



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 08/06/2025
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Fire Department

2025-289

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBJECT:

AN AMENDMENT TO THE WILDLAND PROTECTION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF CORONA AND CAL FIRE TO INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL 1476.01 ACRES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This staff report asks Council to approve an amendment to the Wildland Protection Agreement between the City and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to include a third geographic area of coverage under agreements adopted in 2021 and 2022. This expansion will provide coordinated and cost-effective wildland fire protection for areas under local jurisdiction responsibility, ensuring that specialized resources and mutual aid are available during wildland fire emergencies.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the City Council:

- a. Approve the amended Wildland Protection Agreement for Automatic and Mutual Aid in Fire Emergency Services between the City of Corona and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).
- b. Authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to execute the amended Wildland Protection Agreement for Automatic and Mutual Aid in Fire Emergency Services between the City of Corona and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).
- c. Authorize an appropriation in the amount of \$9,637.62 to the Fire Department's operating budget within General Fund 110.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

Several key terms define responsibility for wildland fire protection in Corona. The Direct Protection Area (DPA) is where a specific fire protection agency, such as the City of Corona Fire Department, is primarily responsible for responding to and managing fire suppression. The Federal Responsibility Area (FRA) covers land where federal agencies are accountable for wildland fire protection under federal law. The State Responsibility Area (SRA) is where the State of California, through CAL FIRE, holds financial responsibility for wildland fire protection. The Local Responsibility Area (LRA) includes lands where neither the state nor federal government has legal responsibility, leaving the local agency, such as the City of Corona, to provide fire protection services.

The City of Corona's Wildland Protection Agreement (WPA) with CAL FIRE was first approved by the City Council on October 20, 2021, covering 721 acres in the Prado Basin LRA. This agreement was established in response to the significant risk of wildland fires in the area, as highlighted by the 2020 Airport Fire.

In November 2022, the WPA was amended to add a second geographic area, Eagle Valley, thereby increasing the total protected LRA acreage to 1,879 acres. The City responded to 54 fires in Eagle Valley since July 2019, and the expansion ensured that specialized resources could be requested at a predetermined cost, protecting the City from unexpected or exorbitant expenses during major incidents.

The most recent addition to the WPA is the Sierra Del Oro area, located in the southwestern city limits. This 1,476.01-acre area is within both Corona's DPA and LRA, bringing the total WPA LRA coverage to 3,355 acres. The City remains responsible for the costs of additional firefighting resources in this area, but the amended agreement continues to provide for specialized resource requests at no extra cost beyond the terms of the agreement.

ANALYSIS:

The WPA establishes a coordinated wildland fire response plan between the City and CAL FIRE. Due to Corona's wind-prone geography, wildland fires can quickly exceed local capabilities. When this occurs, CAL FIRE provides additional resources, which, without the WPA, would be billed at an hourly rate of approximately \$50,000 for the first hour of a high-threat dispatch. The agreement is structured to enhance interagency coordination and reduce the City's firefighting expenses, ensuring rapid and cost-effective access to critical resources during emergencies.

The City of Corona's Wildland Protection Agreement has evolved since 2021 to address the growing risk of wildland fires by expanding coverage from the Prado Basin to Eagle Valley and now Sierra Del Oro. Each expansion has been driven by recent fire history and the need for efficient, cost-controlled access to CAL FIRE's specialized resources, with the total WPA LRA area now at 3,355 acres. The agreement remains a vital tool for protecting the community and mitigating the financial impact of wildfires.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The approval of the recommended actions totals \$186,485.62, which includes an additional appropriation request of \$9,637.62 from the General Fund 110 to offset the increased cost associated with the additional 1,477 acres added to the agreement, as well as the adjusted cost based on the prior year’s statewide fire activity. The remaining \$176,848 is already available and budgeted in the General Fund 110 and Measure X Fund 120 within the Fire Department’s operating budget to cover the balance.

The total cost of \$186,485.62 for FY 2026 will be funded as follows:

Fund	Available	Appropriation	Total
General Fund 110	114,000.00	-	114,000.00
Measure X Fund 120	62,848.00	-	62,848.00
General Fund 110	-	9,637.62	9,637.62
Total	\$ 176,848.00	\$ 9,637.62	\$ 186,485.62

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action merely approves an agreement, and there is no possibility that approving the recommended action will have a significant effect on the environment.

PREPARED BY: JUSTIN MCGOUGH, DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF

REVIEWED BY: BRIAN YOUNG, FIRE CHIEF

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit 1 – Cooperative Fire Programs Local Responsibility Area Wildland Protection Reimbursement Agreement
2. Exhibit 2 - Wildland Protection Agreement Map
3. Exhibit 3 - Wildland Operating Plan