

COUNTY OF NEVADA  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



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May 7, 2015

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Nevada  
950 Maidu Avenue  
Nevada City, CA 95959

**DATE OF MEETING:** May 26, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Letter requesting changes to the way funds are allocated to counties from the State Responsibility Area Fire Prevention Fees.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve the attached letter.

**FUNDING:** None.

**BACKGROUND:** As we enter the 4<sup>th</sup> year since the State of California began collecting the State Responsibility Area (SRA) Fire Prevention Fee (FPF), Nevada County residents have yet to see anything close to an equitable benefit from their payments into this program.

Statewide revenues from the SRA FPF were about \$76 million in 2013-14. Of this, the counties in the Nevada-Yuba-Placer Ranger Unit generated \$7,702,847. Yet in 2014-15, the unit received \$3,216,599 in fire prevention services, or about 42% of what it paid in. This included a **one-time** grant allocation of \$1.8 million for the Unit, including \$512,000 for Nevada County. Based on the online information available, it is difficult to ascertain how much of those services specifically benefitted Nevada County. Nevada County pays about \$3 million, or 4% of the SRA FPF collected annually statewide. Our research shows we see less than a 2% return in terms of fire prevention projects and services on the ground. Even accounting for administrative costs, this is a poor return which does not demonstrate a direct benefit to the fee payers.

The Board of Supervisors continues to advocate for repeal of this fee entirely. Until that happens we need to ensure the fee is administered fairly and in compliance with state law, which specifies that the SRA fee shall only be used for specified fire prevention activities that protect habitable structures in the SRA. Because the SRA fees are directed for a specific purpose, and that purpose must be fulfilled by those fees, they should have the most scrutiny. Yet, there is very little public information available as to how specifically these fees are benefitting the fee payers, and inadequate oversight as to how project funds are awarded. I believe our county is not getting its fair share of projects on the ground in proportion to what we pay out, effectively helping to subsidize the cost of fire prevention for other parts of the state and backfilling the cost of pre-existing CAL FIRE programs. This is unacceptable, and I urge you to approve the attached letter.

Respectfully submitted,

Hank Weston  
Supervisor, District IV

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