

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



**FROM:** Supervisor Ashley

**SUBMITTAL DATE:** August 23, 2005

**SUBJECT: REPORT ON CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION  
OPERATIONS AT HEMET-RYAN AIRPORT**

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

That the Board of Supervisors discuss the draft report and related issues with input from the Director's Office of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and provide direction to the Executive Office on how to proceed with current fire services issues.

**BACKGROUND:**

Earlier this year the Board of Supervisors requested that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) revisit the decision to move its State aviation operations at Hemet-Ryan Airport to March Air Reserve Base. At the Board's direction Supervisors Tavaglione and Stone met with CDF Director Dale Geldert to discuss this matter. Director Geldert agreed to appoint a committee to review the Board's request, investigate the pros and cons of both locations, and report back to the Board with his findings.

A draft report dated July 6, 2005 was circulated to committee members with a cover memo (attached) from Riverside County Fire Chief Craig Anthony dated July 7, 2005. The memo indicated the report was in draft form. The Board and others were also given copies of this draft. In a letter (attached) to the Board dated August 1, 2005, Director Geldert outlined his concerns with the draft report and he "returned the report to staff for completion." A report from the committee has never been officially presented to the Board. Seeking a resolution to the matter, Supervisors Tavaglione and Stone wrote a letter (attached) to our local State legislators on August 10, 2005 asking that the aviation operations be retained at Hemet-Ryan Airport.

(Cont'd. on Page 2)

  
MARION ASHLEY  
5<sup>TH</sup> District Supervisor

The findings in the draft report are now being disputed and/or supported by divergent parties. Concerns regarding the report and the responsiveness of CDF to the Board's overall issues with fire services have emerged.

There are many considerations that need to be addressed when discussing fire services and how they are delivered in the county. These considerations include, but are not limited to, the following. The county has a long and cordial history with CDF. The county has enjoyed outstanding and professional service from CDF firefighters for many years. CDF has a command and control system without rival that during the recent firestorms in 2003 clearly limited the damage in Riverside County. The county's contract with CDF for FY 2005-2006 as outlined in a memo from Chief Anthony (attached) totals \$96,838,623. This contract includes agreements that the county has with contract cities and a community services district for fire services in the amount of \$46,184,566. This is a significant contract for the county, CDF and the local agencies it includes. The Board is awaiting the results of a study that will provide a detailed analysis of the cost associated with establishing a county employee staffed fire department.

An effort must be made to maintain the confidence of the public and our firefighters while working through these issues. Milestones to achieving this are: the report on the aviation operations at Hemet-Ryan must be finalized and presented to the Board; the issue of whether or not to relocate these operations should be resolved in a timely manner; when the study on a county fire department is completed the Board should hold a Public Hearing on the matter so all concerned parties can provide input.

The Public Safety of the residents of Riverside County must be the overriding consideration as these issues move forward.



# RIVERSIDE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

210 West San Jacinto Avenue • Perris, California 92570 • (951) 940-6900 • Fax (951) 940-6910

Craig E. Anthony  
Fire Chief

August 10, 2005

TO: Riverside County Board of Supervisors  
Bill Luna, Finance Director  
Ray Smith, Public Information Officer

The following is the Riverside County Fire Department budget for fiscal year 2005/2006:

County Unincorporated Area:	\$65,549,446
Cities & Community Services District:	<u>\$55,417,893</u>
Total	\$120,967,339

Of these budget funds, the following are contracted to CDF:

City Unincorporated Area:	\$47,654,057
Cities & Community Services District:	<u>\$46,184,566</u>
Total	\$96,838,623

These figures do not include the State budget for protecting the State Responsibility Areas (wildlands) in Riverside County. Please contact me with any questions.

