

● **Board of Directors**  
**Engineering, Operations and Real Property Committee**

July 10, 2001 Board Meeting

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**8-3**

**Subject**

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Authorize entering into a 5-year agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, with a yearly amount not to exceed \$600,000, to provide cost-effective weed abatement services

**Description**

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Under Public Resources Code Section 4114 and other provisions of law, the State of California maintains fire prevention and fire suppression forces, including the necessary equipment, personnel and facilities required to prevent and extinguish brush and forest fires during the fire season. Since 1994, Metropolitan has utilized the services of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) to provide cost-effective fire prevention and perform other labor-intensive work. Pursuant to Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 8103(h), a contract for services with another governmental agency does not require competitive bid. Given that CDF work crews are available only when they are not fighting fires, weed abatement contractors are used to supplement the work as needed.

In the past, the work performed by CDF was requisitioned through two separate agreements for Lake Mathews and Lake Skinner/Diamond Valley Lake (DVL), using two separate contract administrators. However, with the completion of DVL and its transition to an operations and maintenance facility, staff is proposing that a single agreement with one administrator be implemented. Consequently, the invoicing process will be streamlined and existing duplication in responsibilities will be eliminated.

As a State agency, CDF has consistently provided the following fire prevention services at a rate that is far more competitive than that charged by private contractors:

- Weed abatement for fire management, to include cutting and removal of non-native vegetation from the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (Reserve), DVL, Lake Skinner, Lake Mathews, Metropolitan's pipeline and distribution system, and other Metropolitan structures, properties, plants, facilities and right-of-ways.
- Weed abatement for fire management in areas planted under the DVL seed application contract, especially for native seed mixes in the east and west wildlife corridors, as well as in the east and west recreation areas.
- Vegetation maintenance for fire management around the Reserve, lakeshores, Metropolitan's pipeline and distribution system, and other Metropolitan structures, properties, plants, facilities and right-of-ways.
- Conduct prescribed burns within the Reserve consistent with the Reserve's Fire Management Plan.
- Clear and maintain designated fuel breaks in and adjacent to the Reserve.
- Maintain necessary dirt roads, erosion control and other structures, and remove vegetative and other materials.
- Maintain trails within the DVL recreation area and the Reserve.
- Install, paint, repair and/or maintain trail-related structures and facilities.

Cost comparisons have identified an average hourly labor rate of approximately \$7 per CDF crewmember as compared to \$20 to \$30 per contractor crewmember. Consequently, the last time a private contractor was used (FY 93/94) for the Lake Mathews Shoreline Vegetation Control Project, it cost Metropolitan \$860,000, more than three times the cost of using CDF for the same project the following year (\$260,000 for FY 94/95).

The tasks identified are performed under the supervision of Metropolitan and/or designated Reserve representatives.

**Policy**

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Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 8115(a) Contracts over \$250,000

**CEQA**

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Options #1 and #2:

The proposed action is categorically exempt under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The overall activities involve the minor operation, repair, maintenance and implementation of an agreement relating to an existing public facility with negligible expansion of use and no possibility of significantly impacting the physical environment. As such, this proposed project qualifies under a Class 1 Categorical Exemption (Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

The CEQA determination for Options #1 and #2 is: Determine that pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed project qualifies under a Categorical Exemption (Class 1, Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

**Board Options/Fiscal Impacts**

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**Option #1**

Adopt the CEQA determination and authorize the Chief Executive Officer to enter into a 5-year agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, with a yearly amount not to exceed \$600,000.

**Fiscal Impact:** A maximum of \$600,000 per year. The funds are included in the FY 2001/02 Operations and Maintenance budget.

**Option #2**

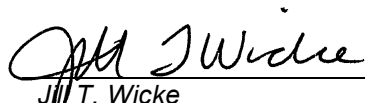
Adopt the CEQA determination and use private contractors to perform the same tasks.

**Fiscal Impact:** Approximately \$2,100,000 per year

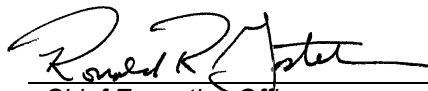
**Staff Recommendation**

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Option #1

  
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J. T. Wicke  
Manager, Water System Operations

6/18/2001  
Date

  
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Ronald R. Oster  
Chief Executive Officer

6/29/2001  
Date