



# El Dorado County Fire Safe Council

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"Public and Private Partners Working Together to Protect People, Homes, and Natural Resources"

September 8, 2013

Supervisor Ron Briggs, Chairman  
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
330 Fair Lane  
Placerville, CA 95667

Chairman Briggs,

First I would like to apologize to you and the Board for the delay in fulfilling your request to provide the Supervisors an update on the County Fire Safe Council. We have been working to help property owners create defensible space, sponsor neighborhood clean up days and establish fuel breaks. We have not done a good job of telling our story, which is a good one. We are on your agenda for October 8<sup>th</sup> and will provide a detailed update at that time.

It has come to our attention that the County Administrative Office has located approximately \$26K in unallocated Title III funds. We request that the Board take action to provide these remaining funds to the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council.

I understand that the past practice has been to provide all the Title III funds to the EDSO Search and Rescue Unit one year and to the El Dorado Fire Safe Council the following year. I am not sure how or where this practice originated, but it seems we could agree to a more logical approach to help even out year to year budget cycles and comply with the Title III requirements.

The Fire Safe Council did not present a good case to the BOS for funding last year and as a result, received only \$7,178 of Title III funds while EDSO received \$158,853. This is in addition to the \$116,698 allocated to the EDSO in 2011/2012 budget cycle. Since that time we have drastically cut our overhead and operating expenses to less than \$20K per year. We no longer have an Executive Coordinator on contract, we have one part time person (less than \$500 per month) that acts as our administrator and schedules the chipper and dumpster requests. For everything else we rely on unpaid volunteers. We will deplete our operating funds by early next year.

We have attempted and continue our efforts of private sector fundraising but are hampered by controversy surrounding the Cal-Fire "Fire Fee", the Proposition 40 issues in the County and a difficult economy.

These remaining Title III funds will allow us to continue operating, although on a shoestring, for one more year and will allow us to restart a limited senior assistance program. We will also use the funds to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for the Lakehills Estates

and Georgetown communities. These CWPPs include a section dedicated to community evacuation plans. The development of CWPPs is one of the allowable uses of Title III funds as indicated in the attached information flyer.

Even with minimum funding and weary volunteers, our revamped Board of Directors and Council are seeking grants from USFS totaling nearly \$400,000 for the next two years. These grants would restart the county wide dumpster and chipper programs, create fuel breaks around our communities and sustain jobs by using local vendors. This represents a potential payback of \$15 for every dollar of Title III funding allocated.

Your favorable decision would protect our county's residents, visitors and resources while protecting jobs and enhancing our economy.

Respectfully submitted,



Pat Dwyer, Chair

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## Secure Rural Schools Program, 2008-2011

### Title III – County Funds

Counties shall notify the Secretary of Agriculture of its election of funds in Title III no later than September 30 of each fiscal year. Title III projects are developed and selected by the counties. Projects should be advertised for 45 days to allow public comment. Proposed projects should also be sent to the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) if one exists in the county.

Compared to the previous Act (Public Law 106-393) the reauthorized Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Public Law 110-343) significantly narrows the activities that can be funded under title III.

Title III funds may be used to:

- (1) carry out activities under the Firewise Communities Program to provide homeowners in fire sensitive ecosystems education and assistance with implementing techniques in home siting, home construction, and home landscaping that can increase the protection of people and property from wildfires;
- (2) reimburse the participating county for search and rescue and other emergency services, including firefighting that are performed on Federal land after the date on which the use was approved and paid for by the participating county; and
- (3) develop community wildfire protection plans in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Firewise Communities program ([www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)) is a cooperative, non-regulatory program administered by the National Fire Protection Association and sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, the US Department of the Interior, and state forestry organizations. It is designed to involve homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in the effort to protect people, property, and natural resources from the risk of wildland fire - before a fire starts. The Firewise Communities approach emphasizes community responsibility for planning in the design of a safe community as well as effective emergency response, and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping, and maintenance.

A community wildfire protection plan is defined in section 101(3) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law No. 108-148, December 3, 2003), with specific content and a process for development.

Under the new Secure Rural Schools Act, counties receiving more than \$350,000 total payment cannot allocate more than seven percent to Title III projects, with the balance allocated to Title II or returned to the U.S. Treasury.

Counties allocating funds for Title III projects must submit certification that the funds were used in accordance with Title III to the Secretary of Agriculture no later than February 1 of the year after county funds were expended. The Forest Service will notify participating counties of the process and format the Secretary will use for certification before the end of fiscal year 2009.

The authority to initiate Title III projects terminates on September 30, 2011. Funds not spent or obligated by September 30, 2012, will be returned to the U.S. Treasury.