



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0877, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Counsel, Emergency Management

Staff Name and Phone Number: Cory O'Donnell 707-565-2421

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Ratification of proclamation of local emergency due to the LNU Lightning Complex Fires.

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution ratifying the proclamation of local emergency in the Sonoma County Operational area due to the LNU Lightning Complex Fires.

Executive Summary:

This item requests the Board of Supervisors to adopt a resolution ratifying the proclamation of local emergency by the Director of Emergency Services due to the LNU Lightning Complex Fires that began on August 17, 2020. Sonoma County Code Chapter 10, article 1(b) provides authority for the Director of Emergency Services to issue a proclamation of local emergency if the Board of Supervisors is not in session, subject to ratification by the Board within 7 days. On August 18, 2020, the Director of Emergency Services proclaimed the Existence of a Local Emergency.

Discussion:

Beginning on August 14, 2020, an Extreme Heat Event struck California, causing record-breaking temperatures and Red Flag Warnings throughout California, including Sonoma County. The extreme weather has also brought rolling power outages for the first time in nearly 20 years.

In addition to fire conditions being exacerbated by extreme temperatures, the weather event resulted in widespread lightning strikes over multiple days in Sonoma County and statewide sparking hundreds of fires throughout the state. In Sonoma County, multiple fires have started, the most significant of which are the Walbridge Fire (previously referred to as the Austin Creek "13-4" Fire) and the Meyers Fire (previously referred to as the Fort Ross "11-16" Fire). Both fires have been incorporated into the complex of fires known as the LNU Lightning Complex Fires. The Director of Emergency Services issued a Proclamation of Existence of Local Emergency in the Sonoma County Operational Area on Tuesday, August 18, 2020.

These fires are fast-moving fires causing wildland destruction, threatening people and structures, and resulting in mandatory evacuation orders. As of the morning of August 20, The Walbridge Fire, west of Healdsburg, has burned over 14,500 acres, threatening lower Russian River communities, Windsor, and Healdsburg. The Meyers Fire, just north of Jenner along the coast, has burned over 3,000 acres. Since the August 18 proclamation, multiple additional fires have ignited, the most significant of which is being informally called the Stewarts Fire, burning south of Lake Sonoma and expected to merge with the northern end of the Walbridge

Fire.

The County has issued mandatory evacuation notices to several areas in the path of the fires, as well as evacuation warnings to areas that could be threatened. Approximately 15,700 people are under either mandatory evacuation orders or warnings issued by Cal Fire and the Sonoma County Sheriff; in addition, approximately 12,000 people are under an evacuation warning from the City of Healdsburg.

The County has established temporary evacuation sites to help evacuees with a variety of resources and find shelter. Given the ongoing COVID-19 emergency, sheltering efforts are greatly constrained in order to ensure the health and safety of the community. The County is following COVID-19 sheltering protocols issued by the State which require extensive screening, limited congregation, and other mitigations to protect public health. In addition, the County's established COVID-19 alternate care location

First responders have been actively engaged since the fires began and multiple community-based and other organizations have been activated. Given the number of fires in the region and statewide, mutual aid resources are extremely limited. Over the past four days, California has experienced a lightning siege that has resulted in approximately 11,000 lightning strikes across the state causing more than 370 new fires. Currently, over 10,000 firefighters are battling nearly two dozen major incidents or complexes with numerous fires across all jurisdictions. Weather is a critical factor in the firefight including high heat, low humidity and strong winds and the high heat will continue into the weekend, exacerbating firefighting efforts.

The conditions of extreme peril caused by the LNU Lightning Complex Fires are exacerbated by continuing extreme weather conditions, rolling power outages, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Resources regionwide are also significantly strained due to the unprecedented number of fires burning in the region and around the state. Public health and human services resources are strained due to COVID-19 response. Ensuring the health and safety of those evacuated now also must include extensive COVID-19 screening and alternative shelter. The potential of additional evacuations, as well as additional fires, remains high.

Ratifying the August 18 Proclamation will continue the local emergency, make available to the County/Operational Area state and local mutual aid, and allow for any state emergency funding if it is made available.

Staff recommends that the Board ratify the Director of Emergency Services proclamation of local emergency in order to meet the seven day period a proclamation can remain in force without Board ratification. This emergency proclamation lasts for a duration of 60 days and may be extended by the Board for additional 60 day periods. When conditions improve, staff will request the Board formally terminate the emergency.

The ratification resolution also gives the County Administrator authority to make decisions regarding pay for the County workforce given the impacts of the LNU Lightning Complex Fires on County facilities and required County service and facility closures.

Prior Board Actions:

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 19-20 Adopted	FY20-21 Projected	FY 21-22 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Resolution Ratifying Proclamation of Local Emergency
Proclamation of Local Emergency

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None