

**JOINT EXERCISE OF POWERS AGREEMENT  
FOR  
MARIN WILDFIRE PREVENTION AUTHORITY**

This Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (“Agreement”) is entered into pursuant to Sections 6500 *et seq.* of the California Government Code, by and between the following local agencies: the cities of San Rafael, Mill Valley, Larkspur and Belvedere (“Cities”); the towns of San Anselmo, Corte Madera, Fairfax, and Ross (“Towns”); the County of Marin (including Service Areas 13, 19 and 31 collectively referred to as “County”); the Fire Protection Districts of Southern Marin, Novato, Tiburon, Kentfield, Stinson Beach, Bolinas, and Sleepy Hollow, the Marinwood Community Services District, the Inverness Public Utility District, and Muir Beach Community Services District (“Districts”); “Cities,” “Towns,” “County,” and “Districts” are referred to in their individual capacities outside of this Agreement as “Local Agencies,” and are referred to for the purposes of participation in this Agreement as “Member” or “Members”.

**RECITALS**

**WHEREAS**, the growing wildfire risk in Marin County does not respect jurisdictional boundaries and needs immediate action and sustained commitment to better protect Marin residents, homes and businesses; and

**WHEREAS**, intensifying climate change and extensive fuel build-up are contributing to the increasing threat of wildfire throughout Marin County and, to the extent possible, should be addressed through ecologically sound practices that minimize release of greenhouse gases and protect the biodiversity and resilience of Marin’s landscapes; and

**WHEREAS**, individual homes and properties are only as fire resilient as the surrounding homes and properties within each neighborhood or area; and

**WHEREAS**, the more than 260,000 people living in Marin County receive fire protection and emergency response services provided by 19 separate cities, towns, fire districts and the County of Marin and no single agency currently exists for coordinating wildfire prevention; and

**WHEREAS**, local fire agencies, communities, emergency service providers, city and towns governments and the County of Marin must coordinate wildfire prevention and disaster preparedness and mitigation, including maintaining defensible space, reducing combustible vegetation, making homes fire resistant and planning for organized evacuation in an emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2016 the Marin County Fire Department published a *Community Wildfire Protection Plan*, identifying specific steps needed to reduce the risk of wildfire and related loss of life and property in Marin; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018 Marin County published *Lessons Learned from North Bay Fire Siege*, summarizing key findings and conclusions from the 2017 wildfires that devastated

Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Solano and Butte counties, burned nearly 250,000 acres, destroyed nearly 9,000 structures, forced 90,000 evacuations, caused \$14.5 billion in property damage and killed 44 people; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019 the Marin County Civil Grand Jury issued *Wildfire Preparedness: A New Approach*, a report identifying an urgent need for a coordinated wildfire prevention program in Marin and providing detailed recommendations for reducing wildfire risk and securing dedicated funding for wildfire prevention programs; and

**WHEREAS**, efforts are needed to assist seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income households to maintain defensible space, make homes fire resistant, and prepare for emergencies to mitigate wildfire threats to structures and defensible space; and

**WHEREAS**, each of Marin’s communities has unique local needs such as wildfire risk from homeless encampments or road widening for safe evacuations and the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority will seek to address these specific local needs with a local wildfire mitigation program that assists local fire agencies in meeting unique community needs while sustaining a core countywide program for consistency; and

**WHEREAS**, the most effective way to protect all of our communities from the risk of wildfire is to come together in a joint powers authority to implement a countywide program of priority fire prevention, education and vegetation management; and

**NOW, THEREFORE**, for and in consideration of the mutual benefits, covenants, and agreements set forth herein, the Members agree as follows:

**SECTION 1. Authority and Purpose**

- a. This Agreement is made under the authority of Sections 6500 through 6515, inclusive, of the California Government Code, among the Members.
- b. The purpose of this Agreement is to establish a Joint Powers Authority separate from the Local Agencies. This Joint Powers Authority is to be known as the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (“Authority”). The Authority will plan, finance, implement, manage, own and operate a multi-jurisdictional and county-wide agency to prevent and mitigate wildfires in Marin County. Each member individually has the statutory ability to provide fire suppression, protection, prevention and related incidental services. The purpose and intent of this Agreement is to jointly exercise the foregoing common powers in the manner set forth herein.

