TO: RICH INMAN, County Administrative Officer
FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
SUBJECT: NECESSARY ACTIONS REGARDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AS A RESULT OF THE OLD HIGHWAY FIRE

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,

ADOPTED THIS Order on September 21, 2004

ACTION AND VOTE:

Rich Inman, County Administrative Officer;
A) Discussion and Necessary Actions Regarding Financial Assistance as a Result of the Old Highway Fire

BOARD ACTION: Rich Inman advised that this matter was scheduled as there may be a number of people wanting to discuss remedial measures dealing with the recent fires. He advised that the Fire Chief has an item scheduled for September 25th.

Jerry Progner, National Resource Conservation Service, advised that the Agency he works with has a number of programs and he suggested that the Board might want to consider the Emergency Watershed Protection Program to help stabilize the watershed area around the reservoir that provides water for the town of Mariposa. He provided input on the program and advised that a local sponsor is necessary, and they will do the administrative work. He also advised that they started the damage survey report on Monday. He noted that there were three fires in the Old Highway vicinity and they are referring to them as a complex of fires and the program could address that or just this fire. Discussion was held relative to remedial measures that this program would cover; i.e., seeding and erosion control. Discussion was also held relative to working with MPUD on this project and the timelines and the potential for in-kind services. Supervisor Parker requested that this project be coordinated with MPUD, and that they be a partner in this. Discussion was held relative to removing the dead and burned debris in the area, and Jerry advised of their efforts on that matter.

(M)Pickard, (S)Stetson, Res. 04-421 was adopted authorizing the Chairman to sign a letter requesting Federal assistance under provisions of Section 403, Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, to provide technical and financial assistance in an effort to rehabilitate the watershed lands impacted by the recent wildfires surrounding the town of Mariposa. Direction was also given for the County Administrative Officer to finalize the language in the letter/Ayes: Unanimous.

Mark Rowney, MPUD General Manager, advised that the MPUD Board has not had a meeting since the fires; however, he is sure that they will be supportive and provide assistance with the project in the immediate watershed area. He also noted that they are working on a tree planting option.
Roscoe Rowney, Administrative Division Chief for CDF, stated it is fortunate that they will have staffing at the Mt. Bullion Camp that can assist with these projects. He advised that Office of Emergency Services (OES) staff will be here on Wednesday for a meeting to discuss the possibility of funding through the Federal Management System grants. Chairman Parker suggested that the County Administrative Officer attend this meeting on behalf of the Board.

Tom Guarino, County Counsel, advised that he is working with Chief Shultz in preparing a resolution for the OES grants, and he was asked to attend the meeting as well.

cc: Blaine Shultz, Fire Chief
File
Mr. Charles W. Bell, State Conservationist
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
430 G Street, #4164
Davis, CA 95616-4164

Dear Mr. Bell:

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action this date to authorize this request for Federal assistance under provisions of Section 403, Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, to provide technical and financial assistance in an effort to rehabilitate the watershed lands impacted by recent wildfires surrounding the town of Mariposa.

Recent fires, particularly the Old Highway Fire, burned approximately 1,500 acres that surrounds the reservoir that serves as the domestic water source for the town of Mariposa. The town area includes residents and businesses and serves millions of tourists that visit Yosemite National Park each year. Assistance would be used to reseed damaged areas, erosion control and for stabilization to restore the natural functions of the watershed.

We understand, as sponsors of an Emergency Watershed Protection project, we are responsible for a twenty-five percent (25%) match in either in-kind or cash or both. The County, along with various other agencies that will assist us in this effort are prepared to furnish the 25 percent local cost-share.

We look forward to hearing from you. If you need any additional information, please contact Richard H. Inman, County Administrative Officer at (209) 966-3222.

Sincerely,

GARRY R. PARKER
Chairman, Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

cc: Congressman George Radanovich
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
Richard H. Inman, County Administrative Officer
Blaine Shultz, Mariposa County Fire Chief
Mark Rowney, Mariposa Public Utility District
Jerry Progner, Soil Conservationist, USDA Soil Conservation Service
How do I get assistance?

If you feel your area has suffered severe damage and may qualify under the EWP program, you are encouraged to contact your local flood control district or County Supervisor to request assistance. City and county governments and flood control districts are usually the most common sponsors of EWP projects.

The sponsor’s application should be in the form of a letter signed by a qualified representative of the sponsoring organization. The letter should include information on the nature, location and scope of the problem for which assistance is requested.

Information is available from NRCS offices which explains the eligibility requirements for the EWP program.

Send applications for assistance to the local NRCS field office or to the NRCS state headquarters in Davis. The address is:

State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
430 G Street, #4164
Davis, CA 95616-4164

All applications should be submitted as soon as possible after the event.

