



JIM DESMOND
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: May 24, 2022

01

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

**FOX FIRE CENTER: ENHANCING FIREFIGHTER TRAINING, FIRE PROTECTION
AND COMMUNITY SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE REGION (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego (County) is currently in the process of regaining ownership of Camp Fox, which is located within the Cleveland National Forrest at the base of Palomar Mountain. In 1977, the County transferred the property to its current owner, the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). The deed granting ownership required SDCOE to return the property to the County if SDCOE no longer wanted to own it. With SDCOE no longer interested in the property, ownership will now transfer back to the County.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) would like to use Camp Fox as a fire center for new CAL FIRE personnel. In advance of the property transferring back to the County, SDCOE recently granted CAL FIRE access to the site to prepare the facility for use, which will be called the Fox Fire Center. This agreement permitted CAL FIRE to make improvements to the property, investing significant resources to clear overgrown vegetation and update the aging buildings. Once renovations have been completed, four CAL FIRE Firefighter 1 hand crews will inhabit the property, providing 24-hour wildland fire protection coverage.

Today's action, consistent with the San Diego County's cooperative approach of providing a greater depth of resources by partnering with CAL FIRE and providing services as one department, permits CAL FIRE to continue its use of Camp Fox as a fire center following the transfer of ownership to the County. This is imperative to the fire safety of the region and actively supports the Board of Supervisors ongoing commitment to protecting residents and property against the threat of wildfires.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate an agreement with CAL FIRE for use of Camp Fox once ownership transfers to the County, while recovering County costs, and return to the Board if necessary for authorization.

SUBJECT: FOX FIRE CENTER: ENHANCING FIREFIGHTER TRAINING, FIRE PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE REGION (DISTRICTS: ALL)

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

California is known for its volatile and perpetual fire season, experiencing the constant threat of wildfires throughout the state. Since the beginning of 2021, over 2 million acres have burned in California. Supporting the continued use of Camp Fox as a fire center for California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) firefighters will benefit residents in our most vulnerable communities through prescribed fire burning, brush clearing for defensible space and fuel reduction conducted as hands-on vegetation management training. In addition, the recruits will train daily in wildland fire prevention, education, and suppression exercises. The requested action will advance fire protection readiness and provide a sense of security to our communities facing the greatest impact from wildfire.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Operational Plan for San Diego County Fire. If approved, this request will result in approximate costs of \$131,000, related to the ownership transfer, in Fiscal Year 2021-22. The funding source is General Purpose Revenue. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The County is currently in the process of regaining ownership of Camp Fox, which is located within the Cleveland National Forrest at the base of Palomar Mountain. The County originally transferred ownership of the property to San Diego County Office of Education in 1977, with a clause in the deed requiring SDCOE to return the property if SDCOE no longer needed it. Ownership is now reverting to the County because SDCOE no longer wants to own the property.

CAL FIRE would like to use the camp as a fire center for new CAL FIRE personnel. In advance of the property transferring to the County, SDCOE recently granted CAL FIRE access to the site to prepare the facility for use, which will be called the Fox Fire Center. This agreement permitted CAL FIRE to make improvements to the property, investing significant resources to clear overgrown vegetation and update the aging buildings. Once renovations have been completed, four CAL FIRE Firefighter 1 hand crews will inhabit the 20.89-acre property, providing 24-hour wildland fire protection coverage. In addition, the crews will train daily in wildland fire prevention, education, and suppression exercises such as wildland hose lays, brush cutting, line cutting, tree falling and other types of fire drills. The curriculum includes hands-on vegetation management training, with recruits conducting prescribed fire burning, brush clearing for defensible space and fuel reduction in the surrounding communities.

The day-to-day operations and administration of the training center will be conducted under the leadership of two Battalion Chiefs. The hand crews will be organized under the direct guidance of a Fire Captain and Fire Apparatus Engineer and include a minimum of thirteen (13) Firefighters I

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trainees. In addition to training, the hand crews will be responsible for completing physical fitness activities, attending daily safety briefings, and the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities. If necessary, the hand crews will be available to respond to regional and statewide emergency incidents, such as wildland fires, floods, debris removal, and search and rescue operations.

Today's action, consistent with the San Diego County's cooperative approach of providing a greater depth of resources by partnering with CAL FIRE and providing services as one department, permits CAL FIRE to continue its use of Camp Fox as a fire center following the transfer of ownership to the County. This is imperative to the fire safety of the region and actively supports the Board of Supervisors ongoing commitment to protecting residents and property against the threat of wildfires.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions to grant the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) continued use of Camp Fox as a fire center supports the Community and Sustainability initiatives of the County's Fiscal Years 2022-2027 Strategic Plan by providing new firefighters the opportunity to learn vegetation management techniques and emergency response protocol through intensive, hands-on training, thereby ensuring communities within the unincorporated areas are prepared against the threat of wildfires throughout the region.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Desmond', written in a cursive style.

JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A