SECTION I: UNIT OVERVIEW

A: UNIT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Integrating local planning with statewide planning is fundamental to the determining the Units goals and objectives. After the devastating fires, at the local level, several fire planning actions and activities were identified and now are in progress to minimize impacts another major wildfire occur. Notably, the Board of Supervisors for the County of San Diego directed the formation of the San Diego County Fire Authority (SDCFA) and contracted with CAL FIRE to provide the leadership and organization support for SDCFA. The Forest Area Safety Taskforce became more committed to reducing impacts from wildfires. Coordinated interagency training has facilitated better trained paid and volunteer firefighters. Coordination between local, county and federal fire agencies has improved. Ignition resistance building standards have been adopted by the county. Fire prevention education has increased public awareness of the dangers from wildland fire. Moreover, in partnership with San Diego County, defensible space inspections have increased and the County abatement program enforces the defensible space law when a property owner fails to comply. And these are just a few of the key changes.

At the statewide level, wildland fire planning is more than just a focus on treating hazardous fuels – it is about the whole system of wildland fire planning and thinking about where and how people live and co-exist within wildfire prone environments. The Strategic Fire Plan looks at wildland fire planning from an integrated approach by focusing on stakeholders, assets at risk, governmental services and jurisdiction, and as well as both the fire prevention and suppression efforts. The integrated concepts framing the goals of the Strategic Fire Plan are: 1) improve the availability and use of information on hazard and risk assessment, 2) engage in land use planning, 3) develop shared vision and planning at the local/community level, 4) improve fire resistance and survivability for the “assets at risk” – such as homes and neighborhoods, 5) develop shared vision with all levels of fire protection jurisdictions and landowners, in terms of fuels management activities and practices, 6) determine the appropriate level of fire suppression service and related services, and 7) provide for post fire recovery. Each goal is intend to build upon the previous one, yet can be implemented simultaneously or independently.

To integrate both the local and statewide level planning key chief officers were appointed to the Core Planning Group. This group consisted of chief officers who have advance knowledge of fire behavior, especially about fire behavior under adverse conditions, fire ground operations, and natural resource management. Moreover, the group understands the Departmental and Unit policies, has knowledge of local and federal government processes and policies, and knows the values of partnerships with individuals, stakeholders, and other agencies to provide the best customer service to the public. To that end, the group, after reviewing the Strategic Fire Plan’s seven goals and fifty-seven objectives, selected objectives from each of the goals that are relevant to the Unit. Nearly all the selected goals and objective were based on the knowledge that the Unit actively supports the objectives or that progress is being made towards meeting these objectives.

In terms of initiating projects and activities, the pre-work begins at the Battalion levels. Field Battalions are the key “work unit” for coordinating and working closely with property owners, community groups, fire safe councils, and other agencies. Through this coordination process projects and activities are identified that best serve the needs of the public for wildland fire protection. Essentially, the public and stakeholders are involved at the grassroots level. Once a project has been vetted through this process, then Battalion Chiefs propose projects to the Unit. Pre-Fire/Resource Management staff assists in the planning and layout for those projects that are related to fuels treatment. Battalions typically focus on proposing fuels treatment projects in or near community areas that facilitate community protection. Environmental review is completed on all fuels treatment project through the Department’s existing Vegetation Management Program or through the departmental guidelines to comply with California Environmental Quality Act.

The following table is the list of goals and objectives the San Diego Unit intends to implement over the next eight years:

