STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Capital Outlay Budget Change Proposal (COBCP) - Cover Sheet
DF-151 (REV 07/21)

Fiscal Year	Business Unit	Department	Priority No.
2026-27	3540	Forestry and Fire Protection	MA-02

Budget Request Name	Capital Outlay Program ID	Capital Outlay Project ID
3540-011-COBCP-2026-GB	2485	00005032

Project Title
Hollister Air Attack Base/Bear Valley Helitack Base: Relocate Facilities

Project Status and Type
Status: ☐ New ☒ Continuing Type: ☒Major ☐ Minor

Project Category *(Select one)*

☐CRI *(Critical Infrastructure)*	☐WSD *(Workload Space Deficiencies)*	☐ECP *(Enrollment Caseload Population)*	☐SM *(Seismic)*
☒FLS *(Fire Life Safety)*	☐FM *(Facility Modernization)*	☐PAR *(Public Access Recreation)*	☐RC *(Resource Conservation)*

Total Request (in thousands)	Phase(s) to be Funded	Total Project Cost (in thousands)
$5,521	Working Drawings	$ 204,453

Budget Request Summary

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) requests a supplemental appropriation of $5,521,000 General Fund for the working drawings phases of the Hollister Air Attack Base/Bear Valley Helitack Base: Relocate Facilities project, located in San Benito County. Total estimated project cost is $204,453,000. This supplemental authority is needed to include the relocation of the retardant pits and helipad as there is insufficient room to accommodate the larger modern aircraft as intended in the original proposal.

Requires Legislation	Code Section(s) to be Added/Amended/Repealed	CCCI
☐ Yes ☒ No		

Requires Provisional Language	Budget Package Status
☐ Yes ☒ No	☒ Needed ☐ Not Needed ☐ Existing

Impact on Support Budget

One-Time Costs	☒ Yes	☐ No	Swing Space Needed	☐ Yes	☒ No
Future Savings	☒ Yes	☐ No	Generate Surplus Property	☒ Yes	☐ No
Future Costs	☐ Yes	☒ No			

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.

Prepared By	Date	Reviewed By	Date
Department Director	**Date**	**Agency Secretary**	**Date**

Department of Finance Use Only

Principal Program Budget Analyst	Date submitted to the Legislature
Michael McGinness	1/9/2026

A. COBCP Abstract:

CAL FIRE requests a supplemental appropriation of $5,521,000 for the working drawings phases of the Hollister Air Attack Base/Bear Valley Helitack Base: Relocate Facilities project. This project includes construction of an air operations building, barracks/mess hall, apparatus storage and warehouse building, auto shop, helicopter and OV-10 hangar, protective aircraft weather canopy for the S-2T Air Tanker (S2T), hazardous material storage building, office building, and a helicopter training tower. Site work includes demolition of existing structures, fire retardant chemical mixing plant, taxiway tie-in work, on-site tarmac improvements (including retardant loading pits with associated utilities and waste/runoff mitigation), helipad, radio tower, sewer connections, fencing, grading, and paving (including access road), fire suppression water storage tank, fire pump test pit, fuel vault, site fencing and lighting, photovoltaic system, landscaping, utilities, and appurtenances, as needed.

Total project costs are estimated to be $204,453,000, including preliminary plans ($5,695,000), working drawings ($7,967,000) and construction ($190,791,000). The construction amount includes the contract ($170,557,000), contingency ($8,528,000), architectural and engineering services ($6,449,000), agency retained items ($80,000), and other construction costs ($5,177,000).

The preliminary plans phase began February 2023 and is estimated to be completed in May 2026. The working drawings phase is estimated to begin in July 2026 and to be completed in March 2028. The construction phase is estimated to begin in March 2028 and to be completed in December 2029.

