

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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Website: [frap.cdf.ca.gov](http://frap.cdf.ca.gov)  
916-327-3939



FP7

May 14, 2004

County Auditor/Controller:

This letter is sent in regards to:

- 1) Status Update on State Responsibility Area Fire Protection Fee**
- 2) Request to Establish Fund Number/Levy Code**
- 3) Request to Include Name/Descriptor and Phone Number on 04-05 Tax Bills**

Existing law creates a process whereby areas for which the State has primary financial responsibility for fire protection are designated as "State Responsibility Area" (SRA). SB 1049 (Chapter 741, Statutes 2003) imposes a \$35 SRA benefit fee on each parcel of land located, in whole or in part, within the SRA for each of the fiscal years 2003-04 and 2004-05. Fees are not to be levied on parcels that are exempt from property taxes or on parcels owned by a public agency and located within the boundaries of a public agency. Section 4139 (e) of the Public Resources Code requires that the benefit fees be collected by each county in the same manner and at the same time as secured property taxes.

SB 1049 charges the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) with implementing the SRA fee. While there has been discussion of possible legislation to alter the fee structure, it appears that there will be no change in the existing legislation at this time. CDF is now in the process of implementing the fee.

CDF has entered into a contract with two consulting firms to help with the implementation. One firm, Psomas, is documenting and aligning SRA boundaries to ground features and where available to digital parcel data. This ensures that the subsequent process of identifying parcels that are within SRA is as accurate as possible. The current digital version of CDF SRA data is available for download at <http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/data/frapgisdata/select.asp>. The more accurate aligned data will be posted as soon as it is completed. SRA parcel determinations must be made using the aligned version to match what CDF will provide to counties.

The second firm, Shilts Consultants, Inc. (SCI), is identifying all eligible parcels within the SRA boundaries to which the fee will be applied and will handle administration of the fee on behalf of CDF. To this end, SCI will finalize the fees to match the lien date rolls, will work with local officials to facilitate efficient collection of the fee, will respond to public

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questions and will perform other related services. SCI also will have a toll-free taxpayer assistance phone number that can be included on property tax bills.

On April 30, 2004 CDF filed Emergency Rules with the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) to facilitate implementation of the SRA fees. The OAL has approved these rules and they are now in effect. A copy is attached. An electronic copy is available on the CDF Webpage under Hot Topics at [http://www.fire.ca.gov/php/fire\\_er\\_sra.php](http://www.fire.ca.gov/php/fire_er_sra.php). Under terms of the rule, SCI is the "Designated Fee Administrator."

CDF is also working with representatives of the County Counsel's Association of California to develop a Model Collection Agreement between CDF and a County. We will send the Model Agreement in the near future.

### **Fund Number/Levy Code**

CDF hereby requests the establishment of a new general ledger system fund number and property tax system levy code, as appropriate, to collect the SRA fire protection fee in your county in fiscal 2004-05. The fund number should be established in the name of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, care of Russ Greenlee, Departmental Accounting Officer, P.O. Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460. If you have any questions directly for CDF regarding this fund number request, please contact me at [sraissues@fire.ca.gov](mailto:sraissues@fire.ca.gov) or contact Russ Greenlee at 916.653.8047.

CDF also requests the following name/descriptor for inclusion on the tax bills: "State Fire Fee." The phone number for property owner inquiries that should also be added to the tax bills, if possible, is 866.485.4300. This is the toll-free number that SCI has established to respond to taxpayer inquiries regarding this fee.

If you have any questions regarding the fee submittal, administration or collection, you are invited to contact John Bliss or other personnel with SCI at 707.426.5016 or at the email address of [john\\_bliss@shilts.com](mailto:john_bliss@shilts.com).

Sincerely,

Dean Cromwell  
SRA Fee Project Manager

cc: Gerard van Steyn, SCI  
Cindy Shamrock, CDF