San Diego Unit: Goals and Objectives – from the 2010 Strategic Fire Plan	
Goal I	**Identify and evaluate wildland fire hazards and recognize life, habitat, social and other values of functioning ecosystems. Facilitate the sharing of all analyses and data collection across all ownerships for consistency in type and kind.**
Objective c:	Provide regular updates to the Department's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps.
Objective e:	Update fire history information and re-evaluate existing fire prediction models to obtain composite fire threat across all ownerships.
Objective h:	Engage and participate with local stakeholder groups (i.e., fire safe councils and others) to validate and prioritize the assets at risk.
Goal II	**Articulate and promote the concept of land use planning as it relates to fire risk and individual landowner objectives and responsibilities.**
Objective c:	Engage in the development, review and adoption of local land use plans to ensure compliance with fire safe regulations and current building standards.
Goal II	**Support and participate in the collaborative development and implementation of wildland fire protection plans and other local, county and regional plans that address fire protection and landowner objectives.**
Objective c:	Collaborate with federal and local governments, other state agencies, fire service and other organizations, to maintain and improve emergency response plans.
Goal IV	**Increase awareness, knowledge and actions implemented by individuals and communities to reduce human loss and property damage from wildland fires, such as defensible space and other fuels reduction activities, fire prevention and fire safe building standards.**
Objective c:	Facilitate activities with individuals and organizations, as appropriate, to assist individual property owners in complying with fire safe regulations.
Objective e:	Increase the number and effectiveness of defensible space inspections and promote an increasing level of compliance with defensible space laws and regulations through the use of CAL FIRE staffing as available, public and private organizations, and alternative inspection methods.
Objective j:	Actively investigate all wildland fires. For those resulting from negligent acts, pursue appropriate civil and/or criminal actions, including cost recovery.
Objective k:	Analyze trends in fire cause and focus prevention and education efforts to modify behavior and effect change.
Goal V	**Develop a method to integrate fire and fuels management practices with landowner priorities and multiple jurisdictional efforts within local, state and federal responsibility areas.**
Objective a:	Increase support of landowner-initiated hazardous fuels reduction using all available authorities, including the Vegetation Management Program.
Objective h:	Support the availability and utilization of CAL FIRE hand crews and other CAL FIRE resources, as well as public and private sector resources, for fuels management activities, including ongoing maintenance.
Goal IV	**Determine the level of fire suppression resources necessary to protect the values and assets at risk identified during planning processes.**
Objective g:	Ensure all firefighters are provided the appropriate training, equipment and facilities necessary to successfully and safely meet the increasingly complicated and challenging fire and emergency response environment.
Objective h:	Continue to evaluate and implement new technologies to improve firefighter safety, situational awareness and emergency response effectiveness.
Goal VII	**Address post-fire responsibilities for natural resource recovery, including watershed protection, reforestation and ecosystem restoration.**
Objective a:	Encourage rapid post-fire assessment, as appropriate, and project implementation to minimize flooding, protect water quality, limit sediment flows and reduce other risks on all land ownerships impacted by wildland fire.
Objective c:	Effectively utilize available resources, including CAL FIRE hand crews, to accomplish restoration and protection activities.
Objective g:	Promote the maintenance of a native species seed bank and seedling production capacity to provide the availability of appropriate tree species for reforestation within all of the state's diverse seed zones.

B: UNIT DESCRIPTION

Located in the southernmost area of the Southern Region for the California Department of Forestry, the San Diego Unit (Unit) encompasses both San Diego and Imperial Counties. Bordered by Mexico to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, Riverside and Orange Counties to the north and the state of Arizona to the east, the San Diego Administrative Unit covers over 5.5 million acres.

State Responsibility Areas, Federal Responsibility Areas, and Direct Protection Areas

The San Diego Administrative Unit is responsible for 1.2 million acres of State Responsibly Area (SRA) for wildland fire protection, while federal agencies are responsible for 2.4 million acres of Federal Responsibility Area (FRA), and local agencies are responsible for 1.9 million acres of Local Responsibility Area (LRA). In terms of coordinated wildland fire protection services (exchanging acres) the Unit has fire suppression responsibility for 1.4 million acres of State Direct Protection Area (State-DPA), while the federal agencies have responsibilities to protect 2.2 million acres of Federal Direct Protection Area (Federal-DPA).

Imperial County is included in the San Diego Administrative Unit boundary; however, the few private land holdings are surrounded by BLM lands (1,000 and 14,000 respectively). This relatively small area is mapped as State DPA.