Severe bank erosion threatens a structure at an EWP site in California.

Putting a home at risk, significant storms caused a concrete wall to fail at another EWP site in California.

USDA Equal Opportunity Statement

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
A new federal agency, the Emergency Work Fund, has been established by Congress to ensure quick response to incidents that require immediate action. The fund is designed to support projects that are too small to warrant full-scale emergency response but still require quick action. These projects are typically focused on public safety, environmental cleanup, or infrastructure improvements. The fund is intended to provide immediate response to situations that are not considered major national or regional disasters.
California Summary

Overview
The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program provides technical and financial assistance for watersheds ravaged by natural disasters. Through EWP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with local sponsors to help heal the watershed and prevent further environmental and economic havoc following a natural disaster. EWP provides funding to project sponsors for such work as clearing debris from clogged waterways, restoring vegetation, and stabilizing river banks. The measures that are taken must be environmentally and economically sound and generally benefit more than one property owner.

A relatively new option for assistance under EWP is available to landowners where NRCS provides funding to purchase flood easements on land that has a history of flooding problems. Repeated costly rehabilitation work is eliminated and the land can then provide the needed floodplain function for the watershed.

Accomplishments
EWP helps California’s people and resources recover from fires, floods, and drought during the 2001 fiscal year. After the Arroyo Grande Flood in San Luis Obispo County in March, 2001, EWP repaired 650 feet of damaged or breached levees, saving threatened homes, a business and 200 acres of prime farmland. Thus a $150,000 repair prevented over $1 million in looming damages.

In Tuolumne County’s Pilot Fire 4,000 acres were burned. Unanchored by vegetation, the watershed then produced sediment, debris and mudflows which threatened homes, an amphitheater, and recreational facilities in the lower watershed. For $20,000 EWP funds provided trash racks and a cleanout box to protect these facilities.

The Klamath Basin drought became an internationally known crisis of a farming community parched by drought. NRCS in California and Oregon helped farmers prevent mass wind erosion, air quality problems and reduced safety threats through a timely EWP cover crop seeding program. By summer’s end 38,000 acres were protected by 100+ farmers participating in the EWP program.

Customer Focus
In 2001 national attention focused on the rural community of Klamath Falls on the eastern California-Oregon border. In a community fueled by agriculture, farms and ranches were held in limbo as producers received word in April that they would receive no water from their main irrigation source.

In May with more than 170,000 acres of farmland ready for planting and bare to the skies, the area faced the threat of severe wind erosion. Dust storms had already begun, causing seven chain-reaction car accidents.

Cover crops might protect the fields but the window of opportunity was closing quickly. If not planted immediately, needed soil moisture would be lost—along with any hope of taming the wind damage.

An EWP program, sponsored by conservation districts from both states, was begun. Farmers planted their own fields as an in-kind match and EWP supplied $2 million in cover crop payments.

On June 21 the first farmers began receiving checks for the work and by July almost 40,000 acres had been planted with cover crops. The entire Basin benefited from improved air quality and safety.
Floodplain Easement Options
EWP easements may be purchased on any floodplain lands that have been impaired within the last 12 months or that have a history of repeated flooding. Owners, managers, and users of public, private, or tribal lands are eligible for EWP. NRCS provides up to 75% of the funds needed to restore the natural function of the watershed. The community or local sponsors of the work pays the remaining 25 percent, which can be provided by cash or in-kind service. Purchases are based on established priorities.

Application Process
Requests for floodplain easement assistance may be made by the landowner. Persons owning land with a history of flooding and costly repair work may qualify for assistance under the EWP program. Contact your local NRCS Field Office for more information.

All other requests for EWP assistance must be made by a project sponsor, usually a city, county or state unit of government. These requests should be made within 60 days of a disaster event. Requests should be made in writing to the NRCS State Conservationist and identify the event, damage and estimated threat to properties as a result of the disaster. The local NRCS Field Office is always a good first point of contact.

Sponsors
EWP applicants must be represented by a project sponsor. City and county governments, general improvement districts, and conservation districts are the most common sponsors. Sponsors are responsible for providing landowners to do repair work and securing the necessary permits. Additionally, they are responsible for furnishing the local cost share and for accomplishing the installation of work.

State Contacts
Bill Ward, State Design Engineer, USDA NRCS, 430 G Street, #4164, 530-792-5616, Davis, CA 95616-4164. Charles Davis, State Conservation Engineer, USDA NRCS, 530-792-5622

For More Information
If you need more information about EWP please contact your local USDA Service Center listed in the telephone directory under Federal Government Agencies, U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local Resource Conservation District. Information on the national program is available on the World Wide Web at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/factsheet.html

Reconstructed Flood Plain.

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