by mail, telephone and email to inquiries by residents about fire safe issues.
- Obtain funding for Senior/Low Income/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance Program to help residents who are otherwise unable to clear their property around their homes. September 2005 grant application is currently pending (FEMA.)
- Obtain funding for fuel reduction projects to protect at-risk communities (as prioritized by our agency partners in their fire plans) of Midpines, Lushmeadows, Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale, Ponderosa Basin, Mormon Bar/Ben Hur and Hunters Valley.

2005 Accomplishment Highlights:
- Our Countywide Fire Safe Education/Chipping Demonstration & Assistance Program has reached seventeen communities/areas during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005, reducing hazardous fuels around homes of residents in immediate need and along roadsides critical for ingress/egress in the event of a wildfire. Three communities remain (Wawona, Fish Camp & El Portal/Foresta) and we will schedule them as soon as weather permits.
- Completed five miles of shaded fuel break in partnership with BLM on strategic ridge top along Ponderosa Way in Greeley Hill. This project enhances protection from wildfires for approximately 575 homes and 1,600 residents. Total of grants awarded was approximately $182,000.
- Completed environmental surveys and reports for U.S. Forest Service “Portuguese Ridge Fuels Treatment” on a strategic ridge top along Portuguese Ridge above Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale. We have solicited bids and selected a local contractor, however due to Hurricane Katrina we are still waiting for a deposit from U.S.F.S. before we can begin “on the ground” work. When completed this project will enhance protection from wildfires for the communities of Mariposa Pines and Jerseydale. Total grant awarded is $109,000.
- Our Chairperson was invited to speak at Assemblyman Dave Cogdill’s Natural Resource Summit at Tenaya Lodge in September 2005, alongside the Deputy Chief of the entire U.S. Forest Service.
- Our Council was awarded the 2005 Trailblazer Award by the Yosemite-SEQUOIA Resource Conservation & Development Council. In addition, they sent our Coordinator to Hilo, Hawaii to help represent their organization and the Fire Safe Council at their annual Pac Rim Conference. It was critical that they be represented this year in Hawaii as the 2006 Pac Rim Conference will be hosted by them in November at Tenaya Lodge.
- Our Council will be hosting the October 2006 California Fire Safe Council statewide meeting in Mariposa and taking attendees on a tour of our projects as well as those of our neighboring Fire Safe Councils in Eastern Madera and Yosemite Foothills/Southern Tuolumne.
**Breakdown of Funds Requested:**

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<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary &amp; Taxes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Expenses</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$26,750.00</strong></td>
</tr>
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Additional Information

Organization Background:

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council started in January 1998 as a grassroots community effort to get the word out to residents in our County about the danger of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface, and to teach people how to maintain defensible space around their homes. During our first few years we completed three successful brush clearing projects in the communities of Ponderosa Basin, Lushmeadows and on Whitmore Drive. We did so without any funding in all but one case, where we used a small ($6,000) grant to help defray the County’s cost to use their road crews. We have also participated with our partners in completing Wildfire Risk Assessment Surveys in most communities in the County. In 2001 we became a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and were awarded our first grant from Bureau of Land Management to hire a part-time paid staff person and establish an office. Since then we have been awarded additional grants to cover operating expenses, complete education and outreach projects, and reduce hazardous fuels. Our organization is committed to delivering proactive fire prevention programs to reduce losses from wildfire. “The mission of the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is to preserve Mariposa County’s natural and manmade resources by mobilizing all Mariposans to make their homes, neighborhoods and communities fire safe.”

Organization Identification:

Organization: Mariposa County Fire Safe Council
Contact Person: Jan Hamilton, Chairperson
Address: P.O. Box 1182, Mariposa, CA 95338
Phone: (209) 966-7700, Fax: (209) 966-7767
Email: hamjan@sierratel.com

Mariposa County Fire Safe Council Partners:

- Bureau of Land Management
- California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit
- Grizzlies Fire Department (Fire Technology Class of Mariposa County High School)
- Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
- Mariposa County Fire Department
- Mariposa County Resource Conservation District
- Mariposa Public Utility District Fire Department
- National Park Service, Yosemite National Park
- SouthWest InterFace Team (SWIFT)
- U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Sierra & Stanislaus National Forests
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Yosemite-SEQUOIA Resource Conservation & Development Area
Statement of Need:

Wildfire is the number one natural disaster that threatens residents in Mariposa County. Our Fire Safe Council has developed and has been successfully delivering many fire prevention programs throughout the County for the past eight years. We are proud of our successes and are seeking additional program implementation funding.

The risk of catastrophic wildfire in Mariposa County is a real and ever present hazard for our residents and environment. The three required elements for wildfire to occur are weather conditions, topography and fuel loads. Only the fuel loads can be proactively altered so as to reduce the wildfire hazard in our County. Our Fire Safe Council is an ideal delivery mechanism for the additional and available HR2389 funds to help reduce the risk of loss due to wildfire in Mariposa County through education, outreach and planning efforts and fuel reduction projects.