Population, Wildland Urban Interface and Ownership

San Diego, a world class tourist destination, is a mixture of cosmopolitan/urban/rural development within the proximity of a wildfire prone environment. While Imperial County, dominated with commercial agriculture operations, supported by the Colorado River and All-American Canal, renewable energy, solar, and geothermal energy, is a desert region that rarely experiences wildland fires. The boundary between San Diego and Imperial Counties is a transitional area of sparse chaparral and desert vegetation that occasionally supports wildfires. Moreover, the San Diego-Imperial Counties region is the third most populated areas in California, and nearly every resident in San Diego County, and portions of Imperial County, has been directly or indirectly impacted by wildfires, and more specifically, by the 2003 and 2007 Fire Sieges in San Diego County.

Although the population of San Diego and Imperial Counties exceeds 3.3 million, most of the population lives in San Diego County and resides in metropolitan areas within 20 miles of the coastline. Whereas, the population that lives in Imperial County resides primarily in small towns and agriculture communities. Nevertheless, nearly a half a million people reside in approximately 170,000 housing units in the rural or "backcountry" communities; which are identified SRA. Nearly all of these households are in San Diego County and are considered a part of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

Public agencies own over 1.6 million acres in San Diego and Imperial Counties. Nearly one third of the area in the Unit is held as public lands (city, county, state or federal governments). See table below:

San Diego Unit: San Diego and Imperial Counties -- Public Lands -- Estimated Acres -- 1,616,000 Acres							
Federal	***Acres***	***State***	***Acres***	***County***	***Acres***	***City***	***Acres***
Military: Pendleton, MCB, Miramar Airbase, MCB and other facilities	148,000	Sate Parks: Palomar, Anza-Borrego, Cuyamaca Rancho, and others	*628,000*	San Diego County Park & Recreation	*44,000*	*San Diego City Parks Dept.*	*39,000*
USFS, Cleveland NF: Descanso and Palomar Districts	366,000						
US Fish and Wildlife Service	42,000	Dept of Fish & Game: Hollenbeck Canyon, Rancho Jamul, San Felipe Valley	*27,000*	Imperial County Park & Recreation	*10,000 (est.)*	*Cities Parks Imperial Co.*	*10,000 (est.)*
Bureau of Land Management	171,000						
Tribal Lands	130,000						
Federal Totals	***857,000***	***State Totals***	***656,000***	***County Totals***	***54,000***	***City Totals***	***49,000***

International Border Interface

The United States–Mexico border creates another type of wildland fire interface. This type of interface results from undocumented, international travelers from Mexico entering the United States through dense, dry brush conditions. Occasionally, these international travelers set cooking, warming or warning fires that spread into wildlands. In the mid 1990's, several "Border Fires" injured or claimed the lives of many international travelers. An international council was formed, the Border Agency Fire Council, to provide fire safety information to international travelers, to guide fire fighting operations, and to ensure fire fighter safety along the border. Since the inception of this council, the numbers of wildland fires, injuries and deaths along the border have dramatically declined.

Climate, Topography, and Vegetation

Like most of southern California, the San Diego Unit is located in a Mediterranean Climate; warm to hot, dry summers and mild to cool winters. Summer temperatures hover around the mid to upper ninety degrees for the center region to the low one hundred degree temperatures in the desert regions. Fog moderates the coastal temperatures for most of summer period. Occasionally, extraordinary hot, dry spells similar to desert conditions may occur near the coastline and mountainous areas, while snow is common at elevations above 3,500 feet during cold winter storms. Rainfall averages range from 12 -15 inches at the lowest elevations near the coast to over 35 inches at the highest elevations. The dry desert region commonly receives less than 4 inches of rainfall each year. Santa Ana Winds are one of the more notable weather conditions for southern California. These winds can blow any time of the year, however, these strong, dry winds typically coincide with the drier period as well, which is late summer and fall periods (September through November). These winds, which can easily exceed 40 mph, are warm and dry and can severely exacerbate brush or forest fires, especially under drought conditions.

