

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
**Budget Change Proposal - Cover Sheet**  
DF-46 (REV 07/23)

<b>Fiscal Year</b> 2024-25	<b>Business Unit Number</b> 3540	<b>Department</b> Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
<b>Hyperion Budget Request Name</b> 3540-106-BCP-2024-GB		<b>Relevant Program or Subprogram</b> 2465019 – Fire Control

**Budget Request Title**

Ramona Air Attack Base: Critical Emergency Response Operations Infrastructure Improvements

**Budget Request Summary**

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) requests \$12 million one-time General Fund in fiscal year 2024-25 for a loading pit reconfiguration at the Ramona Air Attack Base to repair and improve retardant loading operations, better meet tactical objectives, and increase fire operations.

<b>Requires Legislation (submit required legislation with the BCP)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Trailer Bill Language <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget Bill Language <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<b>Code Section(s) to be Added/Amended/Repealed</b>	
<b>Does this BCP contain information technology (IT) components?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>If yes, departmental Chief Information Officer must sign.</i>	<b>Department CIO</b>	<b>Date</b>

**For IT requests, specify the project number, the most recent project approval document (FSR, SPR, S1BA, S2AA, S3SD, S4PRA), the approval date, and the total project cost.**

**Project No.**

**Project Approval Document:**

**Approval Date:**

**Total Project Cost:**

**If proposal affects another department, does other department concur with proposal?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Attach comments of affected department, signed and dated by the department director or designee.*

<b>Prepared By</b> Michelle Lucia-Valenzuela	<b>Date</b> 1/9/2024	<b>Reviewed By</b> Kerry Garcia	<b>Date</b> 1/9/2024
<b>Department Director</b> Joe Tyler	<b>Date</b> 1/9/2024	<b>Agency Secretary</b> Bryan Cash	<b>Date</b> 1/9/2024

**Department of Finance Use Only**

**Additional Review:** ☐ Capital Outlay ☐ ITCU ☐ FSCU ☐ OSAE ☐ Dept. of Technology

<b>Principal Program Budget Analyst</b> Vy Nguyen	<b>Date submitted to the Legislature</b> 1/10/2024
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## A. Problem Statement

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) requests \$12 million one-time General Fund in fiscal year 2024-25 for a loading pit reconfiguration at the Ramona Air Attack Base (AAB) to repair and improve retardant loading operations, better meet tactical objectives, and increase fire operations.

CAL FIRE occupies and operates the Ramona AAB in support of the wildland fire prevention and suppression mission in San Diego County and the surrounding State Responsibility Area in Southern California. CAL FIRE has operated the Ramona AAB since its establishment in 1957. CAL FIRE has made ongoing improvements at Ramona AAB in support of department needs and in 2000, constructed a new tower/operations building, aircraft support building, and concrete pavement for loading pits and the aircraft approach area to the AAB. The concrete mix was constructed with a product that did not meet design specifications; because of this, CAL FIRE has had to perform maintenance and repairs as a mitigation. The concrete has not met performance needs and has fractured and crumbled in many areas, requiring the addition of control joints cut into the concrete and frequent inspections to eliminate foreign object damage to aircraft engines. Small, fractured concrete can be sucked into the engine, damaging or destroying it, or launched as projectiles into other aircraft or ground personnel, causing significant damage or injury.

To help address increasing wildland fire threats, CAL FIRE is receiving seven C-130 aircraft from the federal government and will be retrofitting them as Large Air Tankers (LAT), one of which will be based at the Ramona AAB. CAL FIRE's current aircraft permanently stationed at Ramona AAB includes one OV-10 and two S-2T air tankers. CAL FIRE has supported LAT aircraft in the past, but this has been based on temporary operational need or fire activity.

The current Ramona AAB loading pit configuration requires aircraft to rotate at the airbase apron and tail into the loading pit area where Ramona AAB personnel connect the retardant hose to the rear of the aircraft to load retardant into the airtanker. Current CAL FIRE airtanker equipment (S-2Ts) have a small turning radius and wingspan, which accommodates this tight maneuverability. During initial attack incidents, or smaller scale major incidents, which do not require the inclusion of additional airtankers, the current methodology of tail-in loading meets smaller aircraft operational needs.

CAL FIRE has hosted LATs (e.g., C-130, BAE-146, RJ-85, and Boeing 737) during support of large-scale incidents and on temporary assignments. During these occasions, the LAT style aircraft create operational conflicts. LATs cannot tail-in load in the current Ramona AAB loading pit configuration: wingspans are too great and turning radii are not tight enough to allow the LAT aircraft to get close enough to the loading pits to tail-in load like the S-2T airtankers. Retardant loading hosing must be pulled out to LAT aircraft as the LATs are pulled parallel to the loading pits. This also makes it difficult, and at times impossible, for S-2T aircraft to pull in and load while LAT aircraft are reloading.

During large scale incidents, where many air tankers, including LATs, are required to reload out of the Ramona AAB, the tail-in reloading configuration becomes inefficient and creates aircraft queuing issues. LATs cause aircraft backups as they take much longer to reload and make the other loading pit areas inaccessible. During these operational needs, aircraft become stuck on the airport taxiways, which often requires the airport to limit or shutdown airport operations for non-fire aircraft.