B. Purpose of the Project:

Background

The Hollister Air Attack Base (AAB) is located on a leased parcel, at the southeast end of the Hollister Municipal Airport, north of the city of Hollister, in San Benito County. The base is strategically located for quick initial attack to fires, in high value areas of the Monterey Peninsula, Santa Cruz mountains, south San Francisco Bay area, southern fringes of the Oakland-Berkeley Hills, the remote areas of Monterey, Santa Clara, San Benito, Santa Cruz, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Merced, and the west side of Fresno counties. The total protection area is approximately 3,758,459 acres; of that amount, 220,160 acres are Federal land. Various firefighting agencies depend upon the use of this airbase, on a mutual aid basis, including the United States Forest Service, United States National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as local city and county fire control agencies. Adjoining airbases are Sonoma to the north, and Paso Robles to the south.

The Hollister AAB is the primary fire control facility in the central coast fire protection system. The facility is currently the home base for two S2T air tankers and an air attack command and control aircraft. The mission of the airbase is to provide fixed-wing, aerial delivery of fire-retardant chemicals for use in initial attack on new fire starts, sustained suppression activities on major fires and to provide tactical air support. The facility is staffed year-round.

Due to numerous facility inadequacies, acquisition funding ($99,000) was appropriated in the 1999-00 and 2006-07 Budget Acts to relocate the Hollister AAB. Preliminary plans funding ($564,000) was appropriated in the 2000-01 and 2005-06 Budget Acts. Working drawings funding ($805,000) was appropriated in 2006-07, reappropriated in 2007-08 and again in 2008-09. The Department of General Services (DGS) and CAL FIRE were unable to negotiate a long-term lease of the selected relocation site at Hollister City Airport. However, in December 2008, DGS and CAL FIRE met with the city of Hollister and the airport and resolved all lease issues. In 2019 CAL FIRE began negotiations with the City of Hollister and the airport to add seven acres to the current leased site, making the new site a total of 15 acres. In June 2023, DGS finalized a long term (50 year) lease agreement for the 15-acre parcel at the airport, and the lease was fully executed in July 2023. The leased parcel is located on the other side of airport runway from the current facility to mitigate the logistical issues at the current location.

Preliminary plans were halted in late 2001 due to unresolved lease and scope issues. The original scope was revised to eliminate the auto shop and dozer shed. Preliminary plans were 100 percent

complete and ready for State Public Works Board (PWB) approval; however, based on the scope changes, design revisions were required prior to PWB approval.

Problem

The paved pad area is inadequate at the Hollister Municipal Airport to refuel aircraft separately from the retardant refilling pads. If an air tanker is out of service due to maintenance or refueling, it must be parked on one of the existing three loading pads, eliminating that pad from use, and significantly slowing down fire attack operations. The condition also forces unsafe maneuvering of larger aircraft. It is hazardous for fuel trucks, air tankers, mechanics, loaders, and parking tenders to operate in such a tight area. The base has handled the reloading of up to 14 air tankers and parking of 13, while supporting multiple major incidents. At such times the available space has not been adequate to maintain desired standards for the operating safety of an air base and efficiency in deployment of resources.

The loading ramp is inadequate for larger tankers and large fire operations. Only Loading Pad Three is available to reload Type II Air Tankers. This pad is situated so that any tanker on that pad cannot taxi to the runway if an air tanker is being loaded on Pad Two. The current reloading area reduces and delays CAL FIRE operations and diminishes the Department's primary mission. The dirt island in front of Pad Three restricts ease of movement of aircraft around the loading area. This needs to be paved to weight-bearing limits.

Both the air tanker loading area and air attack parking area are part concrete and part asphalt. Part of the concrete was laid during World War II and is in fair condition. The existing asphalt is in poor condition and has been identified as a safety hazard during annual safety inspections. The asphalt was seal/coated a few years ago but is now cracking and pealing. Loosened debris from the tarmac, parking, loading pit, and runway surfaces can get drawn into aircraft engines, ruining these engines, with repairs costing tens of thousands of dollars, or more; this damage also puts the aircraft at risk of engine failure while the aircraft is airborne.