During the early 2000's, much of southern California experienced a prolonged drought cycle. Annual rainfall totals dipped to below 10 inches of annual precipitation, which is approximately 20% below average rainfall. During this period, particularly in 2007-2009, the vegetation cured earlier and reached critical live fuel moisture conditions 35-40 days earlier as well. However, the summer 2010 was one of the coolest summers and the fall/winter season of 2010/2011 was an above average rain season.

Topographically, San Diego County is boxed by the Pacific Ocean in the west, the Palomar and the Santa Rosa Mountains to the north, the Cuyamaca and Laguna Mountains to the east and Mexico border to the south. Imperial County lies directly east of San Diego County and is framed by the Cuyamaca and Laguna Mountains in the west, the Santa Rosa Mountains and the Salton Sea and Colorado Desert to the north, the Colorado River and the state of Arizona to the east, and the Mexico border to the south. Generally, the elevation rises from sea level to nearly 6,600 feet in elevation. The terrain can be described as coastal areas, inland canyons, mesas, valleys and mountains in the eastern center region, and desert in the far eastern section. Several canyons in San Diego are aligned in an east-west orientation, and this orientation funnels Santa Ana winds from the desert region to the coast areas.

The native vegetation complexes approximately follows the topographic transitions: coastal sage scrub/soft chaparral on the coast, to hard chaparral species in the inland canyon, mesas and upper desert regions, to oak woodlands and mix-conifer forest at the higher elevations which eventually descend into desert plants communities. Nearly all of these vegetation types are fire adaptive plants. In general, the coastal sage scrub and mixed chaparral dominant most of San Diego County's natural landscape; at least 70% of the natural landscape can be described as a chaparral type of vegetation, with most types located below the 5,000 foot elevation level.

Although conifer forest occupies less than 5% the area in San Diego County, these limited resources are primarily found above 4,500 feet in elevation in the Palomar, Santa Rosa, Cuyamaca, and the Laguna Mountains. Conifer forests are under pressure from development, insect and diseases and wildfires throughout most of California, including San Diego County as well. In early 2000's, the combination of drought, overstocked forest conditions, and a major bark beetles outbreak caused extensive tree mortality in San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. In March 2003, Governor Schwarzenegger issued a proclamation declaring a State of Emergency to address the extreme risk to people, property and the environment caused by the significant tree mortality. The proclamation enabled landowners and public agencies to take steps to remove the dead trees and associated hazardous dead vegetation. However, in October 2003, the Cedar Fire burned a significant portion of forested lands in the Cuyamaca Mountains. Cuyamaca Rancho State Park lost nearly 95% (20,000 acres) of the forest to the Cedar Fire. More

notably after the fire, there was very little natural regeneration of the forest. In October 2007, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park launched a partnership project with the CAL FIRE-San Diego Unit, the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Reforestation Project, with the purpose to restoring and reforesting the intensely damaged conifer forest. This reforestation project is in the verification stage of being registered with the California Climate Action Registry – it's the first reforestation project to register public lands in California. To review the project go to http://www.climateregistry.org/ and search for project name: Cuyamaca Rancho State Park (CRSP) Reforestation Project or project identification: CAR505.

Oak woodlands occupy about 10% of the natural landscape in San Diego County. Like coniferous forest, these resources are under pressures from development, insect and disease process and wildfire as well. In the Pine Valley-Descanso area of San Diego, perhaps as early as the late 1990's, red oak species were dying for unknown reasons. In 2008, the Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB) was identified as the likely pest causing oak mortality. Currently, this pest has spread beyond the Pine Valley-Descanso area and is associated with causing oak tree mortality to over 20,000 large, mature oak trees in the southern area of San Diego County. There are two types of concerns with this pest. The first concern is ecological impacts to the red oaks species, not only in San Diego, but for the rest of the California as well. The other matter of concern is that when wildland fire moves through areas with high oak tree mortality, especially in community areas, these dead tree trees increases the dead fuel load and increases the falling hazard risk to firefighters and the public. To address the concerns about this pest, a steering committee, an educational-outreach-science committee and lead scientists and researchers have organized to minimize the spread of the pest. For more information, go to the website: www.gsob.org.

