



**RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT AGENCY
COUNTY OF TULARE
AGENDA ITEM**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

KUYLER CROCKER
District One
PETE VANDER POEL
District Two
AMY SHUKLIAN
District Three
J. STEVEN WORTHLEY
District Four
MIKE ENNIS
District Five

AGENDA DATE: April 18, 2017 -- **REVISED**

Public Hearing Required	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Scheduled Public Hearing w/Clerk	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Published Notice Required	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Advertised Published Notice	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Meet & Confer Required	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Electronic file(s) has been sent	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget Transfer (Aud 308) attached	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personnel Resolution attached	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agreements are attached and signature line for Chairman is marked with tab(s)/flag(s)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

CONTACT PERSON: Celeste Perez PHONE: (559) 624-7010

SUBJECT: Authorize an additional \$85,000 to Complete Phase II of the Tree Mortality Removal Project

REQUEST(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize an additional \$85,000 in funds to complete Phase II of the Tree Mortality Removal Project; and
2. Allow staff the flexibility to adjust budgets between the two Phase II tree removal projects, while not exceeding the total tree mortality project of \$335,000; and
3. Approve the necessary budget adjustments per the attached AUD 308 (4/5ths vote required).

SUMMARY:

On February 28, 2017, your Board authorized Phase II of the Tree Mortality Removal Project (the Project). This included the removal of larger hazard trees along County maintained roads within or near the communities in the Posey/Sugarloaf/Panorama Heights areas (South Valley) and in the Hartland Camp area (Hartland). The Scope of these projects has not changed, but some of the costs for necessary personnel and equipment have increased. Tulare County is requesting that your Board increase the tree mortality budget, currently set at \$250,000, from the Roads Funds by \$85,000 so that both Phase II projects may be completed.

County staff is working closely with Tulare County Fire, CalFIRE, and the United States Forest Service (USFS) personnel to remove the dead trees that threaten public safety. The work plan relies heavily on the availability of fire inmate crews. For this

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reason, there is a sense of urgency to mobilize this phase of the Project because of the availability of inmate fire crews will end when wildfire season begins in approximately four weeks. The cost for a contractor is more than double the cost of using inmate crews.

Estimated costs for the Phase II tree removal costs in the Hartland area are approximately \$1,800 per day for field personnel. Estimated tree removal costs in the South Valley are approximately \$2,800 per day for field personnel. CalFIRE officials have indicated they may also have some limited ability to provide additional CalFIRE personnel to assist in this tree removal effort at no cost to the County.

Background

Tulare County and the State of California have experienced below normal levels of precipitation since 2011. The County proclaimed a Local Emergency due to the drought on February 4, 2014 and additionally proclaimed a Local Emergency due to widespread and increasing tree mortality in Tulare County on October 6, 2015.

The tree mortality disaster continues, and also creates and exacerbates other threats to the health and safety of the public and to County residents. Severe drought and heat conditions, coupled with widespread bark beetle infestation, have increased fire risks, and consequently, increased risks to public safety and air quality. Cal Fire reports more than 300,000 acres burned statewide from January 2015 through September 26, 2015, an 89% increase over the same period in 2014. Tulare County has been impacted by these conditions.

Several analyses conducted by Federal agencies demonstrate how Tulare County has been severely impacted by the confluence of the tree mortality and drought disasters and extreme heat conditions.

On June 20, 2016 the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region released an Aerial Detection Survey Report. A total of 66 million dead or dying trees were identified within the 18 counties most impacted statewide by Tree Mortality. Tulare County was identified as having the highest number of dead trees with an estimate of 240,000 acres with new conifer mortality and an estimated 8.1 million dead or dying trees.

The immediate and long-term ramifications of the tree mortality disaster pose a danger to the health and welfare of our residents and are likely to have a significant impact on the economy of Tulare County. These conditions warrant the monthly renewal of the Proclamation of Local Emergency, enabling Tulare County to take all necessary measures to combat the impacts of tree mortality on our citizens.

Environmental Review

Pursuant to the Governor's Proclamation of a State of Emergency signed on October 15, 2015, Division 13 of the PRC (at section 21000; essentially, CEQA) has been suspended to undertake removal efforts associated with tree mortality. Approval from the US Forest Service of the proposed work plan, including environmental requirements, has been granted for the portion of the project areas that lie on federal

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lands in the Posey/Sugarloaf/Panorama Heights and Hartland areas. On February 28, 2017 the Board of Supervisors approved two CEQA exemptions and one Categorical Exemption for these projects.