The tower is a wood-framed, three-story, 100-square-foot structure constructed in 1968. The design and small size do not allow for adequate dispatching and time recording, during large incidents. Runway 24 is blocked from view by aircraft departing from Runway 31, the main runway used for fire dispatch, and the existing tower, by buildings and trees, making aircraft safety precarious. Hollister airport is an uncontrolled airport, and the Federal Aviation Administration does not require the use of radios by private aircraft. Private aircraft have often landed on Runway 24 with no radio communications, causing "near misses" for air tankers and air attack departing Runway 31.

The Hollister AAB office building is a 1,400-square-foot uninsulated metal building with an attached single vehicle garage. The building serves as a common office area for two fire captains, one battalion chief and a dispatch office. There is one room that serves as day room, kitchen, dining room, pilot ready room, conference room, and training room. There is no office space for the L.T. Engineer, or for contract personnel. Overall, the interior configuration of this building is inadequate for current and future operations.

The office building is poorly insulated, and the roof is warped, rusted and leaking. The heating system consists of two wall heaters. High winds routinely blow out the pilot lights in these units. Cooling consists of a swamp cooler that is inadequate for the facility. Electrical circuit breakers trip frequently because current loads exceed circuit capacities. Old underground conduits lack the size and durability needed for adding new, or repairing old, electrical circuits, phone lines, radio cables, and other needs. Underground water supply pipes are old and rusted and easily break. The sewer system continually backs up because it is undersized for the square footage of the building. Above ground water pipes are exposed to the elements; on several occasions, pipes have broken during a hard freeze, despite being insulated.

The garage is used to store airbase equipment and training material, including slides, overhead graphics, handout material, training certificates, and projectors. These items were stored in the garage due to lack of space inside the office building. In recent years, the garage was converted into a kitchen and dining area, since the existing kitchen was grossly inadequate, due to its size and lack of a stove/range.

The small computer room in the office building accommodates only one person at a time, and lacks enough storage for computer equipment, software, CAL FIRE required manuals, airbase manuals, and books. Currently, contract pilots use the one computer assigned to the base to input flight hours for Aviation Management maintenance records, reducing the amount of time CAL FIRE employees can use the computer.

The shop building was moved from the old Hollister Fire Station to the Hollister AAB in 1979. This building is used for the storage of equipment and supplies, a project work area for base personnel, aircraft maintenance by the aircraft contractor, and retardant equipment maintenance by the retardant contractor. The AAB is also the unit's clearinghouse for Federal Excess Property, so the shop building has been converted into a unit mobile equipment maintenance shop. The Hollister dozer is also located in the shop building, allowing faster access to local roads and highways for fire dispatches. By converting the warehouse into a maintenance shop, a severe lack of storage space for airbase operations such as indoor retardant storage (required), parking of airbase equipment under cover, base supplies, federal excess property, etc. has occurred. Dry powder fire retardant is currently stored in the shop building where it must be protected from moisture contamination, coastal fog, and rain. A minimum number of bags, usually 30, are always required to be on-hand to meet contracted daily delivery capacity for firefighting aircraft.

The shop building's concrete floor suffered substantial buckling during the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. The uneven floor and cracks are structural deficiencies that hinder the use of the building.

There is no hangar at Hollister AAB for the air attack aircraft; therefore, the aircraft are stored outside, exposed to heat and moisture. When the aircraft are due for routine maintenance the mechanic must perform the work after dark, with poor lighting and working conditions. The aircraft must be available for emergency response and cannot be out of service during the daytime.

The base is located next to a public park, with no fencing to prevent public access to the aircraft working areas. Thus, the aircraft have been vandalized several times and radios have been stolen. The need for physical security of the aircraft is critical.

Bear Valley Helitack Base (HB) Background

The Bear Valley Fire Station (FS) / Helitack Base (HB) is a two-engine FS, constructed in 1953, and a HB, constructed in 1996, located in a remote, rural area of Southern San Benito County, along Highway 25, near the town of Paicines. The facility was built on private property, pursuant to a long term, ground lease that was initiated in 1956; the lease is set to expire in 2047.

