RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2012-213

MEETING: April 24, 2012

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Rick Benson, County Administrative Officer

RE: Title III Funding Proposal

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Tentatively approve continued funding of the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council with Title III funding from the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 with direction to staff to notice the proposal and begin the 45-day comment period. The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is requesting continued funding of $46,920 for the period of July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013.

Approved uses of Title III projects are (1) activities under the Firewise Communities program (similar to Fire Safe Councils); (2) reimbursement for search and rescue and other emergency services performed on Federal land; (3) develop community wildfire protection plans in coordination with the appropriate Secretary concerned. Before final approval by the Board of Supervisors the funding proposal requires a 45-day public comment period after being published in the publication of local record.

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is requesting continued funding for a one-year period in the amount of $46,920. The Council will use this funding to pay for personnel, insurance, office supplies, and travel reimbursement. Activities carried out by the Council will include continuing hazardous fuels reduction, fire prevention education, outreach programs, and applying for future grants to cut, pile, and chip hazardous brush for low income, senior, and/or disabled county residents. This proposal meets the criteria to receive Title III funding. Attached is a copy of the Council’s proposal that provides greater detail.

After the completion of the 45-day comment period the Board will be then be asked to review any comments received and formally approve the use of Title III funds for this proposal. A grant agreement with the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council will be presented for approval at this time.

The County received $26,400 this fiscal year for use on Title III projects, and unless this legislation is reauthorized this will be the final year that the County will receive this funding. There is currently an uncommitted balance of approximately $74,500 in
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the Forest Reserve Fund. It should be noted that any funds not committed by September 2012, must be returned to the United States Treasury.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
On June 7, 2011, the Board adopted Resolution 11-248 approving the grant agreement with the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council for the continued use of Title III funding.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Do not tentatively approve the continued use of Title III funding for the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council. Staff will not notice the proposal. Other proposals that meet the funding criteria will need to be solicited or the funding will have to be returned to the United States Treasury.

ATTACHMENTS:
Fire Safe Council Proposal (PDF)

CAO RECOMMENDATION
Requested Action Recommended

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Lyle Turpin, District II Supervisor
SECONDER: Lee Stetson, District I Supervisor
AYES: Stetson, Turpin, Bibby, Cann, Allen
Executive Summary

Wildland fire is the number one natural disaster facing Mariposa County residents. In the year 1998, the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council was developed to help reduce that threat. Mariposa County has a majority population of senior, low income, and disabled residents who are not physically or financially capable of creating and maintaining the legally mandated clearances around their homes, nor are many of the residents aware of the extreme dangers they face while living in the wildland urban interface. Since 1998, The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council has assisted over 5,000 Mariposa County residents with hazardous fuels removal and has successfully completed 8 strategic fuel treatments. The Council has assisted emergency service agencies with school events, and each year attend over 10 education-outreach programs throughout Mariposa County. Having worked with government agencies such as Mariposa County Fire, Cal Fire, US Forest Service, and BLM, the Council has focused and achieved many goals set forth, in the mission of the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council. The Council will continue to seek funding for fire prevention programs, hazardous fuels removal projects, and educational programs. The key focus of the Fire Safe Council in 2012-2013, is to continue to educate Mariposa County resident on the importance of fire safety and prevention, creating and maintaining the 100' Defensible Space around all structures on their property, therefore preventing the spread of wildland fire. Since 2009, the Council has completed $1,940,542.00 in fire prevention-safety programs, hazardous fuels removal projects, and in 2012-2013 the Council will seek a minimum of $1,050,000.00 to continue those efforts in reducing the potential threat of catastrophic loss, caused by wildland fire. The Council is requesting Mariposa County’s continued support in funding a portion of the Councils administrative costs for 2012-2013.
Funding Request for the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council (MCFSC)
Education/Outreach & Administrative Support
from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013

Proposal

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) is respectfully requesting SR2008 (Title III) funds in the amount of $46,920.00 for the period of July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. The mission and overall operations of the Council meets the legislative intent of the SR2008 under Fire Prevention and County Planning. The Council will use the requested funding to continue hazardous fuels reduction, fire prevention education, outreach programs, and future planning. This funding will also provide a match for future grants to cut, pile and chip hazardous brush for low income, senior, disabled or deployed Mariposa County residents (who are unable to create and/or maintain their Defensible Space clearance), as well as other hazardous fuels reduction projects throughout Mariposa County. Without this funding, the Council will be unable to continue the efforts to educate residents on the dangers of wildland fire as well as encouraging, planning, and implementing countywide hazardous fuels reduction, as outlined in the Mariposa Countywide Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan.

