



MENDOCINO COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

To inform, empower, and mobilize county residents to survive and thrive in wildfire-prone environments.

June 7, 2021

Dear Mendocino County Board of Supervisors,

Greetings. I hope the week is treating you kindly. I know that budget season is full of unique challenges. So that you have more complete information for the process, I wanted to bring to your attention the effects of the proposed change to the County's level of support for the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) in item 5e on the June 8, 2021 agenda.

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 simply 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 consider the consequences last year, that Board restored our prior funding. The MCFSC hopes 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 we have brought in substantial grant funding for specific community projects we 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 we have other funding for "keeping the light on."

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



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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, we 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 we will need to shift much of our energy to "retrenching" and charting a path to fiscal viability with reduced resources. That would be a truly unfortunate situation at this moment as we head into what is expected to be a historically dangerous wildfire season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Cratty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Scott Cratty
Executive Director
Mendocino County Fire Safe Council
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