



# COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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November 19, 2019

Re: Support for the University of California Cooperative Extension's Fire Prevention Education Grant Application

Dear Review Committee,

This is a letter of support for the proposal titled *Developing a Prescribed Burn Association on the Central Coast to Increase Fire Safety*, submitted by Devii Rao, University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor serving San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties. The proposal is submitted to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Fire Prevention Grants Program, for a Fire Prevention Education grant.

UCCE and the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) are partnering on this proposal to promote the use of prescribed fire in San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties, with emphasis on utilizing existing resources such as CALFIRE's Vegetation Management Program. They are also looking to establish a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) for landowners of both private and public lands, based on other prescribed burning groups in California. PBA members pool their knowledge, people power and equipment to help others in their association conduct prescribed burns. UCCE and RCDMC are looking to grow the organization by recruitment of local landowners, buying prescribed fire tools and equipment for landowners to use for burning, educating PBA members about techniques and methods used for prescribed burning, and conducting outreach and education for the general public about the organization and prescribed fire training.

About 90% of San Benito County is rangeland. Roughly 75% of the rangeland is in private ownership with the remaining 15% in federal or state ownership. 77% of the county is in high or very high fire hazard zones. Over the past two years there has been an increasing level of interest in prescribed burning in the county. For example, UCCE hosted a two-day prescribed fire workshop and live-fire training in Bitterwater in June 2019. This workshop was attended by about 55 ranchers, landowners, land managers, and agency staff. These groups continue to request information about opportunities for prescribed burning.

The San Benito County 2035 General Plan contains a number of goals and objectives that would be addressed through this project, including the following:

- GOAL PFS-13. To coordinate with fire protection and emergency service providers to ensure adequate fire facilities, equipment, and services are available to protect county residents and property from fire.

- HS-1.13 Education Programs. The County shall sponsor and support educational programs regarding emergency response, disaster preparedness protocols and procedures, and disaster risk reduction. (PI)
- HS-1.16 Public Awareness of Climate Change. The County shall support public awareness of water conservation measures, agricultural changes, storm and flood preparedness, forest/range fire protection, air quality issues, extreme weather events, and disease prevention to help prepare for the potential impacts of climate change. (PI)
- GOAL NCR-2. To protect and enhance wildlife communities through a comprehensive approach that conserves, maintains, and restores important habitat areas.
- GOAL HS-4 To minimize the risk of wildland and urban fire hazards.
- HS-4.7 Range Improvement and Vegetation Management Programs. The County shall actively support and cooperate with the California Department of Forestry's Range Improvement and Vegetation Management Programs with particular emphasis on their impact on water quality and production, resource management, range management, wildlife habitat management, fire defense improvements, and public safety where determined to be appropriate by the County. (MPSP/IGC)

The San Benito County Board of Supervisors strongly supports the UCCE's proposal and hopes to see it funded.

Sincerely,

Mark Medina  
Chair, Board of Supervisors