



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 11/19/2025
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Fire Department

2025-448

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBJECT:
CAL FIRE WILDLAND PROTECTION AGREEMENT RESOLUTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks Council to adopt a resolution authorizing payment of \$186,485.62 to CAL FIRE for the previously approved amended Wildland Protection Agreement. This resolution is requested by CAL FIRE and the State Department of General Services and will be required by the agreement annually hereafter.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council approve and adopt the Resolution approving the amended Wildland Protection Agreement for Fiscal Year 25/26, in the amount of \$186,485.62 in its entirety.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

Several key terms define responsibility for wildland fire protection in Corona:

- Direct Protection Area (DPA): The geographic area where a specific fire protection agency, such as the City of Corona Fire Department, is primarily responsible for fire response and suppression.
- Federal Responsibility Area (FRA): Lands where federal agencies hold legal responsibility for wildland fire protection.
- State Responsibility Area (SRA): Lands where the State of California, through CAL FIRE, assumes financial and operational responsibility for wildland fire protection.

- Local Responsibility Area (LRA): Lands not designated as state or federal responsibility, where the local jurisdiction, in this case the City of Corona, provides fire protection services.

On October 20, 2021, the City Council approved the City of Corona's first Wildland Protection Agreement (WPA) with CAL FIRE. The agreement covered 721 acres within the Prado Basin LRA and was established in response to the significant wildfire risk demonstrated by the 2020 Airport Fire. That fire began in the Prado Basin, with part of the affected area within the City's LRA. Although the fire extended into the SRA, resulting in CAL FIRE absorbing a significant portion of the cost, the incident cost nearly \$4 million and required fourteen days to reach full containment, while Airport operations were disrupted for several days. The WPA was developed to eliminate delays in ordering specialty resources (e.g. aircraft, dozers, and hand crews) and to significantly reduce potential costs to the City during major wildland fire incidents.

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. Since 2019, the City has responded to 54 fires in Eagle Valley. The expanded coverage 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-covered LRA acreage to 3,335 acres. While the City remains responsible for the cost of additional firefighting resources used in this area, the expanded agreement continues to allow for the request of specialized resources without incurring costs beyond those outlined in the WPA.

ANALYSIS:

The Wildland Protection Agreement (WPA) provides a coordinated framework for wildland fire response plan between the City and CAL FIRE. Due to Corona's wind-prone topography, 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.

Since its adoption in 2021, the WPA has evolved to address increasing wildland fire risk by expanding its coverage from the original Prado Basin area to Eagle Valley in 2022 and, most recently, to Sierra Del Oro. Each expansion was prompted by recent fire history and the need for efficient, cost-controlled access to CAL FIRE's specialized resources. With these additions, the WPA now covers 3,355 acres of LRA within the City. The agreement remains a vital tool for protecting the community and mitigating the financial impact of wildfires.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funding for the recommended action of \$186,486 is included in the Fire Department's Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget as a recurring annual cost. The Wildland Protection Agreement, prepared on a fiscal year basis from July 1 through June 30, is subject to annual adjustments based on protected acreage and CAL FIRE's cost-per-acre rates.

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 common sense exemption 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. There is no possibility that adopting this resolution will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

PREPARED BY: JUSTIN MCGOUGH, DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF

REVIEWED BY: BRIAN YOUNG, FIRE CHIEF

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit 1 – WPA Amended Staff Report
2. Exhibit 2 – Signed WPA Agreement for 25/26
3. Exhibit 3 – Resolution
4. Exhibit 4 – Item 6.10 CC Approval