**SECTION 2. Term of Agreement**

This Agreement becomes effective upon the first date that at least half of the 19 Local Agencies listed above (i.e. 10 Local Agencies) have approved this Agreement at a public meeting. It shall remain in effect until it is terminated pursuant to Section 16.

### **SECTION 3. Membership**

- a. **Initial Membership.** To become an initial Member, a Local Agency must execute this Agreement and approve the County of Marin placing the tax measure on the ballot by October 31, 2019. A Local Agency geographically located in Marin County that possesses fire management responsibilities must adopt a resolution of their governing board to become a participating signatory to this Agreement and Member of the Authority. Should an entity defined in this Agreement as a Member of the Authority fail to meet the October 31, 2019 deadline for approval of the Agreement and tax measure, this Agreement shall be interpreted to remove that Local Agency from the definition of Member, and any rights or responsibilities of that entity shall not apply.
- b. **Successor Membership.** If, due to changes in circumstances (including, but not limited to changes in fire suppression responsibility approved by LAFCO) a Member's fire suppression responsibility is transferred to a new or different public agency, that new or different public agency shall be admitted as a Member upon approval of such membership and this Agreement by such public agency's governing body.
- c. Should the tax measure to fund the Authority fail to pass in an election in March 2020, this Agreement is terminated and shall be of no further effect upon certification of the election results.

### **SECTION 4. Board of Directors**

- a. The Authority will be governed by a Board of Directors comprising elected leaders from each Member to ensure that wildfire programs and resources are directed to areas of greatest need and opportunity for community benefit.
- b. The Authority shall be governed by the Board of Directors which is hereby established. The Authority shall not have responsibility for any services or duties set forth in this Agreement unless and until the tax measure is passed by the voters in a certified election. The Board of Directors shall be comprised of Directors who are elected officials of the Members, and each Member shall have one Director on the Board of Directors.
- c. The Board of Directors shall hold at least two meetings each year as determined by its bylaws. Special Meetings of the Board may be called in accordance with the provisions of the Brown Act and Government Code Section 54956.
- d. Minutes of the adjourned, regular and special meetings of the Board shall be kept and said minutes shall be forwarded to each member of the Board within thirty days after each meeting. A majority of the Directors of the Board will constitute a quorum; however, if the number of Members is an even number, then 50% of the Directors of the Board will constitute a quorum. In the event of a meeting of the Board with less than a quorum, the present Directors will only have the power to dismiss a meeting. For purposes of conducting business, a majority of the

quorum will be authorized to act on behalf of the Authority, subject to the voting conditions set forth in Section 4.f.

- e. The Board shall elect, at its first meeting of each fiscal year, a President and Vice President. The President and Vice President shall serve one-year terms, but can be re-elected. The President shall represent the Authority and execute any contracts and other documents when required by the bylaws. The Vice President shall serve in the absence of the President.
- f. **Voting.** For all votes conducted by the Board, a proposed motion subject to vote passes when both following conditions are satisfied: (1) a majority of the Directors present vote in favor of a motion, and (2) the Directors present and voting in favor of a motion represent, in the aggregate, according to the then latest general census, over 50% of the population represented by the Member agencies present in the quorum.
- g. The Board may adopt from time to time such policies, procedures, bylaws, rules and regulations for the conduct of its affairs as deemed necessary by the Board.