*Craig Anthony*  
CRAIG E. ANTHONY  
County Fire Chief

cc: Kim Trone, Press Enterprise

Proudly serving the unincorporated areas of Riverside County and the Cities of:

- Banning
- Beaumont
- Calimesa
- Canyon Lake
- Coachella
- Desert Hot Springs
- Indian Wells
- Indio
- Lake Elsinore
- La Quinta
- Moreno Valley
- Palm Desert
- Perris
- Rancho Mirage
- San Jacinto
- Temecula

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John Tavaglione,  
District 2

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District 3

Roy Wilson,  
District 4

Marion Ashley,  
District 5

RECEIVED AUG 10 2004

*Donna Ashley*

# COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE



## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**ROY WILSON**  
955-1040

**MARION ASHLEY**  
955-1050

August 10, 2005

TO: Honorable Jim Battin, State Senator  
Honorable Bob Dutton, State Senator  
Honorable Dennis Hollingsworth, State Senator  
Honorable John Benoit, State Assemblyman  
Honorable Russ Bogh, State Assemblyman  
Honorable Bonnie Garcia, State Assemblywoman  
Honorable Ray Haynes, State Assemblyman  
Honorable Todd Spitzer, State Assemblyman

Re: California Department of Forestry (CDF)

Dear Esteemed Colleagues:

We are writing each of you, our local Riverside County delegation to the State Legislature, to inform you and solicit your help with an important matter.

As you may be aware, CDF has, for nearly six years, pursued an effort to relocate its air attack base from Hemet/Ryan Airport to March Air Reserve Base (MARB). It is not exactly clear why this direction was taken as it is now known that such direction was not in the best interest of the constituents' safety in the affected areas that we all represent.

At their request, we met with several of the pilots that operate and fly the CDF air attack planes out of Hemet/Ryan. It was clear that there was a high level of concern over the relocation effort. An investigation took place evaluating scientific data that clearly revealed Hemet/Ryan was the most appropriate location for the air attack base to remain, particularly from a public safety perspective. This issue has since been before the entire Riverside County Board of Supervisors and it voted 4-1 (Supervisor Buster dissenting) to urge and request CDF to remain at Hemet/Ryan.

On April 19, 2005, we (Supervisor Tavaglione and Stone) met in Sacramento with Director Geldert of CDF and Jim Wright, Deputy Director. The meeting produced the following commitments:

1. The formation of a committee consisting of State CDF (Sacramento) personnel, as well as local CDF (Riverside County) personnel, to study and

August 10, 2005

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evaluate the issue from both perspectives and make recommendations to Director Geldert.

2. That the committee evaluate and report, in a timely manner of a few weeks rather than several months.

The study took place and the report, consisting of data provided by CDF and MARB, revealed the following information:

1. Due to inclement weather, Air Tankers stationed MARB could not leave the ground during fire season forty percent of the time!
2. When studying the response time areas within the County historically prone to wildfires, it was shown that two out of three fires would go out of control if the planes originated from MARB in contrast to Hemet/Ryan.
3. Because there is not a flight tower at Hemet/Ryan, nor competition with commercial and military aircraft, more swift takeoffs can occur decreasing response times. It should be noted since 1937, the air attack base has operated out of Hemet/Ryan without incident.
4. CDF's own analysis and study in 1998 showed that Hemet/Ryan was strategically the best location even taking Norton Air Base into consideration in San Bernardino County.


With the study complete and the clear recommendation to retain the air attack base at Hemet/Ryan, Director Geldert now claims the report produced by the committee he requested and staffed by his personnel, is inaccurate, inconclusive, and incomplete.

Riverside County has even offered to use our redevelopment funds to build the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate CDF at Hemet/Ryan, and still, the Director Geldert is not satisfied and has not kept his word to make a decision by August 1<sup>st</sup>. We believe that the Director's decision on this issue may be more politically motivated than public safety motivated. Our confidence in CDF diminishes each day with their response to our concerns. We hope that each of you, as a coalition for our County, will intervene with Director Geldert and Governor Schwarzenegger to insure that the public safety benefit is maximized and maintained by retaining the air tanker base at Hemet/Ryan.