Important resources in the area include the Pinnacles National Park, Clear Creek Bureau of Land Management Recreation Area, various campgrounds, cattle ranches, and vineyards. The initial attack area is approximately 200,000 acres and the helicopter covers 7,600 square miles. The station responds to an average of 65 emergencies annually. The location supports CAL FIRE's statewide plan for distribution of vital helicopter resources, including a non-overlapping 20-minute response/flight time circumference, covering nearly all State Responsibility Areas in the State.

Problem

The facility is not served by a municipal water supply and relies on a shallow well located two miles north that requires substantial water treatment and often runs dry. Prior to the addition of the HB function in 1996, the water supply was sufficient to meet the needs of the FS facility. To address the

increased demand from the HB, measures were taken to increase the water supply, including drilling new wells (only one has water), hauling in water, refurbishing the water system, and installing storage tanks. CAL FIRE has invested approximately $300,000, over the last 10+ years, to repair or improve the water system. Although these attempts have helped, the system remains inadequate to provide a reliable water supply. In most recent years, the well has run dry early in the fire season, requiring water to be delivered by a vendor at a significant cost to the support budget.

During fire year, when a full staff is living and working at the facility around the clock, the water demand is approximately 6,000 gallons per day. During a fire incident, water usage increases up to 8,000 gallons per day. The existing water supply system is prone to failure, compromising the operational effectiveness of the facility. Water production from the existing, shallow (approximately 50 feet) well does not meet the current, non-incident water demand for the two functions at this site.

In November 2006, a consultant, hired to evaluate solutions to the domestic water problem at the facility, identified a potential water supply two miles east of the facility, along the San Benito River. In 2007, $4,152,000 was appropriated from the General Fund, to develop a water supply system at the river site. The scope of work included land acquisition or easements, well-drilling, construction of a water delivery system, installation of a water treatment, and housing for equipment in a pump house. A future proposal was to be submitted to replace the 60+ year-old FS.

Subsequently, a local landowner offered to donate a 10-acre parcel to the State, with a proven water source, and sufficient size to accommodate both the FS and HB functions. The decision was made to revert the $4,152,000 General Fund appropriation for addressing the water issue. Unfortunately, the prospective donor required a conditional clause that the State use the real property for a fire station only, or the real property would revert to the donor. The State is not able to acquire a site encumbered with a reversion clause, so the offer to donate the land was subsequently rescinded.

This proposal includes relocating the HB to the new site because it reached its 22-year economic life in 2018. The new, four-bladed helicopter, being purchased by CAL FIRE, will not fit in the existing narrow hangar. The landing pads are also not large or strong enough to support the new aircraft.

The existing structures, worn out from years of use, are characterized by structural deficiencies, utility degradation, and noncompliance with the current codes and standards required for an essential services facility. Staff performs regular maintenance of the buildings but face sharply increased maintenance and repair costs as the buildings continue to age and deteriorate. This adds burden to staff during fire season and drains the station's support budget.

The structures are noncompliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, seismic requirements, and building codes. The electrical and sewer systems are failing and require costly emergency repairs. The living quarters' building and office building have single glazed windows, inadequate insulation, inadequate cooling and heating, and asbestos containing materials. Most critical is the inadequate water supply from the shallow well two miles to the north.

C. Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

This project relates to the following goals in the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2024 Strategic Plan:

Goal 6: Identify core capabilities and strengthen operational capacity.

Objective 1: Ensure the Department has the resources and infrastructure to adapt to evolving operational demands and legal frameworks.

D. Alternatives:

1. Approve supplemental appropriation funding for working drawing phases.

Advantages

- Would support CAL FIRE's goal to be an efficient, effective, quality organization, with the resources necessary to carry out the department's mission, a goal that is made difficult to accomplish when functioning with operational deficiencies in a leased facility.
- Relocating the AAB and HB together at one site would save the State money on the cost(s) of infrastructure. A shared location at the Hollister Airport is operationally superior to locating the HB away from the airport; airports have predetermined/managed flight paths.
- The existing FS would continue operations at its current site, but with a decreased burden on the infrastructure, and the day-to-day operations of the FS would be more efficient.

Disadvantages

- One-time cost to the General Fund.

2. Defer the project.

Advantages

- This alternative would defer costs of this phase of the project until a future fiscal year.