Since we obtained our first grant to hire a part-time Coordinator in 2001, we have been successful in obtaining additional funding to increase our hours of operation and to open and outfit our office. However there has been a shift in focus for our grantors, who have been instructed by Congress to achieve more acres of fuel reduction. This leaves much less funding available to meet administrative needs. As a result, we are now in a position where we have successfully obtained grant funds to carry out fuel reduction, but will not have enough funding to cover our operating expenses. We have re-contacted other agencies and possible funding sources prior to making this proposal. They informed us that their intent in awarding us initial funding was to help get Fire Safe Councils started, and we have exhausted that available start-up funding.

Past Accomplishments:

2004 Accomplishment Highlights:

- Awarded $109,000 grant from U.S.D.A. Forest Service to treat 80 acres of heavy brush on Portuguese Ridge to protect at-risk community of Mariposa Pines from wildfires.
- Final report submitted for $100,000 BLM grant used for capacity building, countywide educational mailer (sent to approx. 7,700 residents) and wildfire awareness workshop.
- Project planning completed and environmental surveys and reports completed for 200 acre fuel treatment in heavy brush on Ponderosa Way to protect at-risk community of Greeley Hill from wildfires. Project funded by $182,000 in grants from BLM. Currently seeking contractor to begin brushing late winter/early spring 2005.
- Wildfire Risk Assessment Survey completed in Mormon Bar/Mt. Bullion/Mykleoaks/Bear Valley areas with our partners Mariposa County Fire, CDF, USFS Sierra National Forest, NPS Yosemite National Park and the Mariposa County High School Grizzlies Fire Technology class.
- Information/education booth (replica of Signal Peak Fire Lookout) at Mariposa County Fair with USFS Sierra National Forest was a huge success that attracted thousands of residents and visitors.
- Countywide Fire Safe Education/Chipping Demonstration & Assistance Program completed in four at-risk communities using HR2389 (Title III) funds. Our project foreman reported that an estimated 56 tons of brush was chipped in the Bronco Hollow, Valley View Estates, Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale and Bootjack areas.
The Fire Safe Council and our partners completed brush clearing projects in Ponderosa Basin, Lushmeadows, Greeley Hill and on Whitmore Drive, which removed significant amounts of fuel from those communities and raised awareness among residents.

- Ponderosa Basin: 1,700 tons of fuel removed
- Greeley Hill: Three 10-yard dump truck loads of chips removed

Working with our partners, we have planned and participated in Wildfire Risk Assessment Surveys and follow-up surveys in the communities of Lushmeadows, Ponderosa Basin, Mariposa Pines, Greeley Hill, Wawona, El Portal, Mormon Bar, Mt. Bullion, Mykleoaks and Bear Valley. These surveys are instrumental in providing baseline data to our fire agencies and afford us a perfect opportunity to contact and educate residents. Also, residents in areas that have a demonstrable program of fuel reduction and homeowner wildfire awareness are typically not surcharged by insurance companies. The surveys we have completed to date represent inspection and inventory of over 10% of the total number of homes in Mariposa County.

Under our 2003 BLM grant, we sent an educational mailer with information about wildfire preparedness to all owners of improved property in Mariposa County. The mailing list included over 7,700 recipients. We also held a Wildfire Awareness workshop for residents which included presentations from all fire agencies in the County, the premiere of an excellent play about the history of wildfire in the American West, and information for residents on how to complete a successful brush clearing project in their neighborhood.

We have been awarded three federal grants to treat almost 300 acres of heavy brush on strategically located ridges to protect the communities of Greeley Hill and Mariposa Pines. Over the past four years, excluding HR2389 funds used for administrative expenses, we have been awarded a total of $513,500. Since receiving our first grant in 2001, this represents a better than 5:1 ratio of grant awards to funding invested by Mariposa County toward Council operational costs.

Use of Requested Funds:

With this funding we will continue to develop and implement education and outreach programs for every community in Mariposa County. Our current programs include: holding monthly community meetings; giving presentations at meetings of other organizations; distributing fire safe literature & materials; assisting agencies with school programs; collaborating on fire safe newspaper inserts; submitting press releases, articles and pictures to newspapers; staffing an information table at Mariposa County Fair; obtaining funds to continue presenting community fire safe workshops and sending educational mailers; developing and maintaining web page; planning and participating in Wildfire Risk Assessment Surveys. We will also continue to seek funding for on-the-ground fuels reduction and to oversee grants and projects.

Success Measurements:

The expected outcome of all our Fire Safe Council projects is a reduced risk of wildland fires, and the reduced potential for structural loss in the event of catastrophic wildland fires. Success will be measured by the continued increase in the number of homes that are creating and maintaining their defensible space. CDF performed an analysis of their LE-38 inspection program to determine wildfire preparedness and survivability of structures. They found that since our Fire Safe Council was formed in 1998, violations of Public Resources Codes mandating minimum clearance around structures have dropped 31% in Mariposa County.