#### **SECTION 5. Powers of the Authority**

- a. The Authority shall have all of the necessary powers and authorities granted by law to exercise the common powers of its members in providing wildfire suppression, protection, prevention and related and incidental services, with members retaining all powers.
- b. The Authority shall have all of the necessary powers to evaluate structures and defensible space and provide structural fire protection advice to enhance compliance of parcels of land and buildings meeting local fire and building codes, as well the power to create neighborhood and public education programs to reduce wildfire vulnerability and improve neighborhood preparedness.
- c. The Authority may contract with private companies and public agencies to create, implement and operate the Authority to provide wildfire protection and prevention, as well as to ensure buildings meet fire and building codes.
- d. The Authority may make and enter into contracts; adopt budgets; employ and retain agents and personnel; retain legal counsel; retain consultants and engineers; acquire grants; acquire, hold, lease and dispose of real and personal property; accept donations; sue and be sued; and possess and exercise all other powers common to the Members. The intent of this provision is to allow the Authority flexibility in making fiscally sound staffing decisions.
- e. The Authority may incur debt and issue bonds or any like instruments of no more than 10% of its annual budget in order to efficiently provide the service enumerated herein in compliance with the pertinent sections of the Government Code of the State of California. Specifically, the Authority can incur debt in its own name under any law authorizing a joint power authority to do so, including

Government Code Section 6540 *et seq.*, and the Marks-Roos Local Bond Pooling Act of 1985, and Government Code Section 6584 *et seq.*

- f. The Authority may authorize taxes pursuant to Government Code Sections 50075 *et seq.*, 53978, or any successor statutes as approved by voters in an election held in March 2020. No subsequent taxes or fees may be raised by the Authority without approval of Members.
- g. The Authority may exercise the powers permitted pursuant to Government Code Section 6504 or any successor statute. Pursuant to Government Code Section 6509.5, the Authority is entitled to invest any money in the treasury that is not required for the immediate necessities of the Authority.
- h. The Authority may do all things necessary and lawful to carry out the purpose of this Agreement.
- i. As required by Government Code Section 6509, one Member must be designated such that the power of the Authority is subject to the restrictions upon the manner of exercising power possessed by the Member. The County of Marin is designated as the Government Code Section 6509 public entity.

#### **SECTION 6. Operations Committee**

- a. The Operations Committee shall be responsible for creating a recommended annual budget for the Board and for creating a recommended annual work plan. The Operations Committee shall meet at least twice per year at a reasonable time before the Board must establish its budget. The Operations Committee representatives should strive for a balance of executive/administrative and fire expertise on the committee. The Operations Committee shall be composed of nineteen representatives who are agency staff, one from each of the Members.
- b. **Voting.** For all votes conducted by the Operations Committee, a proposed motion subject to vote passes when both following conditions are satisfied: (1) a majority of the representatives of the Operations Committee present vote in favor of a motion, and (2) the representatives of the Operation Committee present and voting in favor of a motion represent, in the aggregate, according to the then latest general census, over 50% of the population represented by the Member agencies present in the quorum.

#### **SECTION 7. Advisory/Technical Committee**

- a. The Advisory/Technical Committee shall be responsible to the Operation Committee for expert advice and recommendations regarding how the programs of the Authority should be developed and implemented. The Advisory/Technical Committee shall be comprised of one technical staff member from each Member agency and the Board shall adopt bylaws that establish the manner of appointment to the Advisory Technical Committee.

- b. The Advisory/Technical Committee shall hold at least two meetings each year. Special meetings may be called in accordance with the provisions of Government Code Section 54956.
- c. Agencies and entities such as Marin County towns or cities that are not a Member, Marin Municipal Water District (“MMWD”), Marin County Open Space District (“MCOSED”), National Park Service, State Parks, and FIRESafe MARIN may be invited to participate as at-large, non-voting Advisory/Technical Committee members. In addition, relevant Marin County land management agencies, private companies and community organizations may be invited by the Board to participate as at-large, non-voting Advisory/Technical Committee members. Said at-large Advisory/Technical Committee members shall be fully recognized by the Advisory/Technical Committee for the purpose of interaction and discussion. These at-large Advisory/Technical Committee members shall be appointed by their respective organizations.

