RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Discuss and provide direction to staff regarding the use of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR 2389) funds for (1) continued funding of the South West Interface Project (SWIFT); (2) continue funding the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council; and (3) a fuel reduction program utilizing the California Department of Forestry (CDF) and the California Department of Corrections (CDC) fire crew.

Please see the attached staff report and proposals for additional information.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Financial Impact? ( ) Yes (X) No Current FY Cost: $  Annual Recurring Cost: 
Budgeted In Current FY? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Partially Funded
Amount in Budget: $  
Additional Funding Needed: $  
Source:
Internal Transfer  4/5’s vote
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.: 55-05  Ord. No. 
Vote – Ayes: 5  Noes: 0
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:  

Revised Dec. 2002
To: Board of Supervisors

From: Mary Hodson, Deputy County Administrative Officer

Subject: 2005 HR 2389 Funding Proposals

Recommendation:
Discuss and provide direction to staff regarding the use of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR 2389) funds for (1) continued funding of the South West Interface Project (SWIFT); (2) to continue funding the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council; and (3) a fuel reduction program utilizing the California Department of Forestry (CDF) and the California Department of Corrections (CDC) fire crews.

Background:
In October 2000, President Clinton signed into law the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. This law ensures that for the next six years (2001-2006), counties may count on a specific amount of money that historically came to them as a result of federal timber sales and other timber receipts. Each year the Board decides what percentage of this funding to allocate to either Title II or Title III projects as well as what percentage the Board elects to reserve for these projects. On August 24, 2004, the Board adopted Resolution 04-396 authorizing that the funding be allocated for Title III projects. Title III projects are developed and selected by the Board and the project must support National Forest lands. Approved projects include: search and rescue and other emergency services on National Forest lands; community service work camps; easement purchases; forest related educational opportunities; fire prevention and county planning; or community forestry. The County receives a little over $90,000 each year and this money is deposited into the Forest Reserve fund (#345). There is a required 45-day public comment period before the Board may formally approve the funding of Title III projects.

The Board has previously approved the following Title III projects:

$21,000 for the planning phase of the construction of the Jordan Creek Bridge. This project has been completed and the funds expended.

$80,000 for a county-wide chipping program being coordinated through the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council. The Board approved a two-year contract for this project and a request to renew the contract will be brought back to the
⇒ Board next month as the project has only been partially completed. Thus far $19,411 has been expended on the project with a remaining amount of $60,589.
⇒ $29,470 for the SWIFT project. The Board approved a two-year contract which will expire at the end of the March 2005. The proposal being presented today will continue the project for another two years. Thus far $28,530 has been expended on the project and the remaining $940 will be expended by the end of March 2005.
⇒ $46,764 for the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council to continue their fire prevention education and planning programs. The contract was for one year and has expired. $37,263 was expended on the program.

Discussion:
Three proposals for using Title III funds have been submitted for review:

1. The continuation of the SWIFT project. Mariposa County Fire Chief Blaine Shultz proposes funding a coordinator for a two year period in an amount of $29,270. The original proposal included providing a county vehicle, but this is no longer necessary. The SWIFT project is a multi-agency effort that has completed its fifth year of activity. The goal is to plan and implement a strategic fire defense system designed to reduce the threat to loss of life, property, and natural resources in the Southern Tuolumne and Northern Mariposa County urban-wild land interface. This area encompasses 132,000 acres and has a unique history of repeated large catastrophic fires. This area is adjacent to the Stanislaus National Forest and meets the criteria of HR 2389.

2. Continued funding to the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council so that they may continue with their efforts in educating the public on fire prevention and to seek additional funding to continue reducing hazardous fuels. The period of funding will be from January 1, 2005, through December 31, 2005. This funding will provide for a coordinator and assist with bookkeeping/office supplies and travel expenses. This proposal meets the criteria to receive Title III funding as the money will be used for fire prevention and educating homeowners on the consequences of wildfires.

