

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



FROM: Bob Buster

SUBMITTAL DATE: October 29, 2008

SUBJECT: Resolution 2008-472 in Support of Better Fuels Management on Federal Lands

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors: declares that there is an ongoing emergency due to the threat of wildfire in California, that the state and local governments have taken steps to resolve this issue and requests that the Governor take an active role at the federal level to demand that the United States Forest Service (USFS) be directed to manage federal wild and forest lands in the manner required to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires by changing federal policy where needed and providing the necessary funding to enact that policy and ensure adequate fire protection funding for USFS fire resources.

BACKGROUND: Catastrophic wildfires continue to threaten lives, property and the natural resources of the state of California. Riverside County has over 2,786,120 acres of federally owned land which is 59.6 percent of the total land in the county. In the 2008 fire season Riverside County has suffered 825 fires, with over 1,970 acres burned, and of these, 10 percent were on federally owned land. Over the last 10 years 315 square miles or 201,407 acres of Riverside County have been destroyed by catastrophic wildfires, which were responsible for the deaths of five firefighters and the destruction of property, businesses, and the environment.

California has over 43 million acres of federal land, much of which has not been adequately managed to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Thousands of acres remain untreated in the national forests within the county due to the lack of best management forest practices to address unnaturally heavy fuel loads and the early drying of wild land vegetation. Resources spent to better manage federal lands to reduce fire risk would be a small investment relative to the skyrocketing costs of fire suppression.

(Continued on page 2)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Buster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Buster Supervisor, 1st District

Prev. Agn. ref.

Dist.

AGENDA NO.

The State of California has made significant strides towards reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires on state and private lands such as ranking lands as to the level of fire hazard, requiring 100 feet of defensible space around homes, requiring ignition-resistant materials on all new construction that is built in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within State Responsibility Areas, any Local Agency Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, or any designated Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Areas.

Increased risk of catastrophic wildfires in Riverside County will result in harmful secondary environmental effects, including diminished air and water quality, impacts to watershed, increased air pollutant emissions, and threatened habitats of sensitive wildlife species. Approximately eighty percent of the State's developed surface water supply originates on watershed lands within our rural counties. California's residents use a portion of this water for domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and other beneficial uses and these rivers, lakes, and watershed lands also serve as habitat for hundreds of species of fish and wildlife. These detrimental effects on these watersheds affect all of California, not just rural California. Further, the increased risk of catastrophic wildfires significantly impacts the levels of greenhouse gases in Riverside County and the mitigation of wildfire emissions is vital to reach the goals stated in the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32).

Riverside County has taken steps to implement the Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force to review and provide recommended direction for the reduction of fire hazards. The County of Riverside is requesting that the Governor take an active role at the federal level to demand that the United States Forest Service (USFS) be directed to manage federal wild and forest lands in the manner required to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires by changing federal policy where needed and providing the necessary funding to enact that policy and ensure adequate fire protection funding for USFS fire resources.

2 **RESOLUTION NO. 2008-472**

3 **Resolution and Support of Better Fuels Management on Federal Lands**

4
5 WHEREAS, catastrophic wildfires continue to threaten lives, property and the
6 natural resources of the state of California;

7 WHEREAS, the insurance losses for the 2007 Fire Season in Southern California
8 were \$1.6 billion and the Angora Fire in the Tahoe basin was more than \$150 million
9 alone, insurers have paid out in excess of \$8 billion to thousands of policy holders from
10 the top 10 California wildfires since 1970;

11 WHEREAS, the estimated loss of employment from the 2007 Southern California
12 fires was in excess of \$500 million;

13 WHEREAS, California is approximately 50 percent publicly owned land and 50
14 percent privately owned land but many rural counties have substantially higher
15 percentages of federally owned land;

16 WHEREAS, Riverside County has over 2,786,120 acres of federally owned land,
17 which is 59.6 percent of the total land in the county;

18 WHEREAS, in the 2008 fire season so far alone, Riverside County has suffered
19 825 fires, over 1,970 acres have burned, and of these, 10 percent were on federally
20 owned land;

21 WHEREAS, 315 square miles or 201,407 acres of Riverside County have been
22 destroyed by catastrophic wildfire over the last 10 years, which destroyed five
23 firefighter's lives, property, businesses, and the environment;

24 WHEREAS, California has over 43 million acres of federal land, much of which
25 has not been adequately managed to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire;

26 WHEREAS, two of the three largest wildfires in California in the past 100 years
began on federally-owned land;

1 WHEREAS, thousands of acres remain untreated in the national forests within
2 Riverside County due to the lack of forest management practices;

3 WHEREAS, millions of dollars are spent each year fighting fires in our national
4 forests;

5 WHEREAS, the resources to manage the federal lands to reduce fire risk would
6 be a small investment relative to the skyrocketing costs of fire suppression;

7 WHEREAS, the State of California has made significant strides towards reducing
8 the risk of catastrophic wildfires on state and private lands such as ranking lands as to
9 the level of fire hazard, requiring 100 feet of defensible space around homes, requiring
10 ignition-resistant materials on all new construction that is built in any Fire Hazard
11 Severity Zone within State Responsibility Areas, any Local Agency Very-High Fire
12 Hazard Severity Zone, or any designated Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Area,
13 and many other things to not only address preservation of life and property but the
14 environmental risks of large scale wildfire as well;

15 WHEREAS, the increased risk of catastrophic wildfires in Riverside County will
16 result in harmful secondary environmental effects, including diminished air and water
17 quality, impacted watershed, increased air pollutant emissions, and threatened habitats
18 of sensitive wildlife species;

19 WHEREAS, approximately eighty percent of the State's developed surface water
20 supply originates on watershed lands within our rural counties. California's residents
21 use a portion of this water for domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational,
22 and other beneficial uses and these rivers, lakes, and watershed lands also serve as
23 habitat for hundreds of species of fish and wildlife;

24 WHEREAS, the detrimental effects on these watersheds affect all of California,
25 not just rural California;

26 WHEREAS, the increased risk of catastrophic wildfires significantly impacts the
levels of greenhouse gases in Riverside County;

1 WHEREAS, the mitigation of wildfire emissions is vital to reach the goals stated
2 in the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32);

3 WHEREAS, the Draft AB 32 Scoping Plan, released in June 2008, fails to
4 adequately address the need to mitigate wildfires and the importance of quantifying and
5 modeling wildfire emissions on private, state, and federal lands;

6 WHEREAS, there continues to be a widely recognized extremely high risk of
7 catastrophic wildfires in Riverside County due to unnaturally heavy fuel loads and the
8 early drying of wild land vegetation;

9 WHEREAS, Riverside County has moved to implement the Fire Hazard
10 Reduction Task Force to review and provide recommended direction for the reduction of
11 fire hazards;

12 WHEREAS, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors calls for immediate
13 measures to be taken to prevent imminent catastrophic wildfires; and

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Riverside County Board of
15 Supervisors declares that there is an ongoing emergency due to the threat of wildfire in
16 California, that the state and the local governments have taken many steps to resolve
17 this issue and now requests that the Governor take an active role at the federal level to
18 demand that the United States Forest Service (USFS) be directed to manage federal
19 wild and forest lands in the manner required to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires
20 by changing federal policy where needed and providing the necessary funding to enact
21 that policy and ensure adequate fire protection funding for USFS fire resources.

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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution No. 2008-472, was duly and regularly adopted by the Board of Supervisors at the meeting thereof held on the _____, 2008, by member _____ seconded by _____, motion passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes:

Nays:

Abstained:

Absent:

Attest:

Nancy Romero
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

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