



North Sonoma Coast Volunteer Fire Department

PO Box 386, The Sea Ranch CA 95497
(707) 785-2648 nscfpd.org

August 26, 2020

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing to you to strongly request that you find a way to continue to fund the Henry 1 (H1) helicopter in the coming years. I understand that this program is at risk due to large cuts planned for the Sonoma County Sheriff's department. I also understand that times are tough and that many cuts need to be made this year; everyone needs to tighten their belt. We still have to prioritize, and I submit that the H1 program should have an extremely high priority in the county budget. Yes, the program is expensive. But the H1 program and team, built up over many years, is a tool customized perfectly for the needs of our county and its geography.

I also wish to emphasize that H1 is not *only* a law enforcement tool. H1 has helped with hundreds of rescue, recovery, and search operations over the years, saving lives and helping to provide safety and support for other first responders. And especially important to remember right now: H1 is also a *firefighting tool*. In the early days of the current LNU Lightning Complex fires fire departments were stretched thin simply trying to find where multiple simultaneous fires were getting started in the vast rural areas of our county. H1 was able to do reconnaissance from the air to pinpoint fire locations, saving many hours of hard and dangerous work on the ground and helping ground forces to find access to fire starts more quickly. This is only the most recent case of this kind of help; H1 has often been a great benefit to firefighters working in large rugged areas with few roads, both by spotting fires during the day or by using infrared to locate them at night.

I further suggest that support for H1 would be an extremely appropriate use of some of the PG&E Settlement funds. Of course there are going to be many competing interests in where those funds should go. I submit that support for an existing program that is so beneficial to both law enforcement and emergency response in the county should be at the top of the list.

Please do everything you can to maintain the H1 program for our county.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Plakos
Fire Chief, NSCFPD
chief@northsonomacoastfpd.org
nscfpd.org