



OVERVIEW OF FAIRSGROUNDS AND DISASTER RESPONSE

Fair Organizations:

A state-supported fair organization is defined as any fair that conducts an annual fair and submits an annual statement of operations to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). In some areas, fairgrounds provide the only available event space for the local community. The network of California fairs is comprised of 80 fair organizations, divided into four categories:

- (1) District Agriculture Associations: There are 54 statutory District Agriculture Associations (DAA), of which 52 are active, and 41 operate on state owned lands. DAAs hold various activities on their sites such as fairs, day care operations, fund raising, and commercial events. Budgets range from several hundred thousand dollars to over ten million dollars.
- (2) County Fairs: There are 23 County Fairs, which are either ran by their county government or a not-for-profit organization. These fairs highlight a county's natural and agricultural resources.
- (3) Citrus Fruit Fairs: There are 2 of these fairs and are ran by not-for-profit organizations. They hold annual fairs in recognition of the citrus fruit harvest.
- (4) The California Exposition and State Fair (Cal Expo): Cal Expo is a state agency that annually hosts the California State Fair and is responsible for holding expositions and exhibitions that highlight California's industries, enterprises, resources, and products.

Funding:

Fairs are generally self-funded and rely on revenues from their events. They were historically subsidized by the state through a portion of horse racing revenues until 2009, when \$32 million was instead designated from the state general fund (GF). In 2011, the GF dollars were eliminated in total. Since 2016, the budget has included approximately \$3.5 million in General Funds to assist small and medium sized fairs. As of 2018, the budget now includes an allocation of funds generated from a percentage of the state sales tax revenue on activities at fairgrounds (AB 1499, Gray-2017). The total amount for fiscal year 2020-21 was just over \$15 million. The CDFA is responsible for the allocation of these funds. Additionally, the 2020-2021 Budget included a one-time \$40.3 million general fund allocation to fairs in order to mitigate against the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021-2022 Governor's revised Budget proposes a one-time, \$150 million general fund allocation to the CDFA for the development and improvement of community resilience centers. Fairgrounds, along with other community centers, will have access to this funding in order to support the state's preparedness capabilities as well as provide infrastructure for emergencies such as cooling and heating centers, clean air centers, and extended evacuation response centers.

Shift in use of Fairgrounds:

Forty years ago, fairgrounds were perceived primarily as sites for annual fairs and other well-known seasonal venues such as entertainment and competitions that included horse racing, car racing and rodeos. However, as the impacts of disaster operations became more extensive in California – especially flooding, wildfires, and earthquakes – it was clear that fairground locations were critical for staging first response operations, serving as shelter to the public, and providing emergency services when primary medical facilities were impacted.

In the last two decades, the California fairgrounds have addressed new requests during disasters and emergencies including support for the public during terrorism threats, heating and cooling centers, placement of portable field hospitals, and for vaccination sites during pandemic outbreaks.

The complexity and variety of new threats has also increased the call for the use of fairgrounds because of their statewide availability and their capacity for support. Some of the fairgrounds are already sites of pre-allocated caches of emergency response support equipment and supplies. Some fairground sites are under consideration for staging of first response resources from state and federal agencies. The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) and the National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) caches are part of this new arrangement with California fairgrounds, following careful assessments of the sites for usability and access.

Major Fires:

Fairgrounds played a critical role during the Camp Fire and for many months after. Butte, Glenn and Yuba counties fairgrounds were used as staging areas for emergency services, temporary shelters for both people and animals, and have now long-term temporary Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) shelters.

From 2008 to 2018 more than 51 different fairgrounds were used as fire camps and evacuation centers for people and animals in at least 164 separate incidents lasting over 1,742 calendar days. Every fair in the state has been used or activated at least once for emergency services in the last several years. In that decade fairgrounds hosted 79,381 disaster responders as well as sheltered almost 10,000 people and 6,500 animals.

COVID-19:

Fairgrounds have been a significant part of California's COVID-19 response infrastructure. At the onset of the pandemic, many were utilized as temporary support sites for individuals experiencing homelessness. As unsheltered individuals face a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, a number of fairgrounds, including Kern County and Cal Expo, partnered with local governments to provide temporary housing and isolation centers. Once effective COVID-19 tests were approved, fairgrounds up and down the state were transformed into large-scale testing sites. With approval of three COVID-19 vaccines, at least 47 fairgrounds are serving as ongoing or pop-up, mass vaccination sites. Two of the largest vaccination sites in California operate at state fairgrounds– the Orange County Fairgrounds and Cal Expo – where each has the capability of providing thousands of vaccinations a day.

Unaccompanied Minor Migrant Centers:

With the high number of unaccompanied, migrant children in detention centers across the US-Mexican border, facilities throughout California have been designated to house these minors. The Los Angeles County Fairgrounds, also known as the Pomona Fairplex, is the first fairgrounds to temporarily provide shelter and services to 2,500 unaccompanied minors. Other locations include convention centers and shelters.

Roles of California State Agencies:

The Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Fairs & Expositions (F&E), a Branch within the Division of Marketing Services, provides fiscal and policy oversight of the network of California fairs and ensures the best use of available funding and other services.