3. A new proposal by Mariposa County Fire Chief Blaine Shultz to work in cooperation with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) and utilize the California Department of Corrections (CDC) fire crews to perform fuel reduction and mitigation on properties adjacent to National Forest lands. Supervisors with National Forest lands in their district would be asked to establish priority target areas that would be accessible to hand crews. The cost of the program is $8,000 and this proposal meets the criteria to receive Title III funding as it contributes to preventing wild land fires and increases our wildfire defensive status on lands adjacent to National Forests.

Attached are copies of proposals for the SWIFT project and Mariposa County Fire Safe Council that provide greater detail.

If the Board wishes to pursue these projects, they will tentatively approve the projects today and direct staff to notice the projects and begin the 45-day comment
period. At the end of the 45-day comment period the Board would then be asked to review any comments received and to formally approve the use of Title III funds for these projects. Contracts or personal services agreements necessary for the projects would also be presented for approval at this time. The item would be brought back on May 17, 2005, for formal approval.

Financial Impact:
There is currently an available balance of $221,657 in the Forest Reserve Fund, which is sufficient to fund these projects. This amount takes into consideration the remaining funds encumbered for the county-wide chipping program and the SWIFT project. The County received approximately $94,000 this fiscal year and will receive similar amounts in the fall of 2005 and 2006.

Efforts are currently underway in the federal legislature for reauthorization of this funding with the introduction of S 267 and HR 517. Testimony in support of this measure is being heard by the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

mbh
Attachments
RECOMMENDATION

The Board of Supervisors find that the SWIFT Project fully meets the intent of HR 2389, and authorize expenditure of funds to support a coordinator for the next two years. Total financial commitment is $29,270.00.

BACKGROUND

The SWIFT Project has completed its fifth year of activity. Significant accomplishments include the identification of 23 miles of fuel break protecting Greeley Hill, development of working teams to establish the pre-fire plan for the area and to ultimately develop and maintain a system of fire defenses, emergency evacuation plans and suppression systems that enable future fire managers to effectively prevent and suppress fires that frequent this area. The SWIFT project and its successes have provided a template that is applicable for the County of Mariposa.

Unique to SWIFT is the agency participants, Tuolumne and Mariposa County Fire Departments, the Stanislaus National Forest, Tuolumne and Mariposa CDF Units, Bureau of Land Management, City and County of San Francisco Hetch-Hetchy System, Tuolumne and Mariposa County FireSafe Councils and the Central Sierra Resource Conservation Districts.

SWIFT has produced a number of products to support fire prevention/community involvement for the agencies as well as the FireSafe Councils. The CD produced by SWIFT has been presented to the USDA Forest Service Region V Division Chiefs Meeting as well as the California Nevada Hawaii Forest Fire Association. In each case, the CD has met with extremely positive reviews. A second CD, generic in format, has been produced for use by agencies and FireSafe Councils in other areas of the State and Region.

OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT FOR SWIFT

The key individual of the SWIFT has been the Groveland District Fire Management Officer, Tom James as the organizing member. Tom retired from the Forest Service and has, with the support of the member agencies, acted as the coordinator for activities. The Tuolumne County Title III Committee proposed to their Board of Supervisors a program of support to continue the coordinator position to ensure continuity in the project. The position description is attached as a part of this document.

In response, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors authorized a personal services contract to provide for partial support of the coordinator and selected Tom James as that individual. Memoranda from Steve Boyack, Tuolumne County Administrative Analyst, has provided supporting information on the scope of work and the terms of the personal services contract for their agency. The contract covers work for 960 hours over a two year period and based on the available workload, the number of hours should be at least double or 1920 hours. Further, the project area requires on-site access and a four wheel drive vehicle will serve that need.

Prepared for the: HR 2389 Board Committee, Supervisors Turpin and Stetson, Deputy CAO Hodson
By: Mariposa County Fire Department
Page 1 of 3
REQUEST

The department requests that the County of Mariposa join with the County of Tuolumne in support of the SWIFT Project Coordinator with Title III funds as follows:

1. Enter into a personal services contract with Tom James for the position of coordinator for SWIFT by adding an additional 960 hours of work at $30.00 per hour over the next 24 months. Cost of the contract to be $28,800.

2. That the County of Mariposa provide a 4X4 pool vehicle (available now) to Mr. James at the Fleet rate of $.34 per mile for a total of 1000 miles over the next two years. The vehicle will be operated within the SWIFT area. Tuolumne County is providing an office to support SWIFT.

