

To the Board of Supervisors,

In an exact repeat of last year, the proposed budget would again drop support of the MCFSC from the current \$100,000 to \$25,000. Although the scale is different, a simple way to think about the magnitude of the shift is to envision how a year-to-year drop of 75% in the County's general operating funds would reorient its priorities in the new year. After considering the consequences last year, the Board restored their prior funding. I hope you will reach the same conclusion this year.

Base-operations funding is the most difficult type of support for a nonprofit agency to obtain. Although they have brought in substantial grant funding for specific community projects they have no source of support for key components of our mission such as providing ongoing community education and supporting our growing network of neighborhood level FSCs (now about 40) that are all multiplying important fire risk mitigation work throughout the County. Nor do they have other funding for "keeping the light on."

They are very grateful for the County's generous base-funding support in recent years. Stable funding for basic infrastructure and core staff allowed them to focus on delivering on our core mission rather than spending time and resources attempting to maintain the organization. Notably, as they successfully deliver more services our base costs have gone up sharply due to things like added phones for new staff, iPads for their chipping crews, insurance for multiple chippers, etc. Their budget request to the County (attached) for 2021-2022 was for an increase to \$120,000.

Having support for our base operations allows the MCFSC to focus on delivering service to the community, instead of spending much of our energy supporting our own operations. Over the past year, with the County's support, this approach has proven incredibly productive. This fiscal year the MCFSC has already secured \$400,000 in grants for on the ground work being implemented in the County, with another \$600,000 expected soon. That is not considering work on the significant grant-funded projects that the MCFSC is managing on behalf of the County or the grants we have helped the County draft that may result in yet more support. The MCFSC has also become a significant resource for community wildfire mitigation efforts, delivering community chipping services, low-income defensible space assistance, video and radio educational campaigns and much more. Indeed, they have done so much, so successfully that the MCFSC will soon be announced as California's 2nd State Assembly District Nonprofit of the Year. Now is not the time to reverse that progress.

The alternative, if the current budget proposal stands, is that they will need to shift much of their energy to “retrenching” and charting a path to fiscal viability with reduced resources. That would be a truly unfortunate situation at this moment as they head into what is expected to be a historically dangerous wildfire season.

Living in the Anderson Valley, we watched with horror as Redwood Valley and Potter Valley burned. We are trying to be Fire Safe but need your help. Please fund this request.

Val Muchowski