

PRESS RELEASE

WILDFIRE RESEARCH NETWORK

Date: April 19, 2007

Subject: “Supertankers Now For California”

On March 14 Wildfire Research Network (WRN) appeared before the California Assembly Budget Sub-Committee #3, Room 447 State Capitol, Sacramento. Text of statement by Tony Morris, WRN.

Wildfire Research Network is a citizen non-profit, public safety research organization created to improve wildfire suppression capability throughout California and the United States.

WRN applauds Cal Fire’s forward thinking and support of early employment and technical evaluation of the DC-10 Supertanker in 2006.

WRN recognizes that Cal Fire had to use a Call-When-Needed contract to implement the employment of the DC-10 expeditiously within the 2006 budget constraints.

WRN believes this type of aircraft is the most cost effective “new tool” that can be added to the wildfire fighting arsenal in the near term.

The trends of wildfire losses in California and across the U.S. indicate that the current wildfire fighting systems are not working! Losses are steadily increasing! We cannot allow a trend like this to continue. At least five western states, including California, have experienced the most destructive and expensive wildfires in their history in the last few years.

The primary weakness in the current systems is that they are unable to deliver adequate amounts of suppressant to a new (high wind driven) wildfire soon enough to prevent development of an out of control situation.

Our firefighters put out more than 95% of the wildfires that develop but it is the small remaining percentage that is producing virtually all the destruction! This small percentage

(not immediately extinguished) is also responsible for 65% or more of the total seasonal suppression costs!

If a system can be developed to extinguish more of these wildfires early on we may have an opportunity to significantly reduce total seasonal wildfire fighting costs.

The supertankers appear to offer this potential. They drop significantly more suppressant at one time than our current tankers. (The DC-10 drops 12,000 gallons and the 747 drops 20,500 gallons) California's S-2T air tankers drop 1200 gallons and the largest U.S. Forest Service contract air tankers drop only 3000 gallons!

Because of their gallon capacity and significant speed advantages, supertankers can put retardant fire line down 4 to 6 times faster than the current Cal Fire S-2T air tankers even though they must operate from more remote bases.

Because of the high cost to operate an aircraft of this size... its availability must be financially shouldered primarily by the state. A state \$5M Seasonal Contract for the DC-10 would become cost effective each season if it only stopped one wildfire with \$5M potential suppression costs. Cal Fire's emergency wildfire suppression costs currently can exceed \$25 million per year. The break even point for the 747 would be only slightly higher.

WRN sincerely believes it is in California's financial interest to employ supertankers as part of their regular firefighting forces. As the financier, the state will determine the priorities and fire situations where the airplane will be dispatched.

WRN also feels very strongly that the proper contract type is a Seasonal (standby) Contract – not a Call-When-Needed contract.

The most significant difference in these contracts is that a Seasonal (standby) Contract provides a 30 minute or less response time – while the Call-When-Needed contract response time is 24 hours! Thus, deployment of Call-When-Needed air tankers allows wildfires to grow 48 times the size of wildfires attacked under a Seasonal Contract! This is a crucial difference.

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