Fire History

The 2003 and 2007 Fire Siege burned over half a million acres of costal sage, chaparral, and forest lands. Moreover, San Diego Unit has a long history of major wind driven fire occurrence distributed throughout the county with only the lower desert and immediate coastal areas excluded. The San Diego County Fire History map shows that the county has had a significant history of major fire incidents over the last 50+ years. Almost every community in San Diego County has been threatened by wildfires that have occurred during this period. Readily available fuels, influences of topography and Santa Ana winds, present year-around fire suppression challenges for the Unit.

Typically, the average number of fires per fire season is approximately 510 fire starts over the last ten years and the average number of acres burned is about 15,000 acres a year (minus the 2003 and 2007 Fire Siege years). Generally, the leading causes for unwanted fires are debris burning, vehicles and underdetermined caused fires. Camp fires are another cause of wildfires however; these camp fires are typically related to the border region and international travelers.

Combine these factors with the populace continuing to move to the WUI area and reduced budgets, will continue to hinder efforts to stay on top of this situation. Due to the potential for extreme fire weather in the Unit, strategic solutions have been developed. During times of extreme fire weather, the Unit will staff additional fire engines (reserve and camp), additional handcrews, mobilize Santa Ana strike teams throughout the state, pre-position additional air tankers from other bases, and inform the public, via media and other informational venues, to help prepare themselves in case of wildfires in the county. The San Diego County Office of Emergency Services (SDCOES) has developed a Community Protection and Evacuation Plan (CPEP) template to help facilitate communities in establishing local "plans." These plans will include evacuation routes, safe zones, emergency agency response, critical infrastructure protection, and mitigation strategies. The SDCOES, in cooperation from the Forest Areas Safety Taskforce (FAST) and Fire Safe Councils, are presenting this template in town hall-style meetings throughout the county.

Fire Hazard Severity Zones

The Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) map for San Diego County indicates that nearly all of State Responsibility Area and portions of Local Responsibility Areas are in the Very High Hazards Zones. The FHSZ maps are intended for use related to topics such as: building construction standards on building permits; natural hazard disclosure at the time of sale of real property; defensible space around buildings; property development standards such as road widths, water supply, and address signs; and for city and county to consider for their general plans.

Three large areas within the Very High rating have no recorded fire history in the last 30 years. Within these areas there has also been an increase in residential and community development during this same

30-year period. One area is located south of the Interstate 8, west of Buckman Springs Road, north of Highway 94 and east of Harbison Canyon. A second area that has not experienced fire is the area near Highway 79 and Highway 76, near the community of Warner Springs. The last area of concern is the northwest area of San Diego, which starts in the north near the Rainbow community and follows the Highway 15 corridor south to Bonsall community.

Building Standards – Title 7A, 19 and 24

San Diego County has adopted Building Code Chapter 7A standards (Material and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure) and Chapter 47 standards (Requirements for Wildland-Urban Interface Area). Additionally, San Diego County is certified as compliant with Title 14 - SRA Fire Safe Regulations and Public Resources Code 4290.

Vegetation Management Projects and Environmental Review

All proposed vegetation management projects (including fuels treatment activities) are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act and environmental review. The following is a brief listing of the key components related to project review:

- **Biological Resource and Multi-Species Conservation Program**

  San Diego County is a "hot spot" area for unique and unusual species. With 28 species listed or proposed listed as threatened or endangered and an additional 57 species that are considered sensitive underscores the uniqueness of San Diego natural environmental. Given the richness of species, San Diego County's Multi-Species Conservation Program (MSCP) promotes the protection of these species, while balancing the need for use and development of property. To ensure protection for these species, both the California Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are consulted on all fuels treatment projects.