#### **SECTION 8. Citizens’ Oversight Committee**

The Board of Directors will create a Citizens’ Oversight Committee. The Citizens’ Oversight Committee will review Authority spending on an annual basis following the report from the Treasurer. After review of the previous year’s work program and the financial audit, the Citizens’ Oversight Committee will adopt a report describing the extent to which the funds have been spent consistent with the tax measure and provide feedback to the Board of Directors. Citizens’ Oversight Committee participants will be residents who are neither elected officials of any government entity, nor public employees of any Member. Service on the Citizens’ Oversight Committee will be restricted to individuals who reside in Marin County. Participants on the Citizens’ Oversight Committee will be required to submit a statement of financial disclosure and participation will be restricted to individuals without economic interest in any of the Authority’s projects. The Citizens’ Oversight Committee may create subcommittees to monitor the deliberations of the Board of Directors, Operations Committee, and the Advisory/Technical Committee. The Board of Directors shall appoint participants to Citizens’ Oversight Committee from applications received as set forth below:

- Five participants, each residing in one of these five general geographical areas: West Marin, Novato, San Rafael, Central Marin, and Southern Marin.
- One participant from a taxpayer organization of Marin County.
- One participant from environmental organizations of Marin County.
- One participant from FIRESafe MARIN or similar fire prevention organization.
- One participant from a non-partisan civic organization such as League of Women Voters.

#### **SECTION 9. Funding**

- a. The Board shall adopt an annual budget for the Authority’s activities within ninety (90) days of the date the Elections Office certifies the successful passage of the tax measure proposed concurrently with this Agreement to fund this Authority, and by June 1 of each succeeding year. In adopting the annual budget,

the Board must consider recommendations from the Operations Committee. The annual budget shall identify the programs of the Authority and allocate funds by program. The budget and accounting system shall account for direct and overhead costs by program. The Board shall allocate these costs for each program with the adoption of the annual budget. To the extent changes to the budget under California law require approval of more than a simple majority of Members, the population representation requirement of Section 4.f. shall not increase. To accelerate services being provided to the community, during the first year of operations any core program funds not allocated to Authority start-up costs will be returned to Members in proportion to the tax revenue raised that fiscal year in each Member's respective tax rate area for uses that are consistent with the tax measure funding the Authority. This provision shall not be construed to prevent the Board of Directors from allocating funds for multi-year projects or programs.

- b. The core program functions of the Authority will be funded by 60% of the tax measure proceeds and will consist of, but not be limited to, vegetation management; wildfire detection; evacuation plans and alerts; grants; and public education. The Authority may allocate core funds to local wildfire prevention efforts, should the Board of Directors determine the core functions of the Authority are being served. Vegetation management funds will be allocated with consideration towards equitable spending over the five operational zones. As part of the five year review of the funding levels described in Section 9f, at least 80% of the revenue generated for vegetation management by each operational zone should be allocated within the respective zone. If this requirement is not met, it must be remedied within the next 5 year period.
- c. Defensible space and fire-resistant structure evaluations, and mitigation of fire threats thereof, will be funded by 20% of the tax measure proceeds and will be done on a shared service basis or by the responsible Member consistent with Section 10. Within the defensible space program, an Abatement program shall be created by the Authority, funded with 2% of the total tax measure proceeds. Funds from this Abatement program are retained by the Authority, notwithstanding a Member selecting to locally administer pursuant to Section 10. The Authority will only enforce a uniform abatement code. Litigation of abatements is the responsibility of the Member.
- d. Local-specific wildfire prevention efforts will be funded by 20% of the tax measure proceeds and allocated to each Member in proportion to revenue raised in each Member's respective tax rate areas. Members must certify that the tax measure proceeds are used consistent with the purpose of the Authority and that the tax measure expenses result in a higher level of service than would otherwise be provided by the Member.
- e. An administrative cost of not more than 10% will be budgeted for each program, i.e. the core program functions and the Authority administered defensible space evaluation program. Should a Member locally administer the defensible space evaluations pursuant to Section 10, an administrative cost will not be withheld by

the Authority for that program. The Board shall determine the methodology for calculating administrative costs.

