

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA



FROM: Supervisor Jim Venable

SUBMITTAL DATE: February 11, 2002

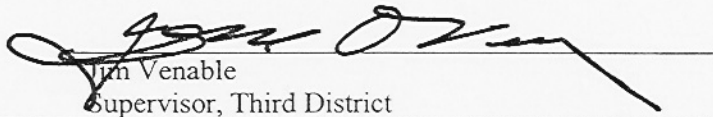
SUBJECT: Position on Senate Bill 8 by Senator Jim Brulte. This measure would establish and task the California Fire Protection Task Force to mitigate the threat of fires in state responsibility areas near or enclosed by the Los Angeles, San Bernardino, or Cleveland National Forests by preventing further tree mortality caused by drought and infestation and by reducing fuel by removal of dead or dying trees and brush

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors support Senate Bill 8 and request amendments to the bill to include an appropriation to fund the activities required by the legislation. The Board directs the Executive Office and the Board's Sacramento representative to further the Board's position.

BACKGROUND: Riverside County is facing a horrible infestation of bark beetles on over 52,000 acres of public and private land. This infestation is seriously jeopardizing forestlands and is creating a fire danger of immense proportions. On March 5, 2002, the Board of Supervisors took action to declare a Local Emergency due to the epidemic infestation and its impacts on the communities of Idyllwild and Pine Cove. Since that time, the County has contributed over \$500,000 to eradicate this infestation and reduce the fire threat posed by dead and dying trees. It is estimated that a catastrophic fire, similar in scope to last summer's Rodeo-Chediski Fire in Arizona, could result in over a \$646 million economic loss to the region. Additional State and Federal support and intervention is necessary to prevent this disaster.

SB 8 would address this important issue by establishing the Fire Prevention Act of 2003. In addition to creating a task force to help mitigate the fire danger associated with drought and the bark beetle infestation, this measure would require the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to implement a program to detect and remove dead and dying trees and brush. SB 8 would require the Department to work with other State, Federal, and local agencies to secure funding and authorizes the Department to enter into agreements with public and private entities to carry out the objectives of this bill. An impacted county would be authorized to apply for funding for tree removal after preparing an action plan for the removal and disposition of affected trees within its jurisdiction. While SB 8 states it is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate sufficient funds for the implementation of the bill, the measure contains no appropriation. Without sufficient funding the intent of this measure will not be realized.

SB 8 represents an important first step toward greater State support and intervention into eradicating the bark beetle and mitigating the fire danger caused by years of drought.


Jim Venable
Supervisor, Third District