- **Archeology**

  All CAL FIRE projects, such as VMP or fuels management projects, are reviewed by a qualified Department Archeologist, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA 1970). As required, each project is evaluated to determine if the project will have any effect on a defined cultural resource. Department policy is to avoid adverse effects to significant cultural resources (prehistoric or historic resource consistent with CEQA), which is most often by avoidance. This internal practice began with the passage of the Forest Practice Act (FPA 1973). Since the passage of the FPA, archeologists regularly review projects and conduct archeological surveys. A number of other laws play a part in the protection, preservation, and management of cultural resources in California. Also, CAL FIRE State Archeologists participate in the department's response to wildland fires. They participate in SEAT 's (State Emergency Assessment Teams) when called in after a major fire to scientifically evaluate "values at risk" in the affected burned area as allowed under the former Governor's Executive Order.

- **Water Quality Boards**

  To meet the requirements of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, all projects, including vegetation management projects, are reviewed for water quality impacts. Depending on the location of the project, the Unit will consult with the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board or the Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board.

  - **Region 7 -- Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board:** Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego counties.

  - **Region 9 -- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board:** San Diego, Orange, Riverside counties.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Air Quality**

  All projects must consider greenhouse gas emission as part of the environmental review process. Nationally recognized protocols are used to estimate the total greenhouse gas emissions that will occur due to project activities. Unit projects are evaluated for air quality impacts and where

appropriate, smoke management plans are completed, filed and approved with the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District.

- **Invasive Species**

  Research has indicated some fuels treatment projects may also create opportunities for invasive species (weeds) to grow and spread. During fuels treatment planning, consideration is given to minimize invasive species from being introduced or spreading. For more information go to UC Cooperative Extension and review the Invasive Specie support services at: http://ucanr.org/sites/socalinvasives/.

Vegetation management projects are intended to minimize wildland fire impacts, especially near community areas. The cost and losses from wildland fires far exceeds the cost of the vegetation management and fuels treatment projects. Nevertheless, the environmental review process provides agencies and the public with the information regarding these projects to ensure the project complies with various environmental regulations.

C: UNIT PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

San Diego Unit – Monte Vista Headquarters is located at 2249 Jamacha Road in the unincorporated area of San Diego County, near the city of El Cajon. The Unit Administration Offices, Mobile Equipment Repair Shop, Service Center, Inter Agency Training Center, Inter Agency Communication Center, and the Monte Vista Fire Station #20 are located on the 14-acre headquarters facility. The following is a list of resources available for emergency response and support services:

The San Diego Unit Resources at a Glance

- ☑ 18 CAL FIRE Fire Stations
  - ✓ 26 Frontline CAL FIRE Type III Fire Engines
  - ✓ 5 Reserve CAL FIRE Type III Fire Engines
  - ✓ 4 CDF Bulldozers
- ☑ 4 CAL FIRE / CDC&R Conservation Camps
  - ✓ 19 Handcrews
  - ✓ 4 Conservation Camp Type III Fire Engines
- ☑ 1 Air Attack Base (Ramona)
  - ✓ 1 CAL FIRE OV-10 Air Attack Aircraft
  - ✓ 2 CAL FIRE S-2T Air Tankers
  - ✓ 1 USFS Type II Helicopter
- ☑ 2 Helitack Bases (Gillespie & Fallbrook)
  - ✓ Joint operations: SD County Sheriff and CAL FIRE
  - ✓ 2 Type II Helicopters
- ☑ 1 Interagency Command Center (Monte Vista)
  - ✓ Joint operations: USFS and CAL FIRE
- ☑ Training, Fleet Services, Pre-Fire/ Resource Management and IT Support Services (HQ)
- ☑ 14 Local Government Fire Stations (Sch. A)
  - ✓ 4 Type I Medic/Fire Engines
  - ✓ 9 Type I Fire Engines
  - ✓ 1 Type II Fire Engine
  - ✓ 4 Type III Fire Engine cross-staffed (Fire Season)
  - ✓ 2 ALS Ambulance
  - ✓ 1 Rescue
  - ✓ 8 Type I Reserve Engines
- ☑ 24 Local Govt. Volunteer Fire Stations
  - ✓ 26 Type I Engines
  - ✓ 27 Type III Engines
  - ✓ 8 Water Tenders
  - ✓ 2 Rescue Light/Air
- ☑ Personnel
  - ✓ 290 Permanent Personnel,
  - ✓ 180 Seasonal Personnel
  - ✓ 450-500 Volunteers