- f. In Fiscal Year 2025-26, 2030-31, 2035-36 and continuing every five years thereafter, the Board may alter the funding levels of the core program functions of subsection 9.b. and the defensible space evaluations from subsection 9.c. The local-specific wildfire prevention efforts of subsection 9.d. will remain funded by 20% of the tax measure proceeds. A vote to alter the funding levels pursuant to this section shall require two-thirds approval of Directors voting to alter the funding levels, while maintaining the over 50% of the population represented by the Member agencies requirement in accordance with the voting rules set forth in Section 4.f. Should the Board approve changes to the funding levels of the programs, to provide adequate notice to Member agencies, those changes will not go into effect until two fiscal years after the changes were approved. For example, if funding levels of programs are altered during Fiscal Year 2025-26, those changes will not be implemented until the budget of Fiscal Year 2027-28.

**SECTION 10. Option to Locally Administer the Section 5.b. Defensible Space Program**

- a. Should a Member choose to locally administer the Authority power set forth in Section 5.b., that member shall evaluate structures and defensible space so property owners can enhance compliance with fire and building codes through homeowner education and, as necessary, enforcement follow-up. The Member choosing to locally administer the powers in Section 5.b. must certify that the Member shall use the funds provided by the Authority exclusively to evaluate defensible space and to enhance compliance with structures and land meeting fire and building codes, and not for any other purpose. Tax measure proceeds will be allocated to Members choosing to locally administer in an amount approximately equal to each Member's proportion of revenue raised in each Member's respective tax rate areas, as determined by the Board. For those Members remaining in the defensible space program, the Authority will expend the tax measure proceeds in an amount approximately equal to each Member's proportion of revenue raised in each Member's respective tax rate areas. Additionally, the Authority shall be entitled to retain 2% of the overall tax measure proceeds for the Authority's Abatement program, regardless of how many Members choose to exclusively manage their own defensible space program.
- b. Eligibility for a Member to elect to locally administer the defensible space program shall be effective beginning in Fiscal Year 2027-28, 2032-33, 2037-38 and continuing every five years thereafter. A Member must provide notice that it elects to opt-out or rescind its opt-out election by October 31 for the next fiscal year beginning on July 1. A Member may opt-out of the defensible space program before May 30, 2020 by providing notice to the Authority. Members can only subsequently opt out during certain years as set forth above. A Member choosing to exclusively manage its own defensible space program may be responsible for a reasonable exit fee, as determined by the Authority. Members



can opt-back-in at any time by providing notice that it elects to opt-back-in by October 31 for the next fiscal year beginning on July 1.

**SECTION 11. Exemptions**

The Authority shall be responsible for technical tax adjustments, consistent with the ballot measure. Whenever possible, the Authority must defer to reasonable requests from the Marin County Tax Collector to accommodate exemptions for parcels that are roads or creek beds, as well as split parcels ineligible for an assessor parcel combination solely because the parcels are not in the same tax rate area.

**SECTION 12. Duties of Treasurer**

- a. The Treasurer of the Authority shall be the Treasurer of one of the Members. The Authority at its first meeting and thereafter at its first meeting of the fiscal year shall elect a Treasurer and establish terms with the Member agency. This person shall also function as the Controller of the Authority.
- b. The Treasurer shall serve as the depository and have custody of all Authority funds and establish and maintain such books, records, funds, and accounts as may be required by generally accepted accounting practice, shall cause an independent annual audit of the accounts and records and comply with all requirements of Government Code Sections 6505, 6505.1, 6505.5 and 6505.6.
- c. The Treasurer, within one hundred and twenty (120) days after the close of each fiscal year ending on June 30, shall give a complete written report of all financial activities for such fiscal year to the Members.