History of the MCFSC

Organization:
The Council started in January 1998 as a grassroots community effort to get the word out to Mariposa County residents on the dangers of wildfire in the wildland urban interface, and to teach people how to maintain defensible space around their homes. The MCFSC is a 501(c)3, non-profit, non-governmental, non-regulatory community partnership of Mariposa County residents, land/property owners, businesses, organizations, and agencies working together to reduce the vulnerability to the threat of wildland fire. The Council has been in operation since 1998. "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." Wildland fire is the number one natural disaster facing Mariposa County residents, and the Council serves all of Mariposa County.
Community:
Over 50% of Mariposa County is public lands (Yosemite National Park, Sierra National Forest, Stanislaus National Forest, Merced Wild and Scenic River and other very large Bureau of Land Management holdings) as well as numerous tribal allotments and Rancherias directly adjacent to private property. Mariposa County has a majority population of senior, low income, and disabled residents who are not physically or financially capable of creating and maintaining the legally mandated clearances (PRC 4291), around their homes or other structures on their property. In addition, the Council serves those residents who have moved to Mariposa County from urban areas that are unaware of the catastrophic dangers of wildland fire, living in the wildland–urban interface, and the limited resources available for fire suppression efforts.

Need for Financial Assistance:
The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is a 501©(3) non-profit and depends solely on grant funding to continue existing and future fire prevention projects, education and outreach events, and hazardous fuel reduction projects. Over 50% of Mariposa County is comprised of public lands which do not generate County tax revenue.

Partners:
Bureau of Land Management, Mother Lode Field Office
California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (Cal Fire) – Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit
California Fire Safe Council
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors & Department of Public Works
Mariposa County Department of Human Services
Mariposa County Fire Department (MCFD)
Mariposa County High School – ROP Grizzlies Fire Dept.
Mariposa County Resource Conservation District
Mariposa Pines/Jerseydale Fire Safe Committee
Midpines Advisory Committee
National Park Service, Yosemite National Park
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Southern Sierra Miwok Nation
SouthWest Interface Team (SWIFT)
Upper Merced River Watershed Council
US Forest Service, Sierra & Stanislaus National Forest
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
Yosemite Sequoia Conservation & Development Council
Yosemite National Park
Yosemite National Park Service
Education/Outreach & Administrative Programs

Use of Requested Funds:
With this requested funding in the amount of $46,920.00, the Fire Safe Council will continue to develop and implement education/outreach programs for each and every community, throughout Mariposa County. The Council's programs include: holding monthly board meetings; attending community meetings and giving presentations to other organizations; assisting agencies with school programs (Team Teaching, Exploration Week, Grizzlies Fire Department, etc.); distributing fire safety and prevention literature and materials; collaborating on fire safe newspaper inserts; submitting press releases, articles and pictures to the newspaper; updating MCFSC website with current fire safety information, status of projects, program opportunities, and relevant information; staffing booths at events such as the Mariposa County Fair, Senior Expo, Safe At Home Fair, Butterfly Days, Contractors Fair, Airport Fly-In, etc.; planning and participating in Wildfire Risk Assessment Surveys. In addition to the above information, the Council will continue to actively seek funding for on-the-ground hazardous fuels reduction projects. The funds will also be used to oversee projects and ensure accuracy and success of all grants.

Project & Grant History:

- 1998-2002: Neighborhood/Roadside Brush Clearing Projects; Whitmore Drive, Ponderosa Basin, Lushmeadows, and Greeley Hill

- 2003: Mailed “Homeowner Watch Outs!” Fire Safe Brochure to all owners of improved property per Assessor’s Office (approx. 7,700) & put on Wildfire Awareness Day fire safe workshop for residents with reps from BLM, Cal Fire, USFS, Mariposa County, and MPUD Fire Departments


- 2003-2005: Partnered with BLM to construct approximately five miles of shaded fuel break along a strategic ridge top above Greeley Hill.

- 2006: Partnered with USFS to construct approx. 1.5 miles of shaded fuel break along a strategic ridge top above Mariposa Pines.

- 2007: Educated and assisted 111 residents with clearing chipping around structures and along driveways.