The protection of 1.2 million acres of SRA wildland and urban interface is provided by eighteen “Blue Book” fire stations geographically located fifteen to twenty miles apart. To manage the eighteen fire stations, the Unit is divided into seven battalions with a Battalion Chief managing two to three fire stations. Under multiple Cooperative Fire Agreements all eighteen fire stations are staffed twelve months out of the year with a three person staffing level. During “Peak Fire Season” the Unit covers twenty six frontline Type III Fire Engines at the eighteen fire stations, with a work force of 290 Permanent Firefighters and 180 Seasonal Firefighters.

The San Diego Unit currently has seven Cooperative Fire Agreements: Deer Springs Fire Protection District, Pine Valley Fire Protection District, Ramona Water District, Rural Fire Protection District, San Diego County Fire Authority, Valley Center Special District and Yuima Water District. As a part of the seven Cooperative Fire Agreements the Unit staffs nine Type I Fire Engines, four Type I Medic Fire Engines, one Type II Fire Engine, and two Advance Life Support Ambulances with a “Schedule A” staff of 190 personnel. In addition to these Cooperative Fire Agreements, the Unit has Dispatch Agreements with Campo Band of Mission Indians (BMI), La Jolla Reservation Fire Department, Pala BMI, Pauma BMI, Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians, San Pasqual BMI, Lipay Nation of Santa Ysabel Indians, and Sycuan Indian Reservation Fire Department.

San Diego Unit participates in the San Diego County Master Mutual Aide Agreement between all of the Municipal Fire Agencies along with several smaller Auto-Aides and Mutual-Aide Agreements with local fire agencies. All of the Agreements are intended to provide a higher level of fire and medical services to the public.

In addition, during Peak Fire Season, four bulldozer units staffed are at the following locations: Monte Vista HQ, McCain Conservation Camp, Rainbow Conservation Camp and Puerta La Cruz Conservation Camp. By a Cooperative Agreement with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, nineteen inmate hand crews are located at four Conservation Camps. Rainbow Conservation Camp and Puerto La Cruz Conservation Camp are staffed with female inmates located in the northern portion of San Diego County. La Cima Conservation Camp and Mc Cain Conservation Camp are staffed with male inmates in the southern part of the county.

The Ramona Air Base is located in the center of San Diego County in the unincorporated area of Ramona. Ramona Air Base is a multiagency base shared with the United States Forest Service. Two CAL FIRE S-2 turbo prop fixed wing air tankers and one OV10 Air Attack plane are staffed at the Ramona Air Base during Fire Season. Due to the location of the air base the fixed wing aircraft can make it to the most remote locations in the county in twenty five minutes of receiving the dispatch. The S-2 air tankers can hold twelve hundred gallons of retardant. The United States Forest Service staffs one Helitack crew on helicopter 538. Helicopter 538 is a Bell UH-1H Super Huey that has a fixed water tank that can hold up to 375 gallons of water. During large fires the air base can staff six retardant loading bays with a fifty two thousand gallon retardant storage tank.

In a unique Cooperative Agreement with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, San Diego Unit personnel staff two San Diego County fire fighting helicopters twelve months out of the year. County Copter 10 and 12 are Bell UH-1H Super Huey helicopters that are owned and piloted by the San Diego County Sheriff Department with a fixed 375 gallon water tanks. Copter 10 and 12 are primarily based out of the Sheriff's Special Detail facility at Gillespie Airport in the City of El Cajon. Copter 10 during Peak Fire Season is designated as the Helitack Ship with a 6-8 person Helitack crew. Copter 12 is designated as the rescue ship with rescue hoist capabilities. During Special Staffing events both helicopters can be staffed with Helitack crews and one helicopter would be repositioned to the Sheriff Helicopter base at the Fallbrook Airport in North County.