Tree Mortality Removal Project – Phase I

On May 24, 2016, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors authorized up to \$250,000 of County Road Funds to be spent on the Tree Mortality Removal Project (Resolution No. 2016-0416). Phase I involves removal of trees along the loop of roadway along Balch Park Road and Bear Creek Road. This project area winds through USFS lands, Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest, and the County-owned Balch Park area, in addition to approximately 35 privately owned properties with homes.

Tree removal efforts in Phase I have consisted of CalFIRE crews brushing and chipping small diameter (less than 36") hazard trees as well as brush along County right-of-way (ROW). Much of this work was accomplished by using "tow-behind" large chippers, with chips distributed in the immediate area to help reduce possible future erosion. Most work initially occurred within 15 feet of either side of the paved road surface, an area estimated to contain approximately 1,500 dead trees. However, work authorized under a work plan approved by USFS in May 2016 allowed removal of trees as far as 300 feet on either side of the road. County workers provided traffic safety control (flagging) and other related assistance.

In Phase I, approximately 95% of the area within 15 feet of the roadway is completed. It is anticipated that the remainder of this area will be completed by the end of April. The cost of Phase I is estimated to be \$133,000 through mid-March. This includes costs from CalFIRE, RMA, General Services and Tulare County Fire. Total estimated expenditures for Phase I during this season (prior to crews being repositioned for fire season) will be \$175,000.

Tree Mortality Removal Plan – Phase II

Phase II of the project includes tree removal work in the Sugarloaf/Posey area and the Hartland area. CalFIRE crews are ready to assist the County with Phase II of tree removals. Your board has authorized work on the Sugarloaf/Posey area and Hartland area on February 28, 2017.

The Hartland project consists of cutting trees then dropping them in place on the ground. There will be a minimal amount of movement of certain trees for safety once dropped. At the time of Board authorization, it was anticipated that the County would require crews to work for approximately 2 weeks to remove the trees in Hartland. As a result, your Board authorized \$20,000 to perform this component of Phase II. After performing an updated survey of dead trees, the estimated time for removal is double the original estimate.

The South Valley portion of Phase II consists of dropping the trees, cutting the trees into 16' sections, then removing/transporting the trees to nearby locations, primarily to Balance Rock. An Air Curtain Incinerator has been placed at Balance Rock by CalFIRE to burn the trees. This increase in cutting/moving the trees has increased the costs of the project. As with the Hartland portion of the project, the number of

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trees has increased after the performance of a new survey, causing a need to increase the funding for tree removal. The County requests that your Board give it the ability to adjust the project budget between the two Phase II projects accordingly, not to exceed \$335,000 for the total tree mortality project.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING:

On May 24, 2016, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (Resolution No. 2016-0416) approved up to \$250,000 from the County Road Fund to be spent on the Tree Mortality Removal Project. Based on the total expenditures to date, the remaining County Road Funds are as follows:

County Road Funds:	\$250,000.00
Total Expenditures (Phase I) to Date:	\$133,000.00
Remaining County Road Funds:	\$117,000.00

County staff anticipates the total project cost for Phase I to be at least \$175,000 this fiscal year. The revised costs for Phase I plus the increase in the number of identified trees in Phase II has caused a shortfall in funds to the previously authorized \$90,000 to \$120,000 that your Board approved on February 28, 2017. The estimated cost of removal of trees in Phase II is \$160,000, causing a need for an additional \$85,000 from the County Road Fund to be allocated for tree mortality removal this year.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF TULARE STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN:

The County's five-year strategic plan includes the Safety and Security initiative, with a directive to plan and provide coordinated emergency preparedness, response, and recovery and mitigation capabilities for both man-made disasters. Proclaiming a local emergency facilitates the County's response to, recovery from, and mitigation against such disasters.

ADMINISTRATIVE SIGN-OFF:



Reed Schenke, P.E.
Interim Director

cc: Auditor-Controller
County Counsel
County Administrative Office (2)

Attachment(s): Attachment A – AUD 308

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TULARE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

IN THE MATTER OF AUTHORIZING AN) Resolution No. _____
ADDITIONAL \$85,000 TO COMPLETE)
PHASE II OF THE TREE MORTALITY)
REMOVAL PROJECT)

UPON MOTION OF SUPERVISOR _____, SECONDED BY
SUPERVISOR _____, THE FOLLOWING WAS ADOPTED BY THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, AT AN OFFICIAL MEETING HELD APRIL 18, 2017, BY
THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

ATTEST: MICHAEL C. SPATA
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/
CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BY: _____
Deputy Clerk

* * * * *

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2. Allowed staff the flexibility to adjust budgets between the two Phase II tree removal projects, while not exceeding the total tree mortality project of \$335,000; and
3. Approved the necessary budget adjustments per the attached AUD 308 (4/5ths vote required).