Total Cost in Title III funds

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Services Contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vehicle Mileage [1000@$0.34]</td>
<td>$340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel ($0.13/mile)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$29,270</strong></td>
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CONFORMANCE TO THE INTENT OF HR 2389

The SWIFT Project's goal is to cooperatively plan and implement a strategic fire defense system designed to reduce the threat of loss to life, property and natural resources in the Southern Tuolumne and Northern Mariposa County Urban-Wild land interface. Currently, County, State and Federal agencies are working together to mitigate the fire problems in the area labeled as the Southwest Interface Project. This area of 132,000 acres, in Southern Tuolumne County and Northern Mariposa County, has a unique history of repeated large catastrophic fires. The agencies involved all have various protection responsibilities within the area and have joined together in an interagency team effort to work on the fire problems. The team consists of representatives from Mariposa and Tuolumne County Fire Departments, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for the Tuolumne/Calaveras and Madera/Mariposa/Merced Ranger Units, The Bureau of Land Management, USFS< USFS-Central Sierra Resource Conservation and Development and the City and County of San Francisco.

There are a total of 12 watersheds within the project area. The watersheds are a very significant value within the area. Large wildfires common to the area have the potential of seriously damaging the watersheds that could affect future water and power supplies. There are 10 residential areas inside the project boundary.

*Prepared for the: HR 2389 Board Committee, Supervisors Turpin and Stetson, Deputy CAO Hodson*  
*By: Mariposa County Fire Department*  
*Page 2 of 3*
Opportunities to support fire protection come from strategically placed and well planned thru thinning projects, biomass operations, and multi-product vegetation offerings. Efforts are made to enlist the wood products industry in working cooperatively with the interagency team to find ways to accomplish protection objectives with environmental, social, political, and financial requirements.

The majority of the work that is planned under this effort will be to primarily reinforce pre-identified strategic fire defense systems. Fuel breaks and road corridors and the key areas that are considered.

RATIONAL

The SWIFT Project clearly meets the spirit and the intent of HR 2389. The SWIFT Project is providing an economic benefit to the local residential and business communities, not to mention the long-term employment benefits and job creation potential to continually maintain the created fire defense systems. The Project has been planned to enhance and benefit forest and water shed health within the region.

ENCLOSURES

1/ Letter to Tom James from Steve Boyack, Tuolumne County commitment and expectations

2/ Resume of Tom James

3/ Publication: "STRATEGIC FIRE PROTECTION and SWIFT, a Process"

Prepared for the : HR 2389 Board Committee, Supervisors Turpin and Stetson, Deputy CAO Hodson
By: Mariposa County Fire Department
Page 3 of 3
Proposal Summary

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (HR2389) Funds Request for Mariposa County Fire Safe Council Administrative Support – January 2005

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is requesting HR2389 (Title III) funds in the amount of $46,567.00 for the period from 1/1/05 through 12/31/05. 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.

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. Currently seeking forester (RPF) to complete required environmental surveys and reports.
- 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.

2005 Goal Highlights:

- 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. Grant application pending.
- Continue educational efforts including elementary school Team Teaching participation, Wildfire Risk Assessment Surveys, creating and staffing booth at Mariposa County Fair, and providing answers by mail, telephone and email to inquiries by residents about fire safe issues.
- Continue Countywide Fire Safe Education/Chipping Demonstration & Assistance Program in sixteen remaining communities/areas, further reducing hazardous fuels around homes of residents in immediate need and along roadsides critical for ingress/egress in the event of a wildfire.
- Obtain funding for fuel reduction projects to protect at-risk communities (as prioritized by our agency partners in their fire plans) of Midpines, Lushmeadows and Yosemite West.

Breakdown of Funds Requested:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Amount:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary &amp; Taxes</td>
<td>$37,327.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
<td>$6,240.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Expenses</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$46,567.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 many 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:

- Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
- Mariposa County Fire Department
- 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 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 seven 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, leaving 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:

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 three years, excluding HR2389 funds, we have been awarded a total of $444,000. Since receiving our first grant in 2001, this represents a 10:1 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.