- 2006-2008: Partnered with Cal Fire to begin constructing a six miles of shaded fuel break along Stumpfield Mountain Road, using $142,000.00 in Proposition 40 funds awarded by Cal Fire. Project was completed in 2007.
2008: Awarded $57,955.00 from Bureau of Land Management to construct approx. 1 mile of shaded fuel break in the Buckhorn Flat area protecting residents of Greeley Hill, Coulterville, BLM lands, and plantations on the Stanislaus National Forest. Project was in the Environmental process when the 2008 Telegraph Fire burned through the project area.

2008: Awarded $20,000.00 from the Bureau of Land Management to complete the Mariposa Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Plan was ultimately finished in June 2009.

2008: Awarded $131,600.00 from the US Forest Service to construct approx. 1 ¼ miles of shaded fuel break protecting the community of Ponderosa Basin. Project successfully completed in early 2009.

2008-2009: Awarded $69,911.00 in prop 84 funds from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to complete a Countywide Community Conservation and Wildfire Protection Plan (CCWPP), which is an expanded version of the Mariposa County CWPP, including the Conservation aspect. Project is in the process of being completed in 2011, due to funding freeze.

2008-2009: Awarded $117,450.00 from the US Forest Service to cut, pile and chip hazardous Defensible Space material. Project successfully completed in 2010. Over 200 residents assisted with this project.

2008-2009: Awarded $99,970.00 in prop 84 funds from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to cut and pile Defensible Space hazardous fuels for “at-risk” residents. Over 200 residents have been assisted with this program.

2008-2009: Awarded $115,787.00 in prop 84 funds from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to chip Defensible Space hazardous fuels that have been cut and piled by land owner. Over 300 residents have been assisted with this program.

2008-2009: Awarded $61,722.50 in Prop 40 funds from Cal Fire to complete additional miles of shaded fuel break along Stumpfield Mountain & Watt Road. “Stumpfield/Watt Phase II” project was successfully completed in 2010.

2008-2009: Awarded $188,277.50 in Prop 40 funds from Cal Fire to complete a 6 mile long shaded fuel break from Whispering Pines off of Darrah Road to Wass Road/49south. “Lushmeadows Strategic Fuel Treatment” project was delayed due to funding freeze, but is near completion in March 2011.

2010-2011: Awarded $87,314.00 from the US Forest Service to assist “at-risk” residents with debris (weeds, leaves, pine needles, etc) removal within their Defensible Space.
“Reducing Exposure to Catastrophic Loss” project was successfully completed in early 2011. Over 150 “at-risk” residents were assisted with this program.

- **2010-2011:** Awarded $42,000.00 from the US Forest Service to cut, pile and chip hazardous Defensible Space material for “at-risk” residents, as well as chipping hazardous Defensible Space material for those residents who are capable of cutting and piling their own material. “Wildland Fire Home Protection Assistance Program” project was successfully completed in early 2011. Over 100 residents were assisted with this program.

- **2010-2011:** Awarded $145,430.00 from the Bureau of Land Management to construct a 2 1/2 mile long shaded fuel break, in the area of Feliciana Mountain. The “Feliciana” project is anticipated to be completed in late 2011.

- **2010-2011:** Awarded $90,880.00 from Cal Fire-Western States Wildland Urban Interface to cut, pile and chip hazardous Defensible Space material for “at-risk” residents as well as chipping hazardous Defensible Space material for those residents who are capable of cutting and piling their own material. The “Wildland Fire Home Defensible Space Program” will be completed in 2012.

- **2011/2012:** Awarded $150,000.00 in Proposition 40 funds from the California Department of Forestry Fire to complete fuel break maintenance, on an existing fuel break in the community of Bootjack (Stumpfield Watt Hazardous Fuels Treatment).

- **2011/2012:** Awarded $50,000.00 in Proposition 40 funds from the California Department of Forestry Fire to complete hazardous fuels reduction in the community of Lushmeadows.

- **2011/2012:** Awarded $750.00 from Pacific Gas and Electric Company to continue education and outreach efforts throughout Mariposa County.

- **Pending Grant Proposals:** The projects listed below are currently being considered by grantors throughout California. All projects include the Education & Outreach component:
  
  1. Defensible Space CHIPPING program - $122,072.00

  2. Defensible Space BRUSHING program for "at-risk" residents - $75,947.00

  3. Midpines Environmental Compliance - $16,450.00

  4. Buckingham Mountain Fuel Break - $18,250.00
The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council is currently working on several grants that will be submitted to the California Fire Safe Council in August 2012. The requested funds will allow the Council to complete hazardous fuels reduction projects throughout Mariposa County and continue to educate the residents of Mariposa County and the surrounding areas on the importance of fire safety, prevention and forest health.
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