



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

February 11, 2020

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lewis T. Broschard III, Fire Chief

RE: Report on New Hand Crew Program

As a result of increasing demands on fire resources during the summer and fall fire season, we are introducing a 12-person hand crew to District operations in 2020. In our first year, the hand crew will primarily be responsible for weed abatement projects, fuel reduction and mitigation projects, fire trail maintenance, and response to support fire crews with equipment and apparatus restoration and rehabilitation at fire scenes. Additionally, there will be training and development of the personnel assigned to the crew to prepare for the advancement of the crew's capabilities as we progress through the 2020 fire season and into the second year of operations.

In addition to the District's weed abatement contractor, the hand crew will support various weed abatement projects throughout the District. Certain targeted fuel reduction or hazard mitigation projects can be supported by the crew in coordination with city and county public works or code enforcement agencies. The District's fire trail program will be enhanced by additional maintenance and removal of brush or overhanging limbs that could obstruct fire engine access. The hand crew will be supporting fire operations by assisting crews in removing hose and equipment from large wildland incidents and getting fire engines back in service and returned to their stations more quickly.

The crew will be split with 6-8 personnel on duty each day. They will be mobilized using a 10-15 passenger van, pickups, as well as a stake side utility vehicle. They will be equipped with weed eaters, various powered saws, and other equipment necessary to carry out their maintenance and vegetation management tasks. In addition, the stake side utility vehicle will be carrying several thousand feet of fire hose which can be easily loaded onto fire engines as replacement for hose used at an incident – the hand crew will retrieve the used hose at the scene, clean it, and return it to service. Utilizing the hand crew in this capacity will result in engine companies returning to service faster.

The hand crew will be staffed by temporary seasonal employees and supervised by permanent Fire Captains on a rotation throughout the fire season. The new temporary seasonal classification of Fire Control Worker was established in late 2019 by the Board.

It is anticipated the Fire Control Worker positions will be filled and training will commence in May. Operations are expected to begin in June, commencing with the traditional start to the fire season. The hand crew will be unstaffed at the end of October, or later if fire conditions persist. If the first year of operations is successful, we will look to expand the hand crew capabilities to include response to wildland fires in direct support of fire suppression activities in 2021. As the District continues to plan for and respond to prolonged fire seasons, we are hopeful this will become a sustainable resource to assist us in providing increased operational capacity for our wildland fire suppression mission.