We appreciate your help and are ready to assist in any process that achieves mutually satisfying goals.

Sincerely,

  
Jeff Stone, Supervisor  
Third District

  
John F. Tavaglione, Supervisor  
Second District

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

P.O. Box 944246  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2480  
Website: [www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)  
(916) 653-9424



August 1, 2005

Chairman Marion Ashley  
Riverside County Board of Supervisors  
County Administrative Center  
4080 Lemon Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Riverside, California 92501

Dear Supervisor Ashley,

As you know, I assigned my staff a project to prepare an independent, professional analysis to determine the best permanent operational location for CDF's air resources in the Inland Empire at either, Hemet Ryan Airport or March Air Reserve Base. I felt it imperative that a report be prepared that accurately and factually addressed all relevant issues such as takeoff times, effectiveness, safety, the ability to handle various types of aircraft, potential land use issues, funding sources and potential use conflicts at each proposed site. Moreover, I believe the pros and cons for each site must be weighed against an objective set of criteria in order for me to make this decision.

The report currently being circulated lacks significant analysis in several key areas. The report also is incomplete and does not fulfill the parameters of the assignment. One significant omission is the paired comparison of 5 potential fires that neglects to consider the initial attack capability of fire engines, fire crews, and bulldozers located throughout the county. In order to accurately assess the relative impact of the location of fixed winged aircraft, all initial attack responses in the county must be considered.

The report also lacks the following:

1. A verified and secured funding source for runway expansion.
2. Confirmed FAA approval of the proposed change in runway length.
3. Analysis of land use issues, such as compatibility with surrounding usage, consistency with the county's General Plan and zoning and compliance with the existing or proposed Airport Master Plan.
4. Consideration of the environmental analysis necessary for the proposed project. The report does not acknowledge that environmental analysis may result in modification -- or even denial -- of the project due to potential significant adverse environmental impacts.
5. A basic examination of future traffic increases, noise impacts and conflicting airport usage.

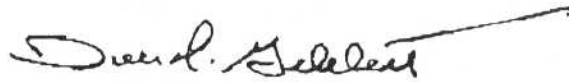
CONSERVATION IS WISE-KEEP CALIFORNIA GREEN AND GOLDEN

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CONSERVE ENERGY. FOR TIPS AND INFORMATION, VISIT "FLEX YOUR POWER" AT [WWW.CA.GOV](http://WWW.CA.GOV).

Supervisor Ashley  
August 2, 2005  
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I have returned the report to staff for completion and expect to have a final report as soon as possible. I regret any confusion that may have been caused by the premature circulation of the report. This is an issue of major significance that will have many long term ramifications for aerial firefighting for Riverside and the State. It is crucial that I base my decision on a document that is one hundred percent accurate and complete. I owe this to you as well as the people of Riverside County and the State. I appreciate the Board's patience, understanding and support in this endeavor. I know that you, too, are most concerned with resolving this issue in a manner that best serves the needs of your county. I will do everything possible to make sure that I arrive at a decision that achieves that goal.

Sincerely,



Dale T. Geldert  
Director

cf/ah

cc: Supervisor Jeff Stone  
Supervisor John Tavaglione  
Supervisor Bob Buster  
Supervisor Roy Wilson  
Executive Officer Larry Parrish

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

Riverside Unit  
210 W. San Jacinto  
Perris, CA 92570  
(909)940-6917



FILE  
"CDF"

July 7, 2005

Air Base Move Committee:

Attached is a draft of the committee report to the CDF Director. As I discussed with all of you, it was apparent the most effective way to accommodate the different committee members perspectives was to focus on the facts and encourage committee members to present any views or interpretations of the facts to the CDF Director.

I have included the findings of operational impacts on initial attack success into the report. Please provide any comments on the report to me by the middle of next week. My goal is to send the report to Sacramento by the end of next week.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Craig Anthony".

CRAIG E. ANTHONY  
Riverside Unit Chief  
Air Base Move Committee Chairman

CEA:db

Attachment