Disadvantages

- The AAB and HB facilities will continue to fall into disrepair and the continued decrease in their operational effectiveness, or lack thereof, will impede CAL FIRE's ability to provide necessary emergency response.
- The existing HB will be unable to house the new Blackhawk helicopter, adequately.
- Deferring the project adds to the backlog of the department's critical capital improvements.
- Deferment of the project will likely cause costs to increase when undertaken in the future.

E. Recommended Solution:

1. Which alternative and why?

   The recommended solution is alternative #1, approve supplemental appropriation funding request for the working drawings phases. This project is critical to the operational efficiency of the Hollister AAB and the Bear Valley HB and their ability to meet the mission of the department. The current AAB will no longer be used as personnel and equipment will be transferred to the new location, and it will be released back to the Airport once the new facility opens. The HB will be able to support the new Blackhawk helicopter and will be co-located with the AAB, which will increase capital outlay and operational efficiencies.

2. Detailed scope description.

   This project includes site acquisition, and construction of an air operations building, barracks/mess hall, apparatus storage and warehouse building, auto shop, helicopter and OV-10 hangar, protective aircraft weather canopy for the S-2T Air Tanker, hazardous material storage building, office building, and a helicopter training tower. Site work includes demolition of existing structures, fire retardant chemical mixing plant, taxiway tie-in work, on-site tarmac improvements (including retardant loading pits with associated utilities and waste/runoff mitigation), helipad, radio tower, sewer connections, fencing, grading, and paving (including access road), fire suppression water

storage tank, fire pump test pit, fuel vault, site fencing and lighting, photovoltaic system, landscaping, utilities, and appurtenances, as needed.

3. Basis for cost information.

   The estimated project costs are based off an estimate completed by the Department of General Services on February 19, 2025.

4. Factors/benefits for recommended solution other than the least expensive alternative.

   The least expensive alternative is to defer the project, which would jeopardize the operational efficiency of these two critical facilities, and their ability to meet the mission needs of the department and are the most important factors influencing this project.

5. Complete description of impact on support budget.

   The current facility is staffed to operate the existing retardant mixing plant. Operation of the new retardant mixing plant will require similar staffing. A current AAB/HB base will be used until the estimated 18-month construction phase of the project is completed. New furniture may need to be purchased. Maintenance and repair costs for the new facility will be low at the beginning of its lifespan, but the new systems would also be more technologically advanced than the existing facility, not requiring constant updates for adequate operations.

6. Identify and explain any project risks.

   There are no risks associated with completion of this project.

7. List requested interdepartmental coordination and/or special project approval (including mandatory reviews and approvals, e.g. technology proposals).

   This project requires compliance with California Environmental Quality Act and plans for the new facility will be subject to review and approval by the Caltrans-Division of Aeronautics, State Fire Marshal, Americans with Disabilities Act Access and Essential Services compliance by the Division of the State Architect.

F. Consistency with Government Code Section 65041.1:

Does the recommended solution (project) promote infill development by rehabilitating existing infrastructure and how? Explain.

Yes. CAL FIRE promotes infill, when possible, by renovating or replacing existing infrastructure in areas served by existing facilities. Preferred sites for this project are located next to the Hollister airport and are zoned for commercial and government airport related purposes

Does the project improve the protection of environmental and agricultural resources by protecting and preserving the state's most valuable natural resources? Explain.

Yes. Due to the nature of the Department's mission, it can be necessary to locate facilities into areas that could have negative environmental and agricultural impacts; however, strategic placement of these facilities to provide more effective response to wild land fires will ultimately protect nearby forests, watersheds, agricultural land, and other valuable natural resources.

Does the project encourage efficient development patterns by ensuring that infrastructure associated with development, other than infill, support efficient use of land and is appropriately planned for growth? Explain.

Yes. CAL FIRE facilities are strategically located to meet the Department's mission. To the maximum extent possible, CAL FIRE prefers to develop close to existing roads, water, sewer, and other utilities to promote efficient development in the area and to mitigate future support costs for facility maintenance.