**SECTION 13. Debts and Liabilities**

As permitted pursuant to Government Code Section 6508.1, no debt, liability, or obligation of the Authority shall constitute a debt, liability, or obligation of any Member and each Member's obligation hereunder is expressly limited only to the appropriation and contribution of such funds as may be levied pursuant to this Agreement or as the Member may agree.

**SECTION 14. Insurance and Indemnification**

The Authority shall acquire such insurance protection as is needed to protect the interests of the Authority and the Members, and such cost shall not count toward the administrative fee of Section 9.e. The Authority may use self-insurance and may contract with a Member for insurance services. The Authority shall defend and indemnify and hold harmless the Members and each of their respective officers, agents and employees, from all claims, losses, damages, costs, injury and liability of every kind, nature and description directly or indirectly arising from the performance of any of the activities of the Authority or the activities undertaken pursuant to this Agreement.

**SECTION 15. Privileges, Immunities and Other Benefits**

In accordance with California Government Code Section 6513, all of the privileges and immunities from liability, all exemptions from laws, ordinances and rules, and all pension, relief, disability, workmen's compensation, and other benefits which apply to the activity of the trustees, officers, employees or agents of the Members when performing their functions shall apply to the same degree and extent while engaged in the performance of any of their functions and duties for the Authority.

**SECTION 16. Termination; Disposition of Assets.**

- a. Should the tax measure to be placed on the ballot in March 2020 fail to pass or is subsequently repealed, this Agreement is terminated and shall be of no further effect upon certification of the election results.
- b. In accordance with Government Code Section 6512, upon termination of this Agreement, any surplus money in possession of the Authority or on deposit in any fund or account of the Authority shall be returned in proportion to the contributions made by the tax payers of each Member's jurisdiction. Any other property of the Authority shall be divided among the Members in such manner as shall be determined by the Authority in accordance with California law.
- c. If the tax measure is rescinded, all decisions of the Board with regard to determination of amounts to be transferred to Members or any successor shall be final.

**SECTION 17. Severability**

If any provision of the Agreement or its application to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this Agreement and the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.

**SECTION 18. No Rights to Third Parties**

All of the terms, conditions, rights and duties provided for in the Agreement are, and shall always be, solely for the benefit of the Members. It is the intent of the Members that no third party shall ever be the intended beneficiary of any performance, duty or right created or required pursuant to the terms and conditions of this Agreement. Nothing in this Section shall be interpreted to preclude the work of the Authority being done on private land.

**SECTION 19. Notices.**

Notices to Members under this Agreement shall be sufficient if delivered to the City Clerk or chief secretarial officer of the Member, or to any other person designated in writing by the Member.

**SECTION 20. Prohibition Against Assignment.**

No Member may assign any right, claim, or interest it may have under this Agreement, and no creditor, assignee or third-party beneficiary of any Member shall have any right, claim or title to any part, share, interest or assets under this Agreement.

**SECTION 21. Amendments**

This Agreement may be amended at any time by one or more supplemental agreements executed by mutual agreement of three-fourths (3/4) of the governing boards of the Members, so long as any amendment comports with the purpose of the voter approved measure, as set forth in Section 1 of this Agreement. Every ten years, the Marin County Board of Supervisors shall hold a public hearing for the purpose of considering the effectiveness of the tax measure and whether any changes in the tax measure should be placed before the voters.

**SECTION 22. Agreement Complete**

The foregoing constitutes the full and complete Agreement of the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof, and supersedes all prior understandings or agreements whether written or verbal. There are no oral understandings or agreement not set forth in writing herein. An such agreements merge into this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be executed by their proper officers thereunder duly authorized as of the date of approval by the public agencies that are parties hereto. This Agreement shall be executed in counterparts.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_