The underlying problem this configuration causes is delays in reloading, resulting in fewer retardant sorties onto fires, fewer tactical objectives being met, and less efficient fire operations. This ultimately results in delays that slow the containment and control of fires. These delays have unquantifiable impacts on the amount spent from the Emergency Fund appropriation, the number of acres consumed by fire, the resulting negative impacts on the watershed, temporary increases in black carbon and the achievement of the state's climate

goals, listed and endangered species, local and state economies, and revenues to local government and the state.

These ongoing fundamental problems can be mitigated with pull-through style loading pits as used in the majority of California AABs (Rohnerville, Redding, Chico, Grass Valley, McClellan, Sonoma, Fresno, Paso Robles, and Porterville). This configuration allows all air tankers to pull off the airport taxiway directly into the loading pit to be reloaded. Once reloaded, the airtankers pull out directly back onto the taxiway to return to the runway. CAL FIRE operates the Paso Robles AAB with pull through style loading pits. This configuration has been recognized for its efficiency, reduction in reloading times, and reduction or elimination of taxiway conflicts—all elements that impact the number of retardant sorties onto the fire.

## **B. Justification**

LATs are a critical resource in suppressing wildfires throughout the State of California. This request is a one-time cost with immediate effects and ongoing benefits related to aircraft fire response, including, the reduction of retardant reloading times, increase in the number of aircraft reloaded at one time, reduction of foreign object damage and injury risk, and increased personnel safety at the air attack base. The collective ongoing benefits of this request, though some are difficult to quantify, more than offset the \$12 million one-time General Fund cost. For example, the estimated cost to replace an S-2T airtanker engine is approximately \$1.5 million and the replacement cost of one C-130 aircraft engine is approximately \$2 million. Avoidance of even a few instances of damage to aircraft engines or other components significantly offsets the one-time cost of this request.

With the addition of improved loading pit configurations at Ramona AAB, CAL FIRE will be more efficiently equipped to support a greater arsenal of air attack on wildfires, including the new C-130 aircraft that will be permanently stationed at this AAB. This allows for greater coverage and return responses during a wildfire in surrounding areas. Improved loading pits will ensure aircraft are loaded safely and will increase the number of aircraft that can be used simultaneously on wildfires, resulting in quicker turnaround times.

The Ramona AAB is a critical component of emergency response, and this project is essential for safely and effectively preventing and suppressing wildland fires in San Diego County and the surrounding State Responsibility Area. The base is strategically positioned for rapid initial attack on fires, providing fixed-wing aerial delivery of fire retardant for use in initial attack on new fire starts, sustained suppression activities on major fires, and to provide tactical air support. With pull through loading pits and the risk of foreign object damage or injury reduced, airbase traffic conflicts will be reduced and airbase reloading efficiency will be increased.

## **C. Departmentwide and Statewide Considerations**

This proposal is consistent with the following goals and objectives in CAL FIRE's 2019 Strategic Plan:

Goal #1: Improve our Core Capabilities.

Objective (2): Evaluate and improve existing emergency response capabilities.

## **D. Outcomes and Accountability**

The construction of an improved Ramona AAB loading pit configuration with updated infrastructure provides improved loading pit operations, increasing safety and efficiency for airtanker reloading; reduces reloading times; and reduces potential for airtanker traffic and taxiway backups, which negatively impact the Ramona airport operations.

## **E. Implementation Plan**

Upon enactment of the 2024 Budget Act, CAL FIRE expects to go out to bid for contract in July 2024, followed by a notice to proceed in October 2024, and expects to establish base operational readiness for fire season and flow calibrations in 2025, with project completion and close out in December 2026.

## **F. Supplemental Information (If Applicable)**

*Proposed Budget Bill Language:*

*Item 3540-001-0001*

*9. Of the amount appropriated in Schedule (2), \$12,000,000 shall be available for encumbrance or expenditure until June 30, 2027, for critical emergency response operations infrastructure improvements at the Ramona Air Attack Base.*

# BCP Fiscal Detail Sheet

BCP Title: Ramona Air Attack Base: Critical Emergency Response Operations Infrastructure Improvements

BR Name: 3540-106-BCP-2024-GB

Budget Request Summary

## Operating Expenses and Equipment

Operating Expenses and Equipment	FY24 Current Year	FY24 Budget Year	FY24 BY+1	FY24 BY+2	FY24 BY+3	FY24 BY+4
5340 - Consulting and Professional Services - External	0	12,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Operating Expenses and Equipment</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

## Total Budget Request

Total Budget Request	FY24 Current Year	FY24 Budget Year	FY24 BY+1	FY24 BY+2	FY24 BY+3	FY24 BY+4
<b>Total Budget Request</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

## Fund Summary

### Fund Source

Fund Source	FY24 Current Year	FY24 Budget Year	FY24 BY+1	FY24 BY+2	FY24 BY+3	FY24 BY+4
State Operations - 0001 - General Fund	0	12,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Total State Operations Expenditures</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total All Funds</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

## Program Summary

### Program Funding

Program Funding	FY24 Current Year	FY24 Budget Year	FY24 BY+1	FY24 BY+2	FY24 BY+3	FY24 BY+4
2465019 - Fire Control	0	12,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Total All Programs</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>