The California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) has a clearly defined role for coordinating requests for state resources during a State of Emergency in California, and during federally declared disasters, and assisting with mutual aid requests between Operational Areas (OA) when counties and cities have declared a local emergency. These duties are defined in the California Government Code (CGC) starting in Article 8550, in what is commonly referred to as the California Emergency Services Act (ESA) and in the California Disaster and Civil Defense Master Mutual Aid Agreement. The implementation of these powers and their use during emergencies and disasters has proven successful during decades of responses to major events.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is contracted with local governments in 36 of California's 58 counties to provide assorted emergency services. Due to its extensive incident management experience with wildfires, CAL FIRE also plays a significant role in managing other disasters such as floods, toxic spills, and earthquakes.

In catastrophic events it is likely that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Region IX will take a substantial role in response to the threat to life, property, and the environment in California. FEMA's role is clearly defined in federal law and in FEMA's implementation plans for catastrophic events in California.

PANELISTS

Mitch Medigovich, Deputy Director of Logistics Management; California Office of Emergency Services

As Deputy Director of Logistics Management, Mitch Medigovich oversees Disaster Logistics Planning and Coordination, Procurement and Logistical Services, Information Technology, and Public Safety Communications. Medigovich has been chief of staff at the California Military Department since 2011. He was a brigade commander for the United States Army from 2010 to 2011 and director at Army Aviation Safety Program from 2005 to 2010. Medigovich was inspector general at the California Military Department from 2002 to 2003 and deputy chief of staff and logistics at the California Military Department, 49th Combat Support Command from 2000 to 2002.

Kevin Masuhara, Deputy Secretary Administration and Finance, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)

Kevin Masuhara was appointed as Deputy Secretary of Administration and Finance for CDFA in 2014 and has been with the Department since 2006. Past roles at CDFA have included Director of Marketing Services, Interim Director of Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services, County/State Liaison and Program Supervisor over Standardization and Certified Farmers Markets. He has also held various managerial and technical analytical positions at the Department of Justice, CalPERS and the Department of Consumer Affairs. Prior to entering state service, Kevin was the managing general partner in a family farming operation that raised fresh market vegetable crops as well as vine and other seed crops. He also was an area manager for a tomato processing cooperative.

George Morris III, Assistant Region Chief; California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal FIRE) Northern Region

CAL FIRE protects over 31 million acres of California wildlands with 20 regional firefighting units, 473 fire stations, over 4,000 full-time Firefighters & employs thousands of seasonal firefighters. CAL FIRE has adapted to the evolving destructive wildfires and succeeded in significantly increasing fire prevention efforts. In addition to wildfires, CAL FIRE is an "all-risk" fire department, responding to auto accidents, structure fires, medical calls, hazardous material spills, swift water rescues, search and rescue, train wrecks, floods, earthquakes, and more.

Tom Mitchell, Vice Chair of the California Fairs Alliance and Chief Executive Officer of the Madera Fair

The Madera District Fair was first established in 1937 on what had previously been known as the Rodeo Grounds which bordered the Fresno River and Gateway Drive. In the early 50's, the 99 freeway route was established which cut the fairgrounds into two parcels. The property on the east side of the freeway was sold and is now known as Rotary Park. Additional property was purchased at that time on the west boundary which resulted in a total area of 116 acres owned by the DAA in 1967.

The California Fairs Alliance (CFA) is a subsidiary of Western Fairs Association, providing advocacy and resource development for the network of California fairs. The CFA mission is to represent the interests of California fairs with effective volunteer leadership that influences key decision-makers through advocacy, education and communication.

Becky Bartling, Chief Executive of the Sonoma County Fair

Becky is the CEO of the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, taking the position in 2015. Prior to Sonoma she was the Chief Operating officer of the Del Mar Fairgrounds and Racetrack, having been at the facility for 22 years. AS the COO she managed the operations of the Fairgrounds including being the liaison with the California Coastal Commission, Army Corp of engineers and other regulatory agencies. She served as Del Mar's legislative liaison on legislation relating to the Fairgrounds. She additionally supervised the Events, Security, Admissions, Parking, telecommunications, facility plant operations departments and was a key player in the 2003 and 2007 San Diego wildfire animal and human evacuations to the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Since coming to Sonoma County in 2015 she has overseen human and animal evacuations for four

wildfires as well as one flood evacuation. The Sonoma County Fairgrounds has served as a center for Covid-19 testing, trailers for homeless at risk for Covid-19, a mass Covid-19 vaccination site and other community uses as a result of the pandemic.

Michele Richards, Chief Executive Officer of the Orange County Fair

Michele Richards has served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Orange County Fair since December of 2019. Previously, she served as the agency's VP of Business Development for more than seven years. Richards has more than 30 years of leadership experience in a variety of fields including advertising/marketing, organizational development, sales and human resources, including more than 15 years managing her own consulting practice. She was also an organizational development consultant to OC Fair & Event Center (OCFEC) for 11 years. At OCFEC, she has worked in several leadership positions including overseeing marketing, communications, events, creative services